

General ideas for the Old Knesset Museum – submitted by Michal Broshi, January 2014

The Old Knesset Museum is intended to demonstrate the work of the Israeli legislative branch in its first years, during the time when it created the unique character of the Israeli government

Nature of the exhibits

The modern museum directs its visitors and creates participatory exhibitions in which a visitor plays an active role communicating with other visitors and adding their own knowledge to the exhibits. Passive exhibitions are no longer relevant to young people who are used to engaging in dialogue and learning from computers.

There are no better topics than the Knesset and democracy to be presented to the public as active exhibitions because civil participation (electing leaders, social involvement, criticism and protest) on the one hand and legislative work (giving speeches, collecting information and making decisions) on the other naturally translates into different activities within the Museum. Most of the exhibitions in the museum will be permanent and their role, in my opinion, is to serve as a catalyst for the expression of opinions, the addition of content and the creation of conversations and debates amongst the visitors, both with the mediation of guides and without them.

Challenges to creating exhibit programming in the Old Knesset Museum:

- To interest a diverse population with different educations and ages in the 50 year old activities of the legislative body.
- To create exhibitions relevant to the modern life of the Israeli citizen.
- To set up exhibitions in the building, some of which will be about restoration and preservation of its internal makeup and not necessarily intended to be galleries in a museum.

What is the difference between the Old Knesset Museum and the new Knesset building?

In the new Knesset building: The Knesset building in Givat Ram serves as an "open house" to citizens of the state. In the building, one can go on group tours for different ages with a focus on the work of the Knesset on the one hand and the building and the treasures within it on the other. In the new Knesset building, the tours are coordinated with the work of the Knesset and are not carried out during times that interrupt the work of the MKs. Visitors cannot linger in front of the exhibitions and there is no place made for spending long amounts of time with a group.

In the old Knesset building: The main exhibits will be dedicated to the history of the Knesset between 1950-1966. The exhibition will be organized and planned as a sequential storyline. It will be a permanent exhibition that is full of media and activities for visitors and there will be areas in the museum meant for groups and field trips. Personally, I am leaning towards

allowing the public to come to at least parts of the museum without making reservations for tours. For groups, there will be a short tour of the temporary exhibit and they will be allowed to stay afterwards to develop and deepen their knowledge.

Below are ideas for exhibitions that would reflect the spirit of the Museum

Galleries:

1. **Knesset Plenum** – Historical introduction by way of media or discussions in the style of the Knesset (first floor)
2. **Visitor and journalist gallery:** Exhibition showing journalist activities in those years (second floor)
3. **Upon three things the Knesset stands:** Democracy, Judaism and society (second floor)
4. **To be a citizen:** Obligations, rights and involvement (second floor)
5. **NOISE! MKs at work:** Exhibition group activities in classrooms and committee rooms (third floor)
6. **A legislature across from "Ta'amon" coffee shop:** An exhibition that relates to Frumin House's surroundings (roof)
7. **Temporary Exhibitions** (I suggest that the renovated Knesset cafeteria be a gallery for a temporary exhibit. Advantages: It will pull in guests from the street, repeat visitors would be able to visit the exhibit without going up to the higher floors.)
8. **Souvenir shop**
9. **Coffee cart** – in the courtyard.

Description of some exhibits:

1. **The renovated plenum: Introduction to the Museum – history of the Knesset and its activities 1950-1966:** Visitors will explore the renovated plenum of the Knesset of the 50s and 60s. The plenum will be used as an auditorium where you can listen to explanations, give lectures, vote and watch films. An intro to the museum will be projected on a big screen. It is possible that the introduction movie will be based on the movie "The Knesset", directed by Nathan Gross. The movie will be reedited and a modern element will be added to it, which is sensitive to occurrences over the years and for which the old debates will be explained for the modern viewer. On the desktop in front of every chair (possibly limited to 50 chairs) a small personal screen will sit and will rise up when the viewer presses on one of the three buttons on his/her chair. (Similar to the buttons that the MKs press to summon ushers). On the screen, there will be short videos (two minutes each) on various topics such as: A. The different Knessets that were in Frumin House. B. According to laws: Basic Law: Knesset, Flag and Emblem Law, Equal Rights for Women Law and so on. C. Votes- that will be carried out by a hand count - as was the custom during the first Knessets. Upon exiting the plenum, the visitor will choose a pin to wear that represents the identity of one of the MKs from those days. On the button will be a picture, the name of an MK and the name of a party. In this way the visitors will be encouraged to have conversations among themselves. Upon exiting the Museum the visitor will be asked a question. For example: Do you think that it is necessary to

prohibit the use of the curse "Nazi"? The visitors will select their answers when they return their pin to one of the three containers that say "yes", "no" and "undecided" on them, creating an open ballot.

2. **Visitors and journalists gallery:** A gallery for the presentation of journalistic works at the Knesset during the period in question: Articles, pictures, recordings and political caricatures. Special mention of the throwing of the grenade.
3. **Upon three things the Knesset stands:** Democracy, Judaism and society: There will be three central exhibitions with original exhibits and digital media exhibits.

One Example: Democracy

- A. Original exhibits: An original ancient exhibit, such as an ostrakon or a ceramic button used for elections in ancient times
- B. The roots of democracy: A short animated movie that describes the roots of Israeli democracy from ancient Greece and until Mandatory Palestine.
- C. Research: Materials related to the creation of democratic legislation (such as the Basic Law: The Knesset). The materials will be organized on big touch screens upon which the visitors are welcome to prepare a small presentation by themselves - they will be able to "open" folders in the archives, to search for visual and textual materials such as debate protocols, correspondence between MKs, public petitions, media coverage, pictures, caricatures and more in order to create an "exhibition". Down the line, visitors will be able to see the exhibitions that have been created by previous visitors. This activity is also fitting for groups of three or four visitors.

In a similar manner, the topics of Judaism and society will also be presented. The society installation will be similar and connected to the following topic: To be a citizen – obligations, rights and responsibilities.

The heart of the presentation will be the conflicts in Israeli society that already existed in the 50s and 60s. For example: Religion and state (the turbulent demonstrations of the ultra-Orthodox to force the keeping of Sabbath laws), equality before the law (Land Day, relating to minorities, ethnic divisions and the Wadi Salib unrest). The group will sit together and watch a video that describes the incident itself (the protest) how the legislators of the day dealt with it and expressions of the conflict today. Guided groups will hold debates on the topic and its legislative consequences.

5. NOISE! MKs at work: The refurbished committee room (select an interesting committee) and six classrooms that will be used for group activities for field trips. **The classrooms will be designed in the spirit of the offices of the 50s and 60s. In the classrooms there will be small exhibitions dedicated to central figures and important roles in the life of the Knesset in Frumin House. For example:**

1. Speakers of the Knesset between 1950 and 1966: Joseph Sprinzak, Nahum Nir, Kadish Luz.
2. The important women – Beba Idelson, Ada Maimoni and others.

3. The opposition leader: Menahem Begin. The exhibition will show the tools available to the head of the opposition in order to influence and to achieve parliamentary victories (a filibuster for instance).

4. A legislature across from a coffee shop: Roof exhibit that explores Frumin House's surroundings. For example: A drawing of 1958 Jerusalem over the roof's fence showing the types of people who characterized the period walking on the street. Visitors will be able to glance above the picture to the current view and compare.

5. The Knesset cafeteria: Gallery for temporary exhibitions: In my opinion, we should strive to present materials that are held by civilians, created by civilians or done at the initiative of civilians. For example: A call for materials on the topic of King George Street. Next to the exhibit will be a picture of the loaner and an explanation written by him/her.