



JEWISH GENEALOGY

Another Genealogical Resource In Israel: Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael

Miriam Weiner

For the family historian, a trip to Israel generally includes extra days for research in the many archives, libraries and institutions that preserve detailed material not only about residents of Israel, but Jews throughout the world.

Recently, determined researchers have discovered the archives and resources of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael (KKL) as yet another possibility for finding data about relatives, both known and yet to be discovered.

In 1901, the Fifth Zionist Congress was held in Basel, Switzerland, and Keren Kayemeth was founded at that time. Thereafter, delegates made contributions to the Golden Book of Keren Kayemeth. Subsequent books of honor include the Plantation Book (1907), the Children Book (1933), the Bar Mitzvah Book (1936) and the Marriage Book (1970).

In 1977, KKL computerized the old registrations and now makes the computerized list and original books available to the public. The Golden Book, together with other Books of Honor, are among the records of the Zionist movement.

The index includes an alphabetical list of family names, type of book, registration number, the country from which the money for registration was submitted, and other data. The type of data included in the books varies, but since many registrations were in honor of a family event or "in memory of," there is a wealth of information about relatives and relationships. The archival documents include name and address of donor along with sum of money contributed.

The Honor Books are housed in the main office of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, Jewish Agency and National Fund building on King George Street (P.O. Box 283), Jerusalem 91002. Telephone: 02/707-411; fax: 02/256-941. Advance appointments are recommended, and while no charge is made for reviewing the books, a contribution toward the planting of a tree is welcomed.

As a child, I can remember receiving a certificate acknowledging a contribution to the state of Israel with confirmation that a "tree had been planted in my name." I thought someday I would go to Israel and see "my tree." Now, I am equally



interested in researching the extensive records about other tree planters.

The original tree planting in 1889 was in Rishon LeZion by the new immigrants of the First Aliyah. The photograph memorializing this event, along with more than 100,000 other photos, are part of the archives of Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael located in the Radko Building, Hillel Street, Jerusalem. All of the photographs are retrievable from a CD-ROM database system and can be searched by keyword, subject or catalog number.

The photographs include names of the settlement founders and other data. The charge for obtaining information from the database is a contribution for the planting of a tree in Israel.

When Marjorie Goldberg of Stamford, Connecticut, sent a fax request to KKL, she received the names of 17 Zavelisky



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registrations, including several from Australia. A trip to the local library produced the appropriate telephone book and address. A letter was quickly sent to Australia inquiring about the possibility of common roots.

A week later, Marjorie received a telephone call from a Zavelisky in Australia who was anxious to help Marjorie in their common quest to research roots. The Australian Zavelisky knew his relatives escaped the Holocaust by going to Harbin, China, where they lived for some time before immigrating to Australia.

He promised to question relatives further in order to discover the ancestral town before his family's flight to China. Marjorie's experience motivated me to send a fax request to KKL, listing three of my family surnames.

Within a week, I received a response by mail listing 44 records of people with two of my surnames. While the U.S. names were known to me, there were new names of my potential relatives from Canada, South Africa, and Israel. A further inquiry to KKL is expected to produce addresses and I am anxiously waiting the possibility of connecting with newly-discovered family members.

When my assistant, Jill Sagarin, proofread this article, she smiled and in less than one minute, produced her certificate issued by the Jewish National Fund confirming a tree planting in the "Freedom Forest." The registration/tree number is stamped on the reverse side and the colorful and picturesque certificate is quite suitable for framing.

In the United States, the KKL may be contacted as follows: Cynthia Barmor, National Projects Coordinator, Jewish National Fund, 42 East 69th Street, New York, NY 10021. The Jewish National Fund's number in San Diego is 457-5630. ✕

For information about the San Diego Jewish Genealogical Society, call society president, Carol Davidson Baird at 481-8511.