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Finding Family and Records in Israel



Whether they came to Palestine in the 19th century as *chalutzim* or more recently as Holocaust refugees or part of the wave of Jewish immigration from the former Soviet Union, members of your family have almost certainly reached Israel. To help genealogists locate these relatives or their descendants, Michael Goldstein, a professional researcher based in Jerusalem, explored a range of known and lesser-known sources. For Yad Vashem's database of Pages of Testimony, Michael focused on the challenge of tracing individuals (or their descendants) who gave testimony.

In Israel, it is not always clear what information is or is not in the public domain. Service from Israeli repositories has been problematic. Although service has improved, the researcher will have to be more proactive in your requests and spell out exactly the help you want. A sincere explanation of the reason you need the information helps get boundaries stretched.

Israel repositories have information about family who never stepped foot in Israel:

[American Joint Distribution Committee Archives](#)

[Yad Vashem](#)

[The Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People](#)

[Central Zionist Archives](#)

[The Jewish National and University Library](#)

[Mass Jewish Migration Database](#)

Michael provided a handout with Israeli resources. It is copied below.

"You DO Have Family in Israel. Now Let's Find Them"

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You may not have relatives living in Israel today or ever, yet Israeli resources and archives may hold valuable family information.

You may have an ancestor who came to Palestine to die or relatives amongst the 1,000,000 new immigrants from the FSU who have immigrated over the past 3 decades or someone who survived the holocaust and went to Palestine/Israel to settle or as a way station. Or, much earlier at the turn of the 20th century and during "The Great War," your relatives may have been among the Jews who left Palestine for other countries.

To pursue these leads and/or to identify family that you know are living in Israel today, you need direction and data.

Challenges you may face.

Every quest has its particularities. So too searches in Israel. Along the way you may face possible cultural and orientation-based differences. There may also be obstacles, especially if you are not an Israeli. It is crucial to be aware of and plan strategies to overcome such hurdles as language, Israeli service delivery, and the correct selection of data sources.

How will you face them?

Know that you are not alone. Search for an Israeli genealogy buddy for whom you will reciprocate. Visit the comprehensive [Israel Genealogy Society](http://www.israelgenealogy.com) site and then send them or the [JFRA](http://www.jfra.com) a query. Post a question on any JewishGen discussion group. The IGS projects CD prepared in 2004 is an outstanding tool; The IGS site will also describes [projects](#) completed and in process. The approach to your fellow genealogists when you confront a brick wall is most productive.

Though not as comprehensive, Israeli web sites are usually also in English and list mail addresses and phone numbers. Most "Information repositories" can communicate in English and to expedite matters, you should definitely e-mail or call. A delay in receiving a response to your e-mail may only mean that your message has been passed on to the appropriate researcher or that the information is being sought.

Vast improvements have occurred in service delivery, however, you may likely have to be more proactive in your requests and spell out the help you want. It is not always clear what information is in the public domain. However, a sincere explanation of the reason you need information helps get boundaries stretched. Most want the information for family reunification or for Holocaust family- related research, and cooperation is readily available.

Where do you look to locate Information about family who never stepped foot in Israel?

[The AJDC Archives](#), located in Jerusalem, houses WWII information and data on displaced persons. You may directly e-mail the [archives](#) or phone +972 2 655 7250).

[Yad Vashem](#) Much more than the Pages of Testimony and online databases, they have Yizkor Books, Arolsen Files and countless non-indexed records. Yad Vashem has recently uploaded "[Shoah Related Lists Database](#)"

[The Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People](#), the [Central Zionist Archives](#) & [The Jewish National and University Library](#) are elaborated upon below. Jewish National

[The Mass Jewish Migration Database \(MJMD\)](#) This database based on the applications of emigrants who applied to the Jewish Colonization Association & Jewish Territorialism Organization information bureaus in the Pale of Settlement in the early 20th century. The database is composed of over 3,000 applicants who not only applied but also migrated to one of the destination countries overseas (U.S.A, Argentina, Canada, South Africa and Palestine) and about 5,000 Jews who migrated to the Galveston port

[Jewish National Fund](#) has a Hebrew-language list of individuals for whom they held property in trust. They also have computerized and scanned most of their Honor Books, as yet unavailable on line

[Beit Hatfutsot](#) (The Diaspora Museum). The Douglas E. Jewish Goldman Genealogy Center houses family trees

Where do you look for Information on Israeli family?

[Yad Vashem](#) is the best-known resource today because of the on line Pages of Testimony. You may not know you have family, but a search of this site may reveal pages of testimony submitted for known family members by relatives in Israel unknown to you. The [IGS will help you find Israeli submitters of pages of testimony.](#)

[The Central Zionist Archives](#) has records from 1880-1970, covering the development of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine and aspects of the history of the Jewish People over the last 120 years. The CZA has over 650,000 Hebrew immigration candidate and immigrants to Palestine/Israel cards, from 1920 – 1964. The catalogue was created as thousands of people living in Palestine/Israel requested Jewish Agency immigration assistance for their relatives or acquaintances. The candidates may or may not have moved to Palestine/Israel. The CZA is also rich in genealogical material from various communities.

[The Interior Ministry](#) maintains the Population Registry including death information and addresses of living relatives. Access is through the consulate nearest you. The [New](#)

[York Consulate's](#) English site may be great help. There is also information on name changes and I suggest you read about [Hebraization](#) of family names.

Locating graves involves contact with [Burial Societies \(Hevrot Kadisha\)](#). They and not the cemeteries provide burial information. Except for Jerusalem, which requires calling up to 12 different burial societies, most cities have a central number. Many are computerized and some have searchable web sites. Burial Societies sometimes have records going back to the 1800's. Knowing the deceased father's name and approximate date of death is often necessary, and these details are available from the Interior Ministry. The [IGS](#) has a list and contact details.

[The Tel Aviv and Region Cemetery](#) is now on line. So too are [Ashdod](#) and [Haifa](#)

["Old Hevron Cemetery"](#) created by [Israel Pickholtz](#). shows photos of tombstones.

[Bezeq's](#) (Israel's telephone company) directory assistance contains the addresses and phone numbers you need. The website is www.144.bezek.com. However the "Nationwide" search rarely works and the web is by far not as up to date and as comprehensive as calling directory assistance. The latter also has cell phone numbers but neither have Kibbutz phone numbers. These can be obtained only from phone Kibbutz phone directory arranged by Kibbutz. For those who don't write or speak Hebrew, go to Steve Morse at www.stevemorse.org.

[Emap](#): Maps and driving instructions in English. This is especially useful if you thought your relatives lived in Kfar Motzkin but only to find a Bezeq listing for them in the adjacent Kiryat Bialik.

[The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People](#) holds important material on Jewish families from all over Europe. A card catalog of original sources and microfilmed materials is available to visitors.

Search [Israel's Fallen](#) if you are looking for a relative who may have died in defense of the country. While it is accessed, search via Steve Morse's one step [English Front-End](#) The [Hagana](#) site (list presently only) in Hebrew can also be searched

[Israel State Archives](#) was founded to safeguard the records of the presiding governmental administrations and document the development of Israel. Government institutions deposit records no longer needed for current work. See the full description at [IGS](#) website

[Hebrew University and Jewish National Library](#) is the National Library of the State of Israel, the National Library of the Jewish People, and the Central Library of the Hebrew University. In addition to books, manuscripts, publications, Israeli newspapers on microfilm, it has a collection of family trees. The Jewish National Library and the JGS family tree joint project is fully explained on the IGS website with [a link to the index of files](#)

[Beit Hatfutsot – Diaspora Museum](#) has a computerized database containing thousands of genealogies of Jewish families worldwide. They also house a collection of some LDS Polish microfilms.

[Lochamei Hagetaot](#) -The Ghetto Fighter' House commemorate and pass along the heritage of Jewish resistance, to tell the story of the Jewish community on the eve of and during the Holocaust, and to salute the deeds of the “Righteous Among the Nations.

What are possible hurdles in making actual contact with relatives or descendants?

This, as well as tips to using the above sites and others will be covered during my presentation.

Each archive and organization in the handout above has a URL link. If the handout is not distributed in a way that allows you to connect, e-mail me at michael@jg-search.com for a surfable version or view them and others at .