

Bible Lessons

Lisa Katz

1. Genesis

It began sometime
during a war somewhere.
By the time you confessed it was ended.
Now I have two lives like Sarah,
the life before and the pall after.
You say you obeyed the command
of your middle aged body. You sacrificed
on the altar of a god.
Now there is always a girl,
in memory there is always the girl
who won't stay inside her own years,
she comes wherever I go,
she never leaves my second life, she is
my second life.
It was better before I knew.

2. *Song of Songs*

I suppose your girl has breasts like soft cones
between which you place your bundle of myrrh
and her couch is green.

At night she wanders into our home
entering your soul while you sleep.

Her rounded thighs,
breasts like fawns or towers,
delectable as clusters of dates,
all these and more
are yours for a battle or two.
Would she love you
if you didn't have any fields, nut orchards, pools?
Can there be any sex without territory?

Tell me where you pasture your flock,
where you lie down at noon.
Can there be any sex without betrayal?

3. *Book of Lamentations*

My Jerusalem
is destroyed. My friend
betrays me, I cry
in the night.

The fall is terrible.
Is it nothing to you?

And I never thought it would happen to me,
hesitant to leave the burned city
fated to be my home.

4. *New Testament*

Where have you been? What again,
the Chinese restaurant in Bethlehem?

Holy cities
frame this conversation
with sin,
crosses
and retribution.

First you lie,
then you confess.
After the meal,
ashes on our plate,
bitter
my mouth.



Lisa Katz is winner of a New York State CAPS Grant in Poetry, and has published in Shenandoah, Inkwell, and Judaism. Her work is forthcoming in The Mississippi Review. Her translations of 10 Israeli poets currently appear in Poetry International #4 (Fall 2000); other translations from the Hebrew appear in The Defiant Muse, Modern Poetry in Translation, Modern Hebrew Literature, Ariel, and Fiction, and are forthcoming in The New Yorker and Stand.

