

Obituary

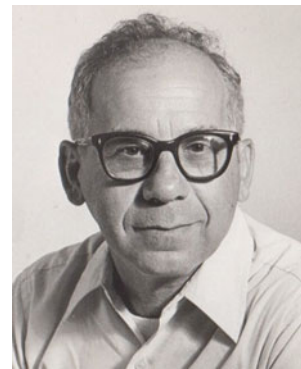
Professor Robert (Bob) Kenneth

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Professor Robert (Bob) Kenneth 1922–2012

Robert (Bob) Kenneth, Professor Emeritus of Plant Pathology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, The Robert H. Smith Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment at Rehovot, Israel, passed away in 2012. He was born in New York in 1922, joined the U.S. Army and served in Europe during 1943–46, and immigrated to Israel in 1948. He spent some time experiencing the communal life of a kibbutz, in Bet HaShita. He studied in the Hebrew University from 1949 to 1955, where he was awarded an M.Sc. in Plant Pathology and Mycology in 1955 and a Ph.D. degree in 1960. His academic career began in 1961 as a lecturer at the Hebrew University's Faculty of Agriculture in Rehovot and was promoted to a full professor in 1978. Bob did research in Canadian and American academic institutions as a postdoctoral fellow and on Sabbatical leaves.

Bob was the first assistant in the Department of Plant Pathology and was the ‘big brother’ of the new, young assistants, getting us acquainted with research, supervisors, administration, innovations and obtaining the most out of very limited resources. The lack of funds and of equipment, inspired the adoption of useful substitutes to advance his ideas and planning. We remember him spending nights in the fields with field microscope and flash light, investigating the process and timing of sporulation in foliar pathogens. In exploration field trips, he was scouting around,



covering a large area, always coming back with important new specimens and information. He was proud of the nickname “Eagle eye Kenneth” that we gave him.

Bob Kenneth was a pioneer in several respects in addition to his scientific endeavors. As a newcomer with very limited resources, he was allowed to settle, with a caravan, on the Campus of the Faculty where he studied and worked, to live there temporarily, as a student with his family, for 4 years.

Bob’s scientific activities covered many fields, including taxonomy of fungi, cereal diseases—especially downy mildews and various leaf spots, diseases of wild grasses, and wild cereals as sources for disease resistance. He was an expert in the taxonomy of Helminthosporia and related fungi pathogenic to Gramineae. He also studied entomophagous fungi as potential biocontrol agents as well as biocontrol of weeds by pathogens, using naturally occurring fungal pathogens. He led the establishment of checklists of

plant pathogens in Israel. He delivered invited lectures on the above topics at many national and international conferences. Among others, he was an active participant in meetings and symposia in India, Tokyo, Thailand, Venezuela and other places, devoted to downy mildews and leaf spots of Gramineae, especially maize and pearl millet. He was also an active participant in Symposia on Invertebrate Pathology. Bob's contributions on the *Helminthosporium* flora of Gramineae are well known. His skills in taxonomy of fungi combined art and precise scientific knowledge.

During many years of scientific activities he served in many positions: chairman or a member in many professional national and international committees and forums, head of the Department, Founding Member (and later President) of the Israeli Phytopathological Society, consultant for international scientific institutions and others. Bob was an enthusiastic teacher and taught several

courses in Mycology and Plant Pathology and supervised many graduate students, with whom he remained in close contact throughout the years and many of whom went on to become leaders in research, extension, teaching and administration. He had a deep knowledge in art, general history and history of science, as well as in many other fields. Bob had a warm personality spiced with a lot of humor and was sensitive to social and public events and affairs. He was married to Naomi, with whom he had two children and five grandchildren. Bob Kenneth will be remembered fondly by all of us.

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