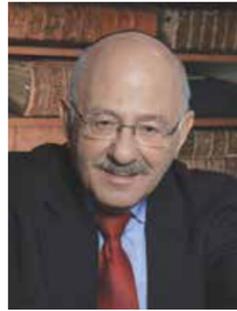


Realizing the Vision

David Blumberg



The written word has been the key mode of expression for the Jewish people throughout its history. Books are our cultural treasures and have accompanied each and every generation throughout time. In Genesis, the Torah states that “this book is the story of man,” meaning that man and the book are eternally intertwined.

Along with our national renaissance in the closing years of the 19th century, enlightened people in Eretz Yisrael and the Diaspora raised the idea of a national library for the Jewish people. One individual central to turning this dream into a reality was Dr. Joseph Chazanowicz, a doctor and man of letters from Białystok, who established a collection of thousands of books which he dispatched to Jerusalem.

Chazanowicz wrote, “In Jerusalem, a great house shall be built, high and lofty, in which shall be treasured the fruits of the Jewish People's endeavor from the moment it became a nation... and to this great house shall stream our masters, sages and all the scholars of our nation, and everyone with a heart who understands our literature, and whose spirit yearns and strives for the Torah and for wisdom and to know of the history of our people and the lives of our ancestors.”

In 1892, on the 400th anniversary of the exile of the Jews from Spain, the Jerusalem chapter of the B'nai B'rith organization inaugurated the Midrash Abravanel Public Library.

The Library's collection continued to grow, and in 1925, alongside the commencement of studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Library was transferred to the University's jurisdiction, and its official name was changed to the Jewish National and

University Library. Researchers and scholars have made continuous use of the Library, both before the establishment of the State of Israel and since its rebirth, as the leading research library in the humanities and Jewish studies.

Over the past two decades, in the wake of joint efforts by Yad Hanadiv and the Hebrew University, the Library has considerably widened its scope of activity. A significant milestone was the National Library Law passed by the Knesset in 2007, which conferred on the Library the status of a public benefit corporation, defining its goals and roles, regulating its activity, and enabling its continued development.

In addition to its role as an academic library of extraordinary scope serving the world of research, it is also a leading cultural institution which offers the public the cultural and spiritual treasures of the Jewish people and the citizens of the State of Israel, in all their diversity. Enhanced infrastructure, enriched collections, development of educational programs, digitized resources which harness new and advanced technologies to serve the Library's patrons – all of these and more make visits to the Library both efficacious and experiential.

Informed debates and captivating cultural events on literature, folklore and music enable an exchange of ideas, beliefs and worldviews, continually engaging a range of audiences with diverse aspects of Jewish and Israeli cultural creativity.

A new, fresh spirit permeates the National Library building. Each day, through its doors pass young schoolchildren, soldiers, students, researchers, educators,

and visitors of all ages, backgrounds and faiths, from Israel and abroad. In the words of Israel's national poet, Chaim Nachman Bialik, in his work “The Hebrew Book”, “... our people, which is naturally inclined to cherish and ponder over books, has at all times derived spiritual satisfaction from delving into this treasure-house, each individual pursuing his own favorite interest” (English translation by Minnie Halkin).

The National Library's renewal project heralds a new era for both the State of Israel and the history of our people. For the first time, it allows every individual the opportunity to connect directly to our cultural heritage. In his thought-provoking essay, Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, on the following pages, describes how the development of Judaism is intimately intertwined with a tremendous technological revolution – that of the written word. The National Library renewal project is now grounded in the information revolution of the 21st century.

Our deep sense of shared purpose accelerates us toward fulfilling our vision of the National Library in its new home adjacent to the Knesset, the Government Precinct, the Hebrew University and the Shrine of the Book. The cornerstone laid this year presents the initial step in the construction of the new National Library building which will safeguard the intellectual treasures of our people. Next to the building will be “Letters of Light”, an environmental work by renowned sculptor Micha Ullman based on the ancient Kabbalistic text *Sefer Yetzira* (Book of Creation) and centered around the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet hewn in stone with light and shade responding to the

ever-changing angle of the sun's rays.

I would like to thank all of those involved in the National Library renewal project, first and foremost Lord Rothschild and the Ruth and David Gottesman family for their vital contribution towards building the new National Library complex. I am filled with hope and a firm belief that this – to quote Rabbi Sacks – “is a project that could bring blessing not just to Israel, and not just to the Jewish people worldwide, but to the entire world.”

The National Library will continue to fulfill the mission envisioned by its founders to gather the cultural treasures of our people and preserve them in Jerusalem, while increasing its efforts to inscribe these treasures in letters of light.

Mr. David Blumberg is the Chairman of the Board of the National Library of Israel since 2008.

A Library for the Twenty-First Century and Beyond

Lord Rothschild



It is more than fifteen years since our Foundation, Yad Hanadiv, brought together a committee to consider how the National Library could be restructured to serve the needs of Israel and the Jewish people.

This endeavour offers Israel a “once in a lifetime” opportunity to add to the many and illustrious institutions which the State has created in the course of its short life since 1948. We already have a democratic society, a parliament, an army, universities and museums. What we do not yet have is a National Library to the international standard expected of Israel.

This is about to change. Thanks to the support of the Israeli government, we have been given the last remaining great site in the heart of Jerusalem, situated between the Knesset and the Israel Museum, and we have the makings of a truly distinguished building of international importance, the creation of that brilliant firm of architects Herzog & de Meuron.

We now have the opportunity to create a library which fulfils the needs of the 21st century and beyond, the realisation of a dream of “a Home of the Book for the People of the Book, in the Land of the Book, and in the City of Jerusalem”, as the former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Lord Sacks wrote to me.

This project is one of extraordinary complexity, for Israel is home not only to Jews but also to Muslims, Christians, Druse, Bahais and indeed groups and immigrants from many countries and cultures. In addition, this Library will serve the Jewish community throughout the world. It will need to establish relationships with national libraries and institutions internationally – throughout the Eastern Mediterranean

and, wherever possible, in the Middle East. It will have to define and expand the role and purpose of the National Library in today’s digital world as we live through the most important revolution in terms of knowledge since the invention of the printing press. Our Library will continue to venerate the Book, but at the same time we have to be as engaged with pixels as we are with ink and paper. We have to serve a virtual, global community as well as a local constituency.

We have to plan seminars, exhibitions, music, concerts and photography to augment and support the Library’s role in education and research. The Library will have the responsibility of nothing less than preserving and illuminating the history of Jewish civilisation. The opportunity comes at just the right time for our “start-up nation”. The revolution in information technology allows us to create a universal library, accessible throughout the world and hopefully, wherever possible, free of cost and with a web presence that will inform and educate in ways which were, until now, impossible.

For 2,000 years our treasured books were scattered, with no geographic centre of gravity. Now at long last, these volumes as well as those yet to be written, together with a wide range of other collected materials, are to have a permanent home and one where it should be – in the heart of Jerusalem. It is astonishing that for “the People of the Book” it has all taken so long.

A project of this magnitude, significance and complexity cannot be realized without exceptional people. I take this opportunity to thank the formidable and committed team who are making this happen: David

Blumberg, our Chairman who gives so much of his life to our project; an outstanding team at the Library led by our Director, Oren Weinberg, and other enthusiasts whose efforts are indefatigable and unstinting, as indeed are those of our team at Yad Hanadiv. Thanks also to Menachem Ben-Sasson for his encouragement and our appreciation to the Gottesman family for being our philanthropic partners.

I would also like to thank Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks for his friendship and his belief in the importance of this project – and in particular for the erudite and moving words he has penned.

In 1798, my forebear Nathan Mayer Rothschild went from Frankfurt in Germany to Manchester in the UK, before settling in London, and in 1852, a new library was established in Manchester. Charles Dickens spoke at its inauguration: “I’ve long been a zealous advocate for the diffusion of knowledge amongst all class and conditions of men; because I do believe, with all the strength and might with which I’m capable of believing anything, that the more a man knows, the more humbly, and with a more faithful spirit he comes back to the fountain of all knowledge and takes to his heart the great sacred precept ‘On earth peace, goodwill towards men.’” He goes on to say “This library should know no sect, no party and no distinction, nothing but the public want and the public good ... Man will know the books stored here for his behalf will cheer him through the struggles and toils of his life ...”

His words resonate till today – my family were proud sponsors of homes for the Knesset, the Supreme Court and other important institutions in Israel. We are

delighted to be able to contribute to another important and significant project – working with a diverse group of talented people to create a beautiful, functional building which will inspire learning, harmony and intellectual pursuits. As such, the Library, will encourage and nurture the best aspects of Israel’s democratic society.

Excerpts from remarks delivered at the President’s Residence in Jerusalem, October 2014.

A New Home for the National Library of Israel

David S. Gottesman



Ever since I started elementary school I have always enjoyed my visits to libraries. Whether in grade school, college or graduate school I was fascinated by the ability to roam and explore any subject that caught my interest. As I began working, I was able to visit many libraries around the world and always was intrigued by the way in which they presented their treasures. My brother Milton also felt the same attachment to libraries. Years later, when he learned that public schools in Israel were being built without them, he began to support the construction of a few small libraries in the school system. He passed away almost 10 years ago and since then our family foundation, the Gottesman Fund, has provided support

for the construction of 250 new school libraries in his name throughout Israel.

Our family has a history of support for Zionism and Israel that stretches back to the pre-state era. I was brought up in New York at a time when my mother's hopes and efforts for the creation of a State of Israel were a part of every dinner conversation. My parent's philanthropic endeavors in and around Jerusalem and my mother's lifetime devotion to Hadassah had a great influence on me. You might say that this abiding passion for Israel was passed down in our genes, first to my brother and me, and then to my children. Today we support institutions and programs that expand access to Israel's educational opportunities and recreational facilities.

When we heard of plans to construct a magnificent building to house the National Library of Israel, we realized immediately that we wanted to participate in this undertaking. Throughout its 125 year history, the National Library of Israel has been the repository for countless works of scholarship and literature. The NLI Master Plan for Renewal called for a unique new building that would not only welcome its devoted users but would attract thousands of people for whom libraries are special institutions. They will enjoy its impressive architectural elegance and can participate in its programming and activities, an integral part of the Library's new role as a major cultural institution. No project has excited me more!

Martin Buber, whose papers reside within the Library, expressed that real life is about encounter and about meeting. This is a core purpose of the National

Library – a meeting place for people seeking wisdom, knowledge and connection. Although the digital age has enhanced the ease for human beings to connect and interact through the internet and other rapidly developing technologies, irrespective of where one is situated, there is still a great need in the 21st century for an inviting and inspirational physical meeting space.

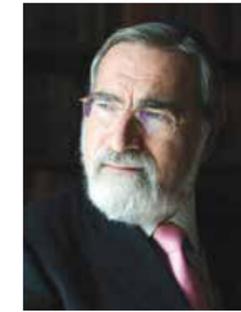
The newly envisioned National Library of Israel will assure equal and free access to all who visit and seek out its treasures. It will also make its collections available outside of the confines of the Library and serve as an all-encompassing resource for people, irrespective of background, who can freely pursue the quest toward knowledge and thought.

This project brings to fruition our most cherished core value: to impact the quality of life for present and future generations in Israel, in a way that is inclusive across religious, ethnic and socioeconomic lines. We are honored to partner with Yad Hanadiv in this great undertaking and to have the opportunity to play a role in the building of a home appropriate to the treasured and storied collection of Israel's National Library.

Mr. Gottesman is the Senior Managing Partner of First Manhattan Company, a highly successful investment management firm that he founded 51 years ago and in which he is still active. Throughout his life, he has been an active and generous philanthropist, supporting a great variety of educational, recreational and Jewish projects, both in Israel and the U.S. He and his wife Ruth of 66 years, have three children and 7 grandchildren.

The Home of the Book for the People of the Book

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks



Introduction

The idea of a new National Library of Israel is one of the great projects of the Jewish people. But what does a new library for the Jewish world in Jerusalem mean? What makes this new library different to any other in the world? What makes it unique, especially when you consider the special relationship between Jews and books?

When Amos Oz and his daughter Fania published their secular credo, their *ani maamin*, of what it is to be a Jew, they called it *Jews and Words*. George Steiner has often argued that Jews inhabit language even more than land. The great historian Simon Dubnow, who was shot and was lying dying in the ghetto in Riga in

1941, said as his famous last words, "*Yidn, shreibt un farschreib*," "Jews, write and record." The last thing he wanted to say to the Jewish people before he died in the Holocaust was "keep writing," as if writing were our most sacred act, as if the witness of words was our legacy to the world.

The Talmud tells a story of Rava who was waiting for Rav Hamnuna to turn up to a lesson, but Rav Hamnuna was late because he was spending extra time at afternoon prayers. Rava says to Rav Hamnuna, "Look at this, he is forsaking the delights of eternity and immersing himself in the pleasures of this world" (Shabbat 10a). Is there any other religion in the universe that would consider prayer a kind of secular pursuit – the pleasures of this world – compared to the eternity that you get in study? I don't know any other religion that has made study so much higher than even prayer itself. Indeed, the festivals are called in the Torah *mikra'ei kodesh*. The word *mikra*, is another name for Torah itself, because from the very outset, in synagogue and in the Temple itself, these were places not just of prayer but of reading and interpretation of the sacred texts.

Books, and the acts of reading and writing, studying and teaching, interpreting and expounding, are all things absolutely fundamental to Judaism. For instance, a few years ago, I was asked by the British Secretary of State for Education whether it felt strange beginning a new year – Rosh Hashanah – at a different time from everyone else. I replied that when you celebrate the New Year depends on what is really important in your life. What is the most important thing for Jews? It's

schools. It's learning, so the Jewish New Year in our part of the world always begins at the same time as the academic year.

The Secretary of State asked: "Chief Rabbi, do you have something to help us, a saying, a sentence, to help us encourage a year of literacy?" I said, "What do Jews do at this time of the year? We say, '*Katvenu b'sefer chayim*,' 'Write us in the book of life.' When Jews think of life, they think of a book. That is what we're about." Therefore, when the Koran calls us the "People of the Book", that is one of the understatements of all time. We are a people only because of the book.

Please allow me to set a picture, a portrait, and a context for a new National Library of Israel. I want to do so by showing that the Jewish people exists at the intersection of three extraordinary propositions which shape Jewish life from the beginning, which are special to Judaism, maybe unique to humanity. We will see how the National Library of Israel fits at the intersection of these three narratives.

Revolutions in Information Technology

Number one, what excites everyone nowadays? IT, information technology. We are currently living through a revolution in information technology – computing, the Internet and artificial intelligence – and it is the fourth of the great innovations in communication in our history. The third great moment of innovation in information technology was the invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg in mid-15th century Germany and in England by Caxton.

The first real breakthrough in information technology

was the invention of writing. Writing was, in effect, the birth of civilization. For the first time, this simple technology allowed human knowledge to become cumulative and expand beyond the capacity of a single human memory. What was the first writing system in history? It was cuneiform in Mesopotamia. Writing has been independently invented seven times in different parts of the world: Mesopotamian cuneiform, Egyptian hieroglyphics, the Chinese ideograms, the Indus Valley script, the Minoan script known as Linear B, and later the Mayans and the Aztecs.

But there is a problem with writing. Whether writing takes the form of pictograms, or ideograms, or syllabaries, those early writing systems all involved a very large number of symbols, from the Chinese, which had 40,000 different symbols – it takes 20 years to learn 40,000 different symbols - to even the most stripped-down, basic, demotic hieroglyphics, which got it down to 450 symbols. That is still an enormous amount. When there is writing in the form of these pictograms or ideograms, the result is a hierarchical society, because only an elite will ever know how to read and write. They are the knowledge class, and the masses are illiterate and therefore powerless.

It was actually the second invention in information technology that made the difference and coincided with the birth of the Jewish people. What was that revolution in information technology? The invention of the alphabet. That was the decisive thing. Of course, why was the first form of the alphabet called "alphabet"? Because of the Hebrew *alef-bet*. The first form of this alphabet is known as Proto-Semitic or Proto-Sinaitic.

The Proto-Semitic or Proto-Sinaitic alphabet was first discovered by a British archaeologist called Flinders Petrie in the turquoise mines at Serabit in the Sinai Desert in 1903. Writing the alphabet seems to have been invented around 38 centuries ago, around the time of Abraham. As far as we know, the alphabet was invented only once. Every other alphabet in the world is directly or indirectly derived from that first alphabet. Of course, the first alphabet which had letters for vowels was Greek and it was also the first alphabet written from left to right. The direct descent from the Proto-Semitic alphabet was clear: *Alef, bet, gimel, dalet* became *alpha, beta, gamma, delta* in Greek. So whilst it is Greek that is very often seen as the first alphabet, actually the Proto-Semitic alphabet existed at least a thousand years earlier.

What was the result? Well, if you can articulate all the knowledge in the world with a symbol set of only 22 characters, for the first time in history you have the possibility of a society of universal literacy. That is the thing that makes Judaism a revolution in human history, because it is literacy that is at the heart of human dignity, as Judaism understands it. When you have a society of universal literacy, you have the possibility of a society where every one of whose members can be seen as the image and likeness of God.

This is what Isaiah means when he says, "And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children" (Isaiah 54:13). All your children will be learned of the Lord, not just some of them. The clearest place that we see this is in the eighth chapter of the Book of Judges. Gideon, who has

a problem with the inhabitants of Succoth who refuse to feed his army until they had beaten the Midianites, came back to the town of Succoth, caught hold of a child at random in the street, and said to the child, "Write me down the names of the leaders of the town." The child then writes down the names of the 77 leaders of the town. Just work that out. More than 3,000 years ago, Gideon can assume that a child at random in the street knows how to write. When did we have universal literacy in England? 1870. So this is something absolutely extraordinary.

Indeed, Jews became the first, indeed the only, civilization that predicated their survival on education. Already in the first century, under Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla, Jews in Israel had a system of universal compulsory education. Jews became the people whose heroes are teachers, whose citadels are schools, and whose passion is learning and the life of the mind. That survives today, even among the most secular Jews. Sergey Brin of Google actually said to a reporter once, "I come from one of those secular Russian Jewish families where they expect even the plumber to have a PhD."

That is the first point I make, that our people became a people because of the book, because they were there when the book was invented, the birth of the alphabet, which made it possible for everyone to read a book. Judaism comes into being, or the Jewish people come into being, simultaneously with the book.

Covenant and Conversation

The second point, and this is very, very hard for us to understand at this distance of time, is that the

birth of monotheism actually created a crisis in the relationship between human beings and the Divine.

Monotheism was not simply a kind of mathematical reduction of many gods to one. That kind of reduction had already preceded, as it were by Moses, because there was a famous controversial Pharaoh of Egypt called Amenhotep the Fourth, otherwise known as Akhenaten, who was seen by Sigmund Freud and many others as the first monotheist. Akhenaten worshiped the god of the sun. That is not what Judaism is about. It's not what Abrahamic monotheism is about. The real revolution of monotheism is not the reduction of many gods to one, but the idea that God transcends the universe, because God created the universe and therefore is not to be identified with or even symbolized by anything within the universe itself.

The result is a huge ontological abyss opened up between God and humanity. It's not simply that God is big and we are small, God is powerful and we are powerless. Everyone, even the polytheists, knew that. It is that in our kind of monotheism, God is a different kind of being altogether, invisible, unknowable, unpredictable, a God that we cannot manipulate by magic, or explain by myth, or appease by sacrifices. The gods of the ancient world were close. You sensed them all around you, in the sun, the moon, the rain, the storm, the ocean, the forces of chaos. For the mythological mind, the world was full of gods.

What Judaism does from the first chapter of Genesis is obliterate that whole world at a stroke. It was the German sociologist Max Weber who said that Genesis, Chapter 1, is the decisive birth of Western civilization,

where there is no struggle between the gods or between the elements. When God simply calls the world into being, Max Weber called this the "disenchantment of the universe," what we would call the de-mythologization of the universe. Weber said if you want to see the roots of Western civilization, of science, and of rationality, you have to turn to Genesis, Chapter 1.

The question is, if God is so beyond the universe, how can we, frail, fallible and finite, relate to God who is infinite? How can we, who live within nature, relate to God who is beyond nature? That is the crisis in which Judaism is born. The answer the Torah gives is very simple. The answer is language. God speaks. And when we speak to God, God listens. That is the fundamental issue. Suddenly, language takes on an immense and fateful consequence with Judaism that it never had before. Indeed, God creates the universe by words: "Let there be light, and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). God creates the world with words. By creating humanity in His image, the great gift He gave us was the power of words, which Jews have used incessantly ever since.

Years ago the BBC did a series on the world's great religions. The presenter finally came to his program on Judaism. He walked into a Jewish religious seminary and interviewed Elie Wiesel. The presenter said, "Professor Wiesel, Judaism seems like a very noisy religion. Do you have such a thing as silence in Judaism?" Wiesel thought for a moment, and replied, "Judaism is full of silences. It's just that we don't talk about them."

In its translation of Genesis 2:7, that God formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living being,

the Targum says, "*Ruach memallela*," man became a speaking being. It was that power of words which God gave Adam, and what gave Adam the ability to name the animals. God's greatest gift is the gift of language. That then becomes the *gesher tzar me'od* – the very narrow bridge – that crosses the abyss between finite humanity and the infinity of God.

All of a sudden, everything rests on language, on God being able to speak to us and our being able to hear that speech. What that meant was that Judaism became much less a religion of holy places and of holy people, though we have holy places, Jerusalem the Holy City, and we have holy people, the *kohanim* – the priests. But above all, Judaism is a religion of holy words. That is where you will find God. Open a Torah scroll. Read. That is what made Judaism completely new in civilization.

This is a very subtle idea. There were two civilizations that thought in these terms, the two civilizations that become the first ever in history to break with myth. One was ancient Israel. The other one was ancient Greece. There is a subtle difference. They both take language very seriously. There's a subtle difference between the Jewish view of language, "And God said let there be," and the Greek understanding of language.

We know this because the theory of language developed by Plato was then taken up by a Jewish thinker, Philo, who was very much influenced by Hellenistic ideas and lived in Alexandria. Philo developed the concept of the *Logos*, "the word," which had a huge influence on Christianity. The Gospel of John, which begins, "In the beginning was the word," comes into Christianity through Philo, and thus

Christianity develops a Platonic idea of language, which is different from the Jewish idea of language.

Suffice it to say that at the heart of Judaism is this remarkable idea contained in the description of the great festival *Shavuot*, the Feast of Weeks. When Moses is at the end of his life recalling those events, in his final address to the Jewish people, the children of those that he brought out of Egypt, he reminds them of the great experience at Mount Sinai and uses a remarkable four-word phrase, remarkable only because it is so ambiguous. He says that what they heard was a "*kol gadol v'lo yasaf*", "a great voice and it went on no more" (Deuteronomy 5:18). As the commentator Rashi points out, this could mean one of two things. "*V'lo yasaf*" means the voice sounded once and never again, or, as the Targum translates it, "pasak v'lo", a great voice that sounded and never stopped. It is completely ambiguous. Did the voice happen once and never again, or did it sound once and ever again?

Of course, the reconciliation of that contradiction is that there were two modes of communication, the *Torah She'beichtav*, the written Torah, and the *Torah She'be'al Peh*, the oral Torah. The written Torah was written once and never again, but the oral Torah has never ceased. From the days of Moses to today, Jews have engaged in the mandate that God gave us to interpret His word afresh in every generation.

Judaism is, in short, an ongoing conversation between that once-and-once-only divine voice that sounded at Sinai, and the human interpretation of those words that has continued in every generation since. It is the great conversation that never ended. I call

my commentary essays on the weekly Torah reading "Covenant and Conversation," because "covenant" is mutual. God made it with Israel. Israel made it with God. But the whole of Judaism is that ongoing "conversation" between Israel and God as to how we understand God's word for all time to make it God's word for this time.

The end result of this was something quite extraordinary. We all know this, but we don't often stop to remember it. What happened, having received the Torah from Moses, the Jewish people spent the next thousand years, from roughly the 13th century BCE to the third century BCE, writing commentaries to the Torah, which we call *Nevi'im* – Prophets and *Ketuvim* – Writings, the other books of *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. They then spent the next thousand years writing commentaries to the commentary in the form of *Midrash*, *Mishnah*, and *Gemara*. Then they spent another thousand years writing commentaries to the commentaries to the commentaries, from Biblical interpretation to Jewish law to poetry, to philosophy, and to mysticism.

For 3,000 years, virtually every word that Jews wrote from 1,300 BCE to around the 18th century, was a commentary to the Torah. It was only in the 19th century that Jews began developing the literature of the Jewish Enlightenment, which was not directly a commentary to the Torah. Jews became a textual civilization, not only for the reason I made earlier, that we were there at the invention of the alphabet, but also because in Abrahamic monotheism, God, who is beyond nature, is to be found in a text, the text of Torah.

That text becomes the defining feature of Judaism,

which could be understood in two different ways. The mystics and the prophets before them saw text as a kind of *ketubah*, a marriage contract between the loving God and His beloved people, or to understand it, as I prefer to do, as the written constitution of Israel as a nation under the sovereignty of God. For these two reasons, Jews became a people of the text: because of the invention of the alphabet and because only through words could we fully enter into a relationship with God.

The Global Nation

This brings me to the third and final point, in some ways the most poignant of all. It emerged out of two major crises. The first was the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BCE, and the second, much more seriously, was the tragic events of the first and second centuries of the Common Era, the Roman conquest, the destruction of the Second Temple, the failure of the Bar Kokhba rebellion, and the dispersion of Jews across the world. The question was, were Jews – no longer a sovereign nation in their own land, scattered instead around the world – still a nation?

In any conventional sense, the answer has to be no. What is a nation? It is a group of people who live in the same land, speak the same language, exist under the same government, share the same culture, and participate in the same fate. In any of those senses, Jews were not a nation. They didn't live in the same land. They were scattered throughout the world. They did not speak the same language of everyday speech. Rashi was speaking French. Maimonides was speaking Arabic. They were not under the same government or culture.

The medieval rabbis in France and Germany, Tosafists, were living under a Christian regime, and Alfasi and Maimonides and others under a Muslim one. They did not share the same fate. While the Jewish communities of northern Europe were being massacred in 1096 during the First Crusade, Jews in Spain were enjoying their Golden Age. When the Jews of Spain were exiled in 1492, and the Jews of Portugal in 1497, and forced to wander the world for a century, the Jews of Poland were enjoying their Golden Age. Jews had none of the things that make a nation. Yet, they saw themselves and were seen by others as just that, one nation.

How was that possible? The answer lies in the one very unusual fact about *Shavuot* – the Feast of Weeks and *Matan Torah* – the giving of the Torah. This can be seen by asking a very simple question: What comes first in the history of any nation, the land or the law? The country or the constitution? The place or the political structure? The answer is obvious. First, there's the place, then come the people. They eventually develop into a nation. They develop political structures. They create a ruler or a government who enacts laws. First the land, then the laws. No exception, except one, and that is Judaism. It is the only exception in all of history. The Torah was given in the wilderness. First came the law, and only later, as it turned out, an entire generation later, came the land. There is no other example of this in all of history.

The result of this was incredibly fateful, because what it meant was, even in exile, even in dispersion, they may have lost the land, but they still had the law. They may have lost their country, but they still

had their covenant. That alone sustained them as a nation in the Diaspora. It is the only thing. God said so explicitly. Believe it or not, we read it in the Torah. In the midst of the curses, the Rebuke in the weekly Torah reading of "*Bechukotai*", God says through Moses these words, "And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly" (Leviticus 26:44). God says, "Even in the land of their enemies, I will not break my covenant with them." Because the covenant preceded the country, it survived the loss of the country.

The result was, even in the Diaspora, that the covenant was still in force. It was Saadia Gaon in the 10th century, who was wrestling with this idea – it puzzled him. How come we, who are scattered all over the world, are still a nation? Saadia Gaon famously said, "Our nation is only a nation by virtue of its Torah." Because of the Torah and only because of the Torah, Jews throughout the world kept the same religious laws, read the same religious texts, celebrated the same holy days, said more or less the same prayers. They even faced the same point, Jerusalem, when they prayed.

Because of that, Jews became the circumference of a circle whose center was here in Jerusalem. Jews therefore became the first virtual community, the Torah became the first Internet, and the Jewish people became the world's first global people and for 2,000 years, the world's only global people.

What is for everyone else in the 21st century the newest of the new – the concept of globalization – is for us the oldest of the old. That was brilliantly summed up by Heinrich Heine in his wonderful phrase that the Torah

became "the portable homeland of the Jew." Wherever Jews carried Torah, they were at home. As, and I find this line almost unbearably poignant, we say in one of the liturgical poems at the climax of Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement, in *Ne'ilah* – the closing prayers, as the cry of Jews before the State of Israel was recreated, "*ein lanu shiur rak hatorah hazot*", this is all we've got left, Master of the Universe. We've lost everything. All we have is this Torah. It was that text, that they could carry wherever they went, that allowed Jews to be at home even when they lost their home, because they knew that the Torah would carry them back one day here to the Land of Israel and here to Jerusalem, the Holy City.

It was those three things, each one of them unique, that shaped the whole essence of Jewish identity. Not only by virtue of being there for the first alphabet did Jews become the first People of the Book. Jews not only by virtue of monotheism found, and were forced to find, God in words. They were also connected globally to one another by this book that they all read, they all engraved on their souls, and they all kept. That text kept Jews together and united as a single nation. The Torah can be seen as in every sense shaping this unique phenomenon, a people that only existed because of the book.

Indeed, we can see the Torah, we can see the Jewish people in this way, just as you see when you open *Mikraot Gedolot*, a central text surrounded by commentary, so the Jewish people has its central text here in Jerusalem the Holy City. All the world's communities are like commentaries on that central text, because wherever Jews were, in every community, in every age, they added

their own commentaries so that even though they lived in different cultures, and countries, and languages, and land, they remained part of that single extended conversation between the Jewish people and the God of heaven in dialogue with the terms of our destiny and our covenant.

Realizing the Vision: The Renewed National Library of Israel

Each of those three is a remarkable phenomenon considered in and of itself, but put them all together, and you get something quite extraordinary. Together they open up extraordinary possibilities when they become the backdrop for this project of a new National Library in Jerusalem, and there are three implications.

Number one, we began by saying Judaism was born in a revolution in information technology, the birth of the alphabet. If that is so, then we must use this new information technology, much of it shaped by Jews, after all, such as Sergey Brin of Google, Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook, to enhance the new National Library, creatively, innovatively, to achieve our version in our time, in the 21st century, of what the invention of the alphabet did 38 centuries ago. Then, the alphabet opened up to everyone, democratized access to information. That democratic access to knowledge is what Judaism sees as fundamental to human dignity and equality.

Incidentally, the Jewish idea is the only one that has a chance of working. Let me explain why. Every other form of equality has been based on either equality of power or of wealth. But there is an inherent problem with democracy and equality of power. The problem

is that power and wealth are both what I call material goods. The trouble with material goods is the more you share, the less you have. If you have total power but you decide to share it with nine other people, the result is you only have a tenth as much power as you began with. If you have 1,000 dollars and share it with nine other people, you're left with only a tenth as much money as you began with. If you have a certain amount of knowledge and you share that with nine others, do you have less? Maybe you have more. *Mikol melamdai hiskalti*, the more we teach our knowledge to others, the more we learn. Wealth and power, at least in the short term, are zero-sum games, which means the more I share, the less I have. It means that wealth and power, the economy and the state, economics and politics, are always arenas of conflict. Knowledge is not, because the more I give away, the more I have.

That is why the Jewish version of an egalitarian society, a society in which everyone reaches his or her own full dignity by having access to education and to knowledge, is the only form of egalitarianism that really has worked and will continue to work. If somehow this National Library can open up its wealth of knowledge by using digitization and the Internet, and making all its materials available to everyone through a modem or through a Bluetooth connection, that would be revolution number one.

Number two, the National Library is a library that can form connections between Jews in this very, very fragmented Jewish world that we have now, where the gap between religious and secular continues to grow. As I began by saying, if there is one thing that even secular

Jews believe profoundly, it is that we have a share in this heritage of literature and literacy. That is what makes the Jewish people what it is. That's what Amos Oz was trying to tell us. That is what Dr. Ruth Calderon was doing in her maiden speech in the Knesset, when as a woman and as a secular Jew, she gets up and gives a Talmud lesson to the members of Knesset. It was a brilliant lesson, and it was a lovely way of saying, "You know what? This text belongs to all of us." "Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4). It belongs to all of us.

A campaign, a way of extending the National Library so that everyone can plug into it, is a way of opening up the Jewish text and the Jewish commentary to what *Torah She'be'al Peh* – the oral Torah – is really supposed to be, the ongoing conversation scored for many voices of Jews in conversation with the terms of their destiny. We like argument. In fact, I don't think we know any other form of conversation. When I did a public conversation with Amos Oz, his opening sentence was, "I don't think I'm going to agree with Rabbi Sacks about everything, but then, on most things, I don't agree with myself." That is how we use a National Library to say, "You are all a letter in this scroll. You are all a part of the Jewish conversation."

Finally, my point about the Torah sustaining Jews as a global people means that I believe that this new National Library to be built here in Jerusalem the Holy City cannot be simply and merely a national library. It must be a global library, because it was only books that kept us together as a global people. How wonderful if, through the Internet and through digitization of

all the manuscripts and books and journals in this library, we could allow any Jew anywhere in the world to access this heritage. Would it not be wonderful if coincidentally with the building of this new Jewish library went a worldwide campaign of Jewish literacy, which really could engage the imagination of Jews throughout the world, regardless of whether they are religious or secular?

It is therefore my hope and my dream that the day will come when visitors to the State of Israel, be they presidents, prime ministers, or popes, will be taken not first to Yad Vashem, however important that is, but here to the new national and international library, which I propose should be subtitled, "The Home of the Book for the People of the Book." Let us show the world not only how Jews died but how Jews live.

My personal favorite atheist, Nietzsche, was one of the greatest of all time because he was the most honest. Nietzsche was a very profound thinker. Many people think that Nietzsche was anti-Semitic. Nietzsche wasn't anti-Semitic. He did not dislike Jews, but he deeply disliked Judaism. In fact, many people hated Jews because they didn't become Christian. Nietzsche hated Jews because they gave birth to Christianity. He regarded Judaism and Christianity as what he called "the slave revolt in morals." Judaism and Christianity is what happened when slaves defeated their masters and imposed their code on everyone.

Nietzsche rightly saw the Jews were his most formidable opponents. Nietzsche defined his own philosophy as the will to power. I define Judaism as the will to life. They are opposed principles. The way I

want to define it very simply is that Nietzsche framed the eternal human choice between, on the one hand, the idea of power, and on the other hand, the power of ideas. Judaism showed the world the power of ideas, simple ideas that can transform the world not through war but through education. That is what I would like a new national and international Jewish library to be.

Those who built this land and this State, the heroes of the land and the State, were motivated by one idea, by the prophetic vision of *Shivat Tzion* – the Return to Zion – articulated by all the prophets, by Jeremiah's insistence, "And there is hope for thy future, saith the Lord; and thy children shall return to their own border" (Jeremiah 31:16). The day will come when Jews will return to their land. If that idea motivated people to create this State, so may those who design and build this new National Library, be lifted and inspired by a no-less-famous vision and a no-less-magnificent one. The words of Isaiah that we all know, "There will come a time when many nations say, Let us come and visit the mountain of the Lord, Jerusalem; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

The time will come when the nations of the world will recognize that the power of ideas is greater than the idea of power. On that day, from Zion will go forth the Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem. Let us show the world that other face of Israel, the People of the Book in the land of the book, whose language is the language of the book and whose landscape is the landscape of the book. That book that inspired some of the greatest moral visions and greatest religious poetry

the world has ever known. To build this Home of the Book dedicated to People of that Book is a project that could bring blessing not just to Israel, and not just to the Jewish people worldwide, but to the entire world. May that great project materialize here in our time. *Bimhera beyameinu, Amen* - speedily in our days, Amen.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth (1991-2013) and recipient of the 2016 Templeton Prize.

Planning a National Library in the Twenty-First Century

Oren Weinberg



Introduction

For hundreds if not thousands of years, libraries have been predicated on the meticulous collection of items and, generally, granting restricted access within a designated physical structure. Today, the objective is to allow open access to the cultural and intellectual treasures both within and beyond the library's walls. The current building of the National Library of Israel is located within the gated confines of a university campus, in accordance with the former prevailing notion that the knowledge stored in libraries is intended mainly for a distinct and select educated class. In contrast, the new home for the National Library reflects the drive to democratize knowledge and the aspiration to open its treasures and resources to as broad and diverse an audience as possible.

The information age now enabling remote access to the Library's treasures has sharpened and redefined the requirements for its physical building, which must now offer tangible added value to its visitors. It is not enough to simply create quiet spaces in our noise-saturated world. There is a need for a building that reflects the latest research methods in the humanities and social sciences which will foster a suitable environment for researchers as well as exceptional experiences for the general public.

Research and Reference

The new Library must reflect the transition from research based on the personal interaction between resource and researcher to interdisciplinary research which relates to diverse materials and also sometimes

involves working in groups. The Library reflects the most state-of-the-art working methods, allowing expeditious access to both vast corpuses and individual units of information in a variety of contexts.

The Library will facilitate better interactions not just between researchers and the materials in its collections, but also among the researchers themselves. Researchers are drawn to the Library not just for the resources it holds. They come to carry out research independently under optimal conditions, as well as to spend time in the company of others interested in sharing knowledge and ideas. In the contemporary library, all spaces designed for users and visitors – both inside and out – are planned in a way that enables and encourages interpersonal interaction.

Openness and Unmediated Access

The information age has not lessened the intense need for personal interaction and for viewing original items without unnecessary obstructions. Despite the ability to watch lectures and performances through electronic means, the need to participate in live events has also not diminished. The Library's new building will include a large auditorium and additional halls for events in which broad audiences will be able to take part. It will also include ample exhibition spaces that will enable the general public to view rare and exceptional items which, until now, have been kept in the Library's vaults, only accessible to a select few.

Harmony of the Parts

The plan for the Library's new home was founded upon the idea of unifying five elements with complementary and sometimes opposing roles: research and reference, education and culture, public spaces, library operations, and collection repositories. Despite their different characteristics, the structure's overall design rests on the notion that all parts of the building serve a single vision, complementing one another, allowing for easy passage and, in specific places, even vantage points from which visitors will be able to appreciate the different areas as never before. Thus, for example, visitors who do not even enter the reference areas, remaining exclusively in the culture and education or public spaces, will still be able to see and be inspired by the treasures and scholarship which lie at the core of the National Library's activities.

Sustainability and Flexibility

The building's design has been carefully planned in order to ensure the optimal conditions for the spiritual and intellectual treasures of the Jewish people and Israel. In collaboration with leading experts, the highest climate control and security standards have been established, and considerations which will enable sustainable, long-term operations and maintenance have been taken into account.

Recognizing the fast pace of technological advancement in today's world, particularly with regard to how modern libraries must function, the new building is characterized by maximum flexibility to accommodate changes in the future. The design of the

new building is based on the assumption that in addition to normal physical wear and future technological changes, it is possible that in the not too distant future more modifications to the building's interior spaces, including their division and designated functions, may be necessary. The planning approach of the building therefore strikes a balance between meeting the needs of the Library's current functions and maintaining a certain flexibility which will facilitate implementation of changes in the future.

Mr. Oren Weinberg is the Director of the National Library of Israel since 2010.

Project Description

Herzog & de Meuron

The shift from print to digital necessitates a rethinking of the library both as an institution and a building typology. To sustain their relevance in the information age, contemporary libraries must function for existing users by providing the operational and spatial quality of traditional library buildings while generating alternative spaces and uses to attract new audiences. Likewise, designing a new building in Jerusalem juxtaposes the desire to react to the architectural traditions of this historically significant place with the ambition to make a building that is both appropriate for the contemporary city and specific to the immediate site. These challenges frame our proposal for the National Library of Israel.

Jerusalem has two primary urban precincts. The historical center lies to the East while the modern administrative and cultural zone sits among newer development in the West. The dense and highly pedestrianized old city forms the dominant image of Jerusalem. Unlike the Old City, buildings in the new development are heterogeneous, freestanding, and primarily linked by vehicular traffic. It is in this area that the site for the National Library of Israel is located.

The site is a sloped, triangular plot at the intersection of Ruppin Boulevard and Kaplan Street. Located between the Israel Museum to the South and the Knesset to the East, the National Library site is directly between Jerusalem's most prominent institutions and is an extension of the park-like landscape that weaves through the area. While fully independent, the Library will be a link between the cultural and civic buildings around it. A native garden with public space and art

will surround the Library and connect the interior functions to the surroundings. Visitors, who come for the cultural experience, mingle with local residents, researchers, and staff who use the Library on a daily basis. Exhibition spaces, eating venues, an auditorium, bookstore, and youth center, all surround the reading room. The diversity of functions and the connection to the city ensure that the Library will remain a strong and vibrant institution in the future.

Our design responds to the context and reflects the ambitions of the National Library of Israel. It is open and transparent but grounded in the traditions of great libraries and the city itself. As in the past, books will remain at the center. They form a foundation and necessary balance against constant technological change. Books root the building to the ground and are visible to all in a central void. Vitrine-like elements form the bottom two floors and display the Library's content and activities to the street. Above, a carved space containing stone binds the project together and reflects the massive quality of Jerusalem's historical architecture.

Book Well

Underground stacks contain the majority of the Library's physical collection and form the foundation of the building. A void, consisting of offset circles and culminating in a large circular skylight, passes through each of the levels and connects the reading-room, public spaces, and administrative areas to the collection below. Wooden bookshelves line the void, letting the books shape the visual experience of the space. On the main floor of the reading room and at the center of the void,

carrels provide space for researchers to work. Books surround the reader.

Vitrines

Five rectangular vitrines reveal the first two floors of the Library to the street and the garden. Fundamental to the future success of the Library is the transparency with which its activities and the collections are displayed. The gestalt plan of the vitrines provides a variety of spatial configurations and programmatic relationships. Large open reading spaces are located in the central vitrine and contain the well of books. Adjacent vitrines accommodate small-scale spaces for the Library's various collections and offer the readers intimately scaled reading areas that overlook the landscape. The vitrine to the south contains the auditorium and restaurant while opening to the public plaza outside.

Carved Stone

The sculptural form of the upper volume is a singular carved stone shaped by its surroundings. The triangular plan reflects the shape of the site. The East, West and North facades are offset from the site boundaries but gently curve in plan to embrace pedestrians as they move past the building. The South facade is perpendicular to the main axis of the adjacent Israel Museum and raised to the vertical limit of the site. Likewise, the North facade is raised to relate to the urban scale of the adjacent Ministry of Finance. Seen from the Knesset to the east, the curved form of the Library maintains views of the western landscape. The stone is not just sculptural. The elevated mass provides shade while its mineral

construction adds thermal mass to insulate the interior spaces. Thermal mass and shade, combined with solar panels on the roof and a rock store in the ground (for naturally cool air) ensure that the building is sustainable. The form is strong but humble to its surroundings and the environment.

Visitor Experience

The carved stone and transparent vitrine base intersect at the main entry on Kaplan Street to the east. Kaplan Street is elevated, necessitating a raised entry vitrine that cuts into the stone and provides direct access to the open space at the center of the Library. Public program is distributed throughout the building, but is located primarily on the entry level and within the stone mass. The walls of this stone mass are space – containing and housing the exhibition program, cafe, bookstore and youth center to the south. Continuous circulation allows the visitor to move through the floor and around the reading room at the center. An auditorium slopes down to provide visual connection to the street and plaza below.

Facade

The building's curved, elevated and cantilevered form necessitates a contemporary take on the cut Jerusalem limestone found throughout the rest of the city. Limestone is ground and added to cement to provide a bright but warm surface in keeping with the surroundings. Like stone found throughout the city, the cast surface will be chipped to unify the overall form. Openings and carvings, whose shapes are derived from

a projection of erosions on ancient stone walls, are designed to minimize solar heat gain on the windows behind. The pattern is reminiscent of culturally specific imagery and text but remains abstract in origin.

The mineral surface continues to the vitrine legs below. The solid legs ground the building and connect the different floors with stairways, elevators and service areas. Wood interrupts the massiveness of the structure and frames the glazed vitrines. Uncommon in contemporary Jerusalem, the wood brings a human scale and detail to the pedestrian experience while linking the building to timber traditions important to the local vernacular from ancient to early modern times.

Herzog & de Meuron

are the architects designing the new building of the National Library of Israel



Left to right: Senior Partners Christine Binswanger, Ascan Mergenthaler and Stefan Marbach, with Founding Partners Pierre de Meuron and Jacques Herzog

Herzog & de Meuron is a partnership led by five Senior Partners – Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Christine Binswanger, Ascan Mergenthaler and Stefan Marbach.

Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron established their office in Basel in 1978. The partnership has grown over the years – Christine Binswanger joined the practice as Partner in 1994, followed by Robert Hösl and Ascan Mergenthaler in 2004, Stefan Marbach in 2006, Esther Zumsteg in 2009, Andreas Fries in 2011, Vladimir Pajkic in 2012, Jason Frantzen and Wim Walschap in 2014 and Michael Fischer in 2016. An international team of about 40 Associates and 380 collaborators is working on projects across Europe, the Americas and Asia. The firm's main office is in Basel with additional offices in Hamburg, London, Madrid, New York City, and Hong Kong.

Herzog & de Meuron have designed a wide range of projects from the small scale of a private home to the large scale of urban design. While many of their projects are highly recognized public facilities, such as their stadiums and museums, they have also completed several distinguished private projects including apartment buildings, offices, and factories. The practice has been awarded numerous prizes including The Pritzker Architecture Prize (USA) in 2001, the RIBA Royal Gold Medal (UK) and the Praemium Imperiale (Japan), both in 2007. In 2014, Herzog & de Meuron were awarded the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize (MCHAP).