



Roots and Branches

Jewish Genealogy

Form No. 50
Reference No 0627

ABOUT YOURSELF

Family name
First name
Birthplace & Date
Parents' name: Father mother
Place of residence before the war
Present address

ABOUT THE PERSON YOU ARE SEEKING

Family name
First name
Birthplace & Date
Profession
Previous address (before immigration)
Parents' first name/father mother
Date of immigration
Last address in Israel
Family & Friends in Israel
Relationship to the inquirer

מספר תאריך
שם המשפחה
שם הפרטי
מקום ושנת הלידה
שמות ההורים: האב
הכתובת לפני המלחמה
הכתובת הנוכחית
השם המשפחה
שם הפרטי
מקום ושנת הלידה
מקצוע
הכתובת בחו"ל
שמות ההורים: האב
שנת העלייה
הכתובת האחרונה בארץ
קרוביו ופנימיים בארץ
יחס הקרבה אל המבוקש



by Miriam Weiner

SEARCH BUREAU FOR MISSING RELATIVES

For the past ten years, Batya Unterschatz has brought joy to hundreds of people looking for their relatives whose whereabouts were unknown, in some cases, for over forty years. Batya works in Jerusalem for a division of The Jewish Agency known as the "Search Bureau for Missing Relatives," set up to assist in re-establishing contact between the Jewish survivors in Europe and their relatives in Palestine and overseas. She is virtually a one-woman office, and what she accomplishes is remarkable.

In 1981, Arlene Blank Rich, a Cleveland resident and president of the Jewish Genealogy Society in her community, received a letter from the Search Bureau in response to one of the many requests she had initiated in tracing her family members. As she opened the letter, she was prepared for the standard response to most of her inquiries--an indication that no records existed for her father's sister, last heard from in Rumania in 1948.

A search request can be done by mail, and a sample form is shown here.

One can imagine her joy when she finally realized that the letter from the Search Bureau not only reported that her aunt, Sidoni Schacter, was alive, but provided a telephone number as well! A phonecall to Jerusalem confirmed this immediately, along with the wonderful news that other family members had survived the Holocaust.

Batya Unterschatz is one of those special people who genuinely cares about her work. As a result, she devotes many off-duty hours to helping those who come to her. According to Batya, "I receive close to 1800 inquiries per year from all over the world and am successful in about 60% of the cases.

"In one instance, a woman discovered she was adopted when the woman she thought was her natural mother passed away. She came to me asking for help in locating her natural mother and I was able to find her. In another instance, a Polish nun came to my office while visiting in Jerusalem. She had hidden two young Jewish girls in her church during the war and now wanted to see them once again. I was able to locate both girls living here in Jerusalem."

Though she has seen the fruits of her labors many times, Batya continues to share in the excitement and tears of reunions between family members and friends.

The Search Bureau maintains a computer file of records from 1948 to the present which includes the name and address of every living Israeli citizen as well as those who have died within the past five years. These individual records include the family name, first name, parents' names, age, country of birth, and date of arrival. Sometimes the names of spouses and children are shown, along with the name of the ship on which the person arrived. Recent name changes can also be found.

An additional set of records includes the collection of search requests, name and address of the person initiating the request and, in some cases, his or her place of birth and parents' names.

Further records available to Batya include a register of new immigrants compiled by the Jewish Agency's Department of Immigration beginning in 1919. Names of immigrants in the registers are ordinarily grouped together under the names of the vessels which brought them to Palestine and are alphabetized for each vessel. In addition to age, category of immigrant, name of vessel, and date of arrival, the registers sometimes provide information on the nationality of the immigrant and his or her relatives already residing in Palestine.

In 1945, the Search Bureau published *Register of Jewish Survivors: List of Jews Rescued in Different European Countries*, (60,000 names of Holocaust survivors) and *Register of Jewish Survivors: List of Jews in Poland* (58,000 names of survivors).

Bureau offices include a set of telephone books for all of Israel and the names and addresses of the Landsmanshaftn societies there. Batya also consults records maintained by the burial societies, some dating back to 1839. In addition, she maintains a close working relationship with the governmental agencies and has access to much information not easily obtainable by the public, if at all.

Her special devotion to assisting genealogists has made her a favorite among them. Many times, relatives are located, but are unable to communicate with those searching for them because of the language barrier. Batya either calls these people or visits them in order to ask the questions and gather the data. Her knowledge of Hebrew, Yiddish, Russian, Polish, Lithuanian, English and German enables her to communicate with almost everyone.

For those planning a trip to Israel, try to include a visit to the Search Bureau office located at 6 Yishayahu Press in the Mea Shearim section of Jerusalem. Office hours are Sunday through Friday, 9:00 am to noon, telephone: 02-231-746. Batya spends the afternoons doing field research, sometimes taking several buses and taxis in her efforts to locate people whose last known addresses are many years old.

A search request can be done by mail and a sample form is shown here. After you have completed the form, mail it to: The Jewish Agency, Search Bureau for Missing Relatives, P.O.B. 92, Jerusalem 91920 Israel.

There is no charge for an inquiry, but a contribution in any amount is welcomed.

According to Arlene Blank Rich, "That one letter to The Jewish Agency restored a whole family!"

Miriam Weiner, the first certified Jewish genealogist in the United States, is an acclaimed lecturer on exploring Jewish "roots." A *Beginner's Kit* (55 pages) on how to start researching your family history which includes charts, lists of archives and libraries, bibliography, maps, family group sheets and more can be ordered from: The Jewish Calendar Magazine, 7106 Owensmouth Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91303 (Cost: \$12.50).