A STAR OF DAVID FELL FROM HEAVEN

Keith Gottschalk

[For Ilan Ramon 1954–2003]

“Over there,
in that arched blue, on the edge of the air,
I once lived. My window was fragile.
Maybe what remained of me
were little gliders”
——Dan Pagis: Footprints

this lance of fire
this blowtorch of plasma
these crematoria hands of mach 19
tore one wing off an angel:

we fell off Jacob’s ladder.

so, this diary,
this cloth star of David:
orphaned.

tell Dan Pagis it’s all in our
Draft Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts
& the Return of Astronauts:

(Dear Colonel
we regret that
your visa for heaven has expired)

“As to the yellow star: immediately
it will be torn from your chest
and will emigrate
to the sky.”

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As to the blue star: immediately
it will be torn from your chest
and will repatriate you
to earth.

tumbling,
we fluttered sixty kms down
we stumbled
onto the earth
next to Palestine.

NOTES

In 2003 space shuttle Columbia disintegrated, killing all on board.
By a fluke of the laws of aerodynamics, the Israeli astronaut’s blue
star air force emblem & diary survived intact, and fluttered 60 kms.
down to ground. By a fluke of geography, they fell to earth outside
a small Texas town called Palestine.

Dan Pagis escaped a Nazi extermination camp in Bucovina to
become one of the most famous Israeli poets of the 1940s and
1950s. The second quotation comes from his poem Draft Reparations
Agreement. The Agreement on the Rescue of Astronauts is also a real
treaty.