

Professor Jacob Galil (1914-1993)

Jacob Galil was born in Russia and immigrated with his parents to Israel when he was still a child. He spent his boyhood in the young city of Tel Aviv, among the sand dunes and the huge sycamore trees surrounding his home. Much of his time was spent roaming along the seashore, where the sandy cliffs teemed with insect life and the air was scented with the fragrance of mint plants from the Yarkon River, at that time still a lush source of life. The intimate contact with nature in this unspoiled environment, together with the pioneering spirit of the time, made a deep impression on the young boy with his alert and enquiring mind.



After graduating from high school in Tel Aviv, Galil studied botany, zoology, and geology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Here he was strongly influenced by his teachers, and especially by Professors Alexander Eig, Michael Zohary and Naomi Feinbrun. His ideas about the role of climate in phytogeography took shape in Jerusalem where he completed his M.Sc. degree.

In the 1940's, Galil was invited by Dr. Yehoshua Margolin, the well-known teacher and educator, to join the staff of the Pedagogical Biological Institute which later grew into Tel Aviv University. While working towards his Ph.D., he also taught botany at the Kibbutz Teachers' College in Tel Aviv.

For Prof. Galil, teaching was always a way of life. According to his educational philosophy, knowledge must be acquired through a genuine desire on the part of the student to learn. Thus the task of the teacher is to inculcate in students a love of learning, through encouraging in them attitudes of enquiry and critical thought. He set out his ideas in a number of thoughtful articles on teachers and teaching, and his ideas greatly influenced Tel Aviv University and other institutes.

Prof. Galil established the Department of Botany at Tel Aviv University and headed it for nearly 20 years, during which time he also founded the Botanical Gardens of Tel Aviv. As a researcher scientist, his work was centered on two main topics. The first was the geophytes of Israel, which he studied through his pioneering work on the ecology, physiology, and behavior of bulbous and cormous plants. His book *Kinetics of Geophytes*, published in Hebrew, summarizes the results of years of research on the germination, movement, and establishment of geophytes.

The other focus of Prof. Galil's pioneering research was pollination ecology, mainly flower biology and the coevolution between pollination insects and flower morphology. He conducted prolonged and extensive research in this field, and is probably best known for the work on pollination in the genus *Ficus*. Together with his numerous students he has published scores of papers on *Ficus* pollination, many of which are now classics in the field. Several terms coined by

Prof. Galil, such as "synstigma", "ethodynamic and topocentric pollination", have found their way into the classic ecological literature, and a number of insects are named after him, e.g. *Ceratosolen galili* and others.

Following his retirement, Prof. Galil continued to play an active role for many years both in research and mentoring. A memorial to him stands in the north-west corner of the Tel Aviv University Botanical Gardens, the Gardens that he had the vision to establish.

Prof. Emer. D. Eisikowitch