

Jason Frantzen, Hannah Rothschild CBE, and Oren Weinberg | From the Ground: Up Building a New National Library of Israel

– Good evening everyone. My name's Claudia Rubinstein, and I'm the director of Jewish Book Week, and I'm delighted to welcome you this evening to this partnered event with the National Library of Israel and Lockdown University on the building of the new National Library of Israel. We have a very distinguished panel with us this evening. We have Hannah Rothschild and award winning writer and chair of Yad Hanadiv. We have Oren Weinberg, who's the CEO of the National Library. We have Jason Fransen, who's a senior partner at the award-winning architects, who designed the new library. And this evening is chaired by Harry Rich, the former CEO of the Royal Institute of British Architects. So welcome everyone, welcome to our panel, and I'm delighted to hand over to Harry to begin this evening's event. Thank you very much.

– Thank you very much, Claudia and welcome from me. It's great to talk to all of you. Have you all participating from wherever you are around the world without having to step into the cold and damp of London this evening. So it's great that you are all with us. We have, as Claudia said, the fascinating hour ahead of us with the dream team that created the new National Library of Israel, which will be opening next year. As you heard, we've got the director of the library, the architect, and the philanthropists, the people who between them have helped to make this happen. So Oren Weinberg is the chief executive of the National Library of Israel. He's been there since 2010. Before that, he was the director of the Heifer University Library. He did his undergraduate degree at Heifer University and a master's programme at Bareline University. And Oren is joining us from Jerusalem. Jason Fransen is the architect for the project. He studied at Cornell University and then Harvard Graduate School of Design. He joined Herzog & de Meuron in 2005 and has been a senior partner there since 2019. He leads on an awfully large range of major projects, very varied all around the world, and he's with us from Basel in Switzerland. And finally, Hannah Rothschild, who is a writer and documentary director. In 2018, Hannah took over from her father Jacob as Chair of Yad Hanadiv and I'm sure she'll tell us a little about it, Yad Hanadiv at a headline level is a charity that creates resources to advance Israel as a healthy and vibrant democratic society and to provide support equal opportunities for the benefits of all of its inhabitants. And notably, the charity has been involved at the core, for example, at the construction of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament and the Supreme Court. So the shape of this evening is that in a moment I'm going to ask each of the three panellists to set context for what we're going to talk about, and then we'll have a conversation between them and me. And we will have that time for questions towards the end. So please do feel free to put your questions into the Q&A box and we'll do our best to get through them

or at least select a good number of them. So if I can then kick off, first of all with a few words from Oren who's going to talk a little bit about the mission and the purpose of the new library. So Oren, over to you.

– Good evening. Thank you, Harry. Well, the national library is an all institution concerning the state of Israel. We are celebrating this year, 130 years since the foundation of the library, much prior to the state of Israel. And going back little bit to the past, the library was founded in 1892. Can see an image from the first reading room of the library. And I always like to see this picture because you see that they already then like to pose to the camera except for this guy that is hiding behind a newspaper. Moving very quickly from 1892 when the first Hebrew library was founded in Jerusalem to 1925, when the library joined, the Hebrew University found in then in Mount Scopus Jerusalem. And just to open a circle at that time, there was a first debate in Jerusalem about the question, should the library should join the university and lose it little bit, it's public sides and become a university library? So the debate was concluded and the library was joined the university and running very fast to 2007 when the same debate came 180 degrees, 330 degrees in fact and to the same debate that should the library continue to be a university library or become a new entity, a real national library that will be much more open not only for research, but for cultural and educational programming? So in 2007, the new law was passed in the Knesset National Library of Israel and the Jewish people. I'm running to the language of the law. You can see here that the law added to the roles of every library, a very traditional roles of libraries, from collecting and preserving, it added to cultivate endowed treasure of knowledge, heritage, and culture. And that meant for the library to be much more transparent, open institution that instead of holding inside the treasures, opening them up to a wide and diverse audiences and various ways of programming from culture, education, digital, and of course research. And another thing that is important to state at this point, that it's not only the library of the state of Israel, but this is also the library of the Jewish people at large. So we not only collect what is published in domain of the state of Israel, but we collect also everything concerned with Jewish life wherever there are. So 2000 years of history, numerous communities around the globe, different languages, different formats. And this is today the largest repository of Jewish and Israeli heritage, culture heritage and looking forward for the future. It's also the largest resource that is open, freely available for all to learn not only about, as I said, the state of Israel, the Jewish world, but also on different cultures in the state of Israel like Islam and Middle East cultures and humanities at large. Stop sharing here.

– Alright, thank you very much. That's really fascinating introduction. I'm going to pass over now to Jason to talk a little about the building itself.

- Thank you, Harry. Thank you Oren also for the introduction. It's been an incredible journey on this project. And the building I'll show right now is the product of a really fantastic series of exchanges we've had over many years, both with Oren and his team and of course Hannah and the Rothschild Yad Hanadiv. So we began the project naturally by thinking about everything that Oren said. And by really understanding the content of the project, by understanding the meaning of the library. We also immediately went and tried to understand the site. The site is an incredible place in the city of Jerusalem, situated between the Knesset and the Israel Museum and the Hebrew University on the left hand side. It is a site with incredible opportunities, but also enormous complexity. We looked at Jerusalem's architecture in the regional architecture and tried to think from the beginning about how to create an architecture that is both contextual and contemporary within this environment. And of course, we thought about how to make a project that is appropriate both for the local culture, local people, and for the global audience. It was like this map somehow that shows Jerusalem at the centre of the world. And in a way, when we think about the significance of Jerusalem, this really highlighted the challenge for us as we took on this project. It is a city that is so important in global history. The concept sketch that you see in front of you is something that was done very early on in the project and it contains a number of the elements that carry through to the project today. This idea of a kind of drill down at the centre of the project and the carved stone shaped by the site are very present. The first key concept is related to that drill. The idea that the books are at the centre of the project. That I guess is not always a given when we think about libraries now, but certainly for us books really anchor this project. Light comes down into the centre, carries through into this ring of books, connecting all the different reading rooms. Bringing the light and the readers and users all the way down into the underground area where there's a viewing platform overlooking the stacks down below. This is that viewing platform at the bottom of the this ring of books with the view out over the stacks. To give you a sense for the scale of that space, the underground space that contains more than 4 million books. In addition, of course to other parts of the library. I have this photo from the excavation early days of construction. Here you see that space for the automated stacks. This is a really incredible place, which now is all accessed by robots in order to get the books out into the library. The second concept is this idea of creating a carved stone. And from the beginning we understood the importance of stone in the history of local construction and thought about how to respond to that. For us, it was important to say in the beginning that rather than just thinking of this building as a stone building, that the building itself would be conceived as a kind of single carved stone. The building, the stone is shaped by the context and plan on three sides with these soft curves where people walk along it and one side cut straight so that it is perpendicular to the axis of the Israel Museum. Here you can see the

shape in the other direction as well, raising up onto that axis, facing the Israel Museum. Dipping down for the view from the Knesset over it and raising up again to meet the context of the buildings behind it. The third concept is related to the vitrines at the street. This idea of creating transparency and openness, and that's related to what Oren talked about. The idea from the beginning was to make a library that is accessible, that is open to everybody. That is visible from the street to convey the activities of the interior spaces, not just the reading rooms, but also the cafe and cultural activities as well. With those vitrines which anchor the building on the lower two floors, we create a variety of spaces, both for the the different entry areas, seminar spaces, cultural activities, and restaurant. But most importantly for the reading room where we understood that there are many different types of readers who want different kinds of spaces. Those who want spaces that are open at the centre, who like to do their research in a more kind of communal way. Those who want to look outside and those who want to find quiet private spaces towards the exterior here. The structure binds the building together, anchoring both the lower floors and the upper volume running through this kind of carved stone, defining the spaces. On the outside, they land on the ground, creating seating areas that help to activate the street. And a carved space at the entry on Kaplan, the upper street, which becomes a welcoming sequence into the building. At the centre of the building, a central unifying space connects all of the different activities. From the central reading room and lobby to an auditorium and permanent exhibition space. The auditorium looks down connecting down from the upper floors to the lower floors where there is a plaza at street level. The reading room goes around the ring of books providing different kinds of spaces, both spaces for people who sit overlooking the books and small niches on the sides for people who want to have a more quiet environment. Behind you have the exhibition spaces. Finally and just close quickly with where we stand today, which after many years is incredible to see. The building is much as we had hoped, and it for us, it is a project that we're truly excited about. This is just a picture from a few weeks ago showing the construction still underway. But I think, well on its way to opening. A view of the interior in progress. I think you can see the similarities to the rendering with the light coming in from the top, bringing the light down through the different reading levels. And finally a view on the outside with the kind of carved spaces, the carved stones, creating these openings to the different programme elements. Thank you.

- Jason, thank you. Clearly an absolute beautiful building that fulfils a very important range of purposes. And Hannah, if I could ask you just to perhaps say a little about your family's engagement with an interest in this project.

- Of course. Good evening everybody. Thank you for your lovely introduction, Harry, and for those inspiring resumes from Jason and

Oren. So as quite a lot of you know that my family's been deeply involved in the state of... Well long before it was the state of Israel for about 140 years with Palestine and then subsequently with Israel. And on the whole, we don't put our name anywhere. Part of our modus operandi is to keep, you know, below the parapet to use an architectural metaphor. And we operate through Yad Hanadiv, which is, if you can believe it, about 140 years old started by my cousin Baron Edmond that time ago. Of the physical representations of what we do, the Knesset is probably the best known, obviously that would be. And then the Supreme Court is another monumental building that the family was involved with. But more than 25 years ago, my father Jacob made a wish that the foundation would add a library to the landmark GIPs for the state of Israel. And if I could just quote our much loved and lamented friend, Jonathan Sacks, who we talked to about this wish right at the beginning, and Jonathan wrote, "Isaiah's vision was that Jerusalem would one day become a world centre. Not of wealth or power, but of knowledge. And this new library, especially in the context of technology and our time represents an unprecedented opportunity to realise that vision." So that was part of the background. And I think really if I stripped it back, even further, it seemed extraordinary to us that there wasn't a suitable home of the book for the people of the book whose memory and destiny are encoded in the book. And I don't in any way want to put down the library or its former home in the Hebrew University, but I think Oren would say that it didn't really perhaps have the gravitas or the presence that one might have expected in the heart of Jerusalem. And I can say honestly that what Jason Pierre and Jack have done with this design, I believe will make it the greatest building, not just in Israel or in the Middle East, but I believe one of the greatest libraries that has ever been built. So I can't tell you how proud we are to be involved in this project.

- Hannah, thank you so much. And it's wonderful to hear about a building that has been created from the start to reflect I suppose that spiritual and emotional purpose. And it's also great to hear that's actually coming through in the finished object. So we're lucky enough to have some trimbus of client architect and philanthropists here. And I'm interested to understand a little bit about how that works because I know from experience that the dark decks and clients can work brilliantly together, but there can be moments of challenge, but also where there's a philanthropist involved that can have an extra layer of either value or again, potential issues. So I wonder if I could just invite you to talk a little bit about how that relationship has worked on this project. And also Hannah, if you wouldn't mind touching on what makes the project particularly interesting to you as a sport? You touched on it already, but maybe just expand on that a little bit.

- I don't think I'm kind of over exaggerating when I say that actually at this moment, we are living at a time of architect where the architects are as great as any period I believe in history. And I

really do think that if you look around the world now. In the last 20 years, let's say perhaps a little bit more, maybe 50, we should say , let's widen that. I mean there really are some unbelievably brilliant architects. And some of these people have become rock stars and with them kind of rockstar like behaviour. So you go into these projects with slightly a trepidation. You, you know, how are we going to manage this? And also, let's be clear, building in the middle of Jerusalem is not easy. I mean, the building has to withstand huge swings in temperature. It has to be bombproof, literally. It doesn't necessarily have easy access to all the materials one might want. So you enter into a relationship like this, you know, with a certain amount of, you know, awe and fear, I'd say kind of combination. So there was originally one architect, and for various reasons, which isn't not worth going into, we then decided to broaden the competition. And the final three were, I'd just be clear about this, I think three of the greatest in the world. And the two others who pitched in, turned up with quite complicated plans and models and God knows what else. And they were amazing. They were absolutely amazing. And Jack and Pierre turned up with a sketch pad and they basically drew what Jason has just shown. They just kind of sat there with a pencil and did this and then that, and then this. I mean, literally not much more than that. Then they got out those pictures which Jason showed you. You know, and explained why the stone was important, why the shape was important, everything else. And it was mesmerising and dad and I looked at each other, it was like, "Okay, this is it." And obviously it wasn't just us, there was, you know, Oren was there David Bloomberg was there and various other people were there, but it was a kind of electric and electrifying moment. And that really was the start. Now, I'm not just saying this 'cause Jason is on this call, but quite honestly, had it not been for him, I think it would've been quite a difficult process. But I think Jason, you've got the most extraordinary temperament as well as being very professional. So I think that it has actually been, I have to, honestly, I've done quite a few other building projects, as we all have to great and small. And this one, although it is complicated, in fact I've banned the use of the word complicated on this project. It's been very enjoyable. And we work with the Gottesman family who have been with us, you know, step by step, who were absolutely brilliant, Oren, step by step, absolutely clear about what he wanted. So while as I say it's had its moments. Actually I think it's one of the most pleasurable experiences I've had in terms of-

- Hannah, tell me who, it's interesting who's the client? Is it you or is it Oren on the library?

- I think we're have to be very clear about this. This is the National Library of Jerusalem. And the client ultimately is going to be the National Library of Jerusalem. And that's exactly how it should be.

- Okay.

- And so we're there as the philanthropists and Gottesmans and not just the Gottesmans, may I say, there are a huge amount of people who've come in, including, for example, Wendy Fisher and Nathan Kirsch, I know that Wendy's involved with this particular evening. And many, many others who've been just spectacularly generous. So, but ultimately the building has to work because it's the national library and it is for the people of Jerusalem, it's not for us.

- And Oren, how's it felt to you to be part of this impressive group?

- I would say in relation to what Hannah said now, is that we were looking for architects that we could have a great dialogue with them. And I think that from the first phase we found out that we made a great choice because through all the way those projects usually have numerous numbers of egos around us in the various stakeholders. But I think that what was more successful in this project, that there was one ego, that's the initial idea of the vision, what we are doing there. And that's where everybody joined in and put aside a lot of their maybe personal aspiration needs and so on and understood what we are aiming at, which is to build a very open place, a home where people are, I would quote, I think Pierre on that, "A home where people would feel happy." And that's what we aim at, at the library, that people will not only consume information, they feel it is a place that people can engage in this course and dialogue around the collection and create. And that's where we found the architects, a great partners in that, and both the Rothschild and the Gottesman and the other partners that join in. They all under through the idea. And they were in a way very humble in that through all the way to the wonderful accomplishment that we now see in Jerusalem.

- Thank you. And Jason, it's often said that for a really great architect to build a really great building, they need a really great client. So how's that worked in this case from your point of view?

- I was just going to say exactly that.

- Okay.

- It's absolutely essential that to make a building like this, you have to have a client team that's really ready to collaborate. And that's what we have had here over the course of this project. There are so many aspects of this project that have come out of dialogue. And it's true, absolutely true that it is a building for the national library. And Oren's team have been so collaborative from the beginning, setting clear expectations, but then also working with us to develop and build on their goals for the project and create something new. But it's also really been something where Hannah and Jacob have been so close along with the Gottesmans and Ariel Vice, who is just absolutely essential from Yad Hanadiv to shaping this and to bringing different perspectives. And it is that combination, the

people who are so focused on how we live on a day-to-day basis in the library, how you work with it, but also those people who are carrying forward a vision for what they want from a much broader perspective. So it's just been a fantastic experience. One which I've certainly just learned an incredible amount.

- Any challenging moments you can talk about Jason?

- Oh, I think any building of this magnitude has many, many challenging moments, but we've never had a challenging moment that created enormous friction. It's always been, we've had, you know, issues as in any project dealing with budget, what's feasible, really working creatively to figure out how to kind of maximise the money that was there. Schedule issues working within the city. Which has like many places, very kind of complex agencies who are overseeing the project. So we've had so many different challenges along the way. It's hard to even know where to begin, but we've gotten through all of them.

- You got through them, that's the main thing. I'm actually thinking, is there any public funding involved with this? And if so, what's the impact of that?

- Well, the state gave about 16%, one sixth out of the overall budget. And she also gave, it also gave the plot. The ground, which is in a marvellous place. Maybe the best place in Jerusalem and in Israel. So we were lucky with the spot and we were doing the project in a very troubled time, post COVID, we had five election during the project, no government budget for two years. So quite complicated, but we said that we overall challenged that and got a great result.

- Okay, excellent, thank you. Maybe moving on to thinking about sort of the purpose of libraries and this one in particular. So I suppose historically libraries have been the repository of knowledge, but now all the knowledge you could possibly want exists online and is available sort of touch of a finger. So in that context, what is the role of the library? Particularly, National library, and who's it for? So if I could maybe turn to Oren first and maybe also while you're thinking about that, the role of the library, it'd be lovely to hear about a couple of interesting important artefacts or objects, whether and the impact of that being physical rather than digital.

- Well, we have numerous collection that has reflects a very rich history of the Jewish people, of the state of Israel, but of humanities at large. So maybe the point of view from Maimonides handwritten Ishnedikwa to go to France, Kafka collection, Isaac Newton papers, which is a local hero, and photographs, historical maps of the land of Israel will be the largest collection, most important one. And today, going to digital harvesting the domain of the Israel domain of the internet, and both Jewish sites around the world. We collect

everything. So from a newspaper, Jewish newspaper in St. Petersburg to books written in Israel, in Buenos Aires. We're not only documenting the history, but also documenting daily life of Jewish wherever they are. So it's like a-

- Oren, but why do we need a physical space for it when I can, you know, from London or from New York, just call it up and see these objects?

- So first of all, we build this building not as a repository of physical items. We want this place to be a space which is much needed in Israeli society, which is very diverse, very virtuous society. We believe that this is a place of discourse a meeting place of dialogue between different parts of Israeli society and beyond. And everybody is seeking today in a digital age, also a space to meet. So it's not only about the physical item, but it is a platform. A platform that enables people to share ideas. And that's why we aspire to, and that's why we are not building just the research library, or a reading hall, but the cultural centre that can help people to recreate.

- Fantastic, thank you. And Hannah, any thoughts from you about sort of the purpose of libraries? And I think you've been involved with a competition to look at the meaning of the library in 21st century in digital terms?

- Absolutely. No, I think it is a complicated thing. You think why on earth do you need a library? Now as you write you say you can get a, you know, every book you've ever heard of and an awful lot more on your iPhone or your whatever tablet, I suppose I wanted to say in a more egalitarian way. But firstly, I think the way that it's been designed to have this extraordinary kind of amphora, if you like, in the middle of it. So that or this oculus you go in and the whole way I think that Herzog & de Meuron have designed this building is that you don't go into a kind of space which makes you feel like you're going backwards in time. You go into a space which actually opens your heart because you've got this extraordinary physical feeling of being able to look through time with different books. You can literally see the oldest book to the newest book. And there's a feeling I think of togetherness, of being with other people and that we know from libraries all over the world. People go to libraries not just to read books, they go to share ideas, to be with other people. As Oren said, you know, it is a cultural centre. It's got, I think there is a brief picture. It's got a beautiful kind of auditorium, which can be for music as well as for lectures. It's got, you know, all sorts of other, it's got cafes. It's got outside spaces. I mean, this is a place I believe that will become a locus in Jerusalem. And then as to the competition, obviously, we're thinking a lot about how do you make a library reach out beyond its physical boundaries? And one of those is just simple online. But we then wanted to see, and I worked with a colleague, Asher Reagan at Yad Hanadiv and he and the colleague came

up with an idea, which is to start an international competition. Which was completely open. It was open from all ages, all creeds, all backgrounds and all areas of technology to see, could you imagine a way using technology that we could make libraries and the contents in libraries more accessible? And we had literally thousands and thousands and thousands of people. It's a big prize, it's a million dollars, so it's not insignificant. And in the end we've got it down to 20 finalists. And what we saw was an extraordinarily inventive and interesting way of people trying to apply technology and trying to apply outreach and trying to apply learning, et cetera, and marry it with what we've got at our fingertips or in our tablets. So that will be announced in the not too distant future. I'm delighted that Oren and his colleagues are kind of excited by this as well. And so I think, wait, watch this space, we'll let you know.

- Excellent. I think, trying to answer my own question, there is something really electric about being in the presence of an original artefact as well. You know, you are there in front of the real thing. Even though probably it could be reproduced in the way that I wouldn't know the difference, knowing that it was, you know, Hanadiv touched this object or whatever it may be, it's fascinating. And Jason, this is a big weight of significance and cultural value and historical value. How do you stop that grinding the project to a halt?

- Well, I think that we had those clear ideas from the beginning that anchored us. And of course, you know, over the course of a project, it's a very iterative process. You go through a lot of different ideas and we're kind of constantly questioning when we have, perhaps become a little bit too, well contextual is the wrong word, but when we start to kind of mimic historical forms and when we're creating something that is not appropriate to the local environment and it's always sort of a fine line between those aspects. And that has come just through time and through the team process. There's never a single right answer on this topic, but it is certainly more than anything that I've seen in my career, been a real topic on this project. This environment is very complicated to work in.

- So, picking up on that, I mean, Oren you mentioned it as well operating, I think Hannah you may have done too, against a really complex political and cultural background and Yad Hanadiv's purpose of looking at a vibrant and equal opportunity society. And on the other hand, this is part of its purpose is, it's a library of the Jewish people and the state of Israel and the land of Israel. How does all that mix together for you in terms of really achieving that significant and important objective of connecting people of all sorts?

- Well, I like to touch on that to the building itself. I think that part of the idea of HDM was that it's a place of a lot of interconnections. It's the interior and exterior speaks all the time together. The fact that we have a connection between visitors and

users. Those that come only for a few moments to see an exhibition or to a cultural event. We want them to become users and the users, we want them to become visitors. We want to have different audiences inside the building. So academic and nonacademic, young and old, Arabs and Jews, religious and nonreligious in the place. The fact that we all the time look at the connection between digital and physical and how we can make it a one smooth experience. So all those different relationships are really helped by the architecture of the building, by the collection themselves that represent different parts of Israeli society and Jews around the world. And again, beyond that. So the combination even with the challenges that a lot of different viewpoints. The fact that we have on the shelves things to present everybody is also looked at the building and the users themselves. And that's what create a great library in a way and a great space.

- Okay, thank you. And thinking about the kind of design process for the building itself, to what degree and how, and perhaps this is one for Jason initially, but it could be for anybody else. How did you engage and understand the needs of users and future users as you were putting it together? Jason, is that so something you might want to touch on?

- Well, I think Oren and his team, there were a core group of people who were acting as representatives for the users and I think Oren's team did a great job of collecting the different perspectives. And it is a complex group and that's something we learned. There are so many different types of people who use the library and people with very strong opinions. And we're on the one hand trying to create a place that is welcoming to people who have used the existing library for many years and feel very comfortable there. And on the other hand, we're trying to think forward and create a space that creates a whole new audience and there are inevitably, some kind of contradictions there.

- And Hannah did you have a sort of driving idea behind the kinds of audiences and or participants or users that you wanted to encourage into the library?

- I think what I said, you know, it is the home of the book and I think that it should be egalitarian. It should be exactly as Jason and Oren have both said it should be for everybody. And that's something that I hope and I'm absolutely sure I don't just hope, I'm absolutely sure that it will happen actually. I think it's such a beautiful place. It will attract many, many different people.

- And I've got a comment in the questions here from Mendel Horowitz that says, "I live and work in Jerusalem and I'm grateful for a public space in which to engage with other people that is neutral and non-religious." And he asks "what can be done to maintain an open space that is inviting to each of the communities of Jerusalem?" Is there a

sort of, Oren in use, is there a sort of a, once you're there sort of active programme to make sure that happens?

- Well the first step of the renewal of the national library is the building of course, but we have been actively looking at the ways to activate the building and being a real building that is full with people and activities all times. So we do a lot of educational programming that are intended again for everybody. Events, culture, concerts, seminars, residency programme, exhibitions. We have a very large space for any beautiful one for exhibitions. Don't know if Jason has some images of those, but those are maybe the best part of the building that I love. And seminar rooms, restaurant, coffee shop, eh, a lot of public spaces. So we feel that this is the thing that Israel needs this time.

- Yep. Excellent. Okay, Jason, just a very mundane question to you. You talked about the light coming in through the centre core. How do you deal with the fact that somehow old books and light don't get on too well?

- Oh, it's filtered. So it's not just direct sunlight coming in. There are multiple layers that cover this and just let in a very kind of a reduced amount of the UV light coming in. We have screens coming over, especially the western windows on the street level. So this has been a key topic for us over the course of the project. How do we create that connection to the outside that openness while still protecting the artefacts.

- Okay, I'm quite interested in thinking about the degree to which it's been possible to future proof the building. In as much as all buildings somehow tend to change their purpose over the years and perhaps libraries will continue to change their purpose. So the degree to which that's there. And then also one of the questions that has popped up in the question box here from Alice Milner is, "What plans were incorporated into the design to accommodate the expansion of the collection?" And it's two questions there. One is expansion, one is flexibility, if that's a factor. Oren, as the client.

- Well I'll start with expansion. When we started planning the building, we estimated that there will be a decline in print. Maybe not the death of the print, but suddenly a decline. We haven't seen that actually print is not less popular today than it was 10 years ago. Even if the digital is growing and we certainly didn't plan enough space for the future. And we know that if print is still going to be alive and kicking for the future, we will need more storage space. So that's an issue. And sometimes we are wrong. And for flexibility, since every client usually comes to the architect and says, "I want a very flexible building." And everybody agrees, "Yes, we'll do a flexible building", but when it comes down to a concrete, it's less flexible than we thought we should have. But we thought

about different ways to that will accommodate changes in the future. For example, if less, demand for the reading halls of the physical collection, we can certainly make some of the space more to exhibition spaces, to cultural spaces. And if we have great demand for the reading halls, we can do the opposite. So we have alternatives in the building.

- Maybe I can just add, if we get to that point where this is really a topic, then the building has succeeded. I think that we're dramatically expanding the amount of area and the anticipated users in this building and through all of the activation. So I really hope we're at the point where we say, "Wow, it's so successful, we need more space." And then, you know, hopefully there's reason for somebody to come along and do something else that's great.

- I have to say, I think dream on if you think the building isn't going to be used Oren. I think your problem is going to be having too many people in there, not too few is what I anticipate. I would just like to say what was one of the really interesting parts of the journey for us as the so-called, you know, philanthropist behind this was actually working on how do you future proof a building in terms of environment? So for example, you know, we wanted it to be, Jason, correct me if I'm wrong, lead platinum, is that the term?

- Lead. Yes, lead it is. Did we get to lead platinum, I think.

- Let's say we did 'cause that's what we are trying to get to anyway. So what again absolutely fascinating. So we had in the basement, I won't take up too much time, but in the basement for example, the sub sub sub-basement, there are huge cages full of giant rocks, you know, twice the size of me in some cases half the size and others. And you'd see these huge kind of like cages of rocks in the bottom and they're there to help air circulation. So when you look at this building with its glorious kind of curved top, you'd never imagined that actually it's resting on a whole lot of rocks. Which are there, you know, to help with circulation. Ditto, as Jason was saying, is some of the materials. I mean whether it's the oculus roof and we had to look at that or we were explained how one would make that more environmentally friendly to withstand, as I said, snowfall, which it does snow interesting, occasionally. Obviously extremes of temperature. The concrete, I remember endlessly looking at different samples of concrete and wood. You know, there is not one bit of this building which hasn't been thought through, agonised over, tested, stress tested, heat tested, you know, load tested, you name it. And it has been an amazing experience and I do think that HDM are very, very, very good at this. I think it's one of the things that they take really enormous trouble with is how to match the material to the place.

- Thank you. Picking up on the sort of the stone and the construction.

Couple of questions here, one from Jeremiah Tower who says, "Can you talk more about the shapes of the carving on the exterior walls, what is the meaning symbolism of the shapes?" And another question which is, "What was the reason for not using the local stone for the exterior?" That's from the Norah Strosky. Jason?

- So I can talk about the shapes. That's a very long conversation and it exactly comes back to this idea of symbolism. I think it was important for us to find a logic for the pattern on the outside to create openings in this overall stone. That wasn't too driven by symbolism. And for us, the way we started with that is by looking at these ancient walls that you find all over Jerusalem and regionally and looking at the way that they erode over time, which is quite beautiful. I think that's something that we all respond to when you see these stones that have just kind of softly eroded. And so we worked with this idea of the erosion in a kind of pattern, that kind of soft edge in order to create openings where we needed openings. In the end people may look at it and project onto it that they see a kind of text or they see a symbol. But that wasn't really the intentional. Though it was obviously a, a conversation for us. We didn't want to, you know, specifically refer to ancient text or contemporary Hebrew or Arabic or anything that you might find. We stayed away from that and really thought just about the material and what the material offered us.

- Thank you. Anything that Hannah or Oren you want to talk about? Sort the symbolism of the building? Don't have to, no?

- I think I would add to that, to what Jason said. I think that one thing that we are a little bit conscious about is how, you know, Swiss firm, very important one will go and understand the local traditions of Jerusalem or the local architecture of Jerusalem in a very sensitive space in the heart of Jerusalem. And I must say that it took us a few iterative sessions to understand it, how they work and how they learn through the process. And I think that the building even so it's very modern architecture, it's very rooted in Jerusalem. When you come in, first of all it's very human scale unlike the many libraries that you feel intimidated in them. And for me it goes to maybe the old city of Jerusalem that even so it has so many layers of history there. When you walk through that it's very human scale and the library is all the arches inside the local stone. The way that the light comes in is very jerusalemite. Even the local courtyards that are incorporated in the building.

- Yeah, it seems to me there's something very important about building it out of stone and picking up some degree on the vernacular because buildings that have a kind of different kind of facade as sort of a modern facade can age and sort of feel out of date. Whereas it seems to me from what I've seen of this building, will be it only on images, is that it has a massive longevity there so that it will be part of

the landscape for a very, very long time. Couple questions here, different but connected. Mosha Abramovich asks, "Will the building have a betneset and any other prayer space for the use of visitors to the centre and maybe connected, maybe not?" Will Kintish asks, "How much of the Arab community have been involved in the overall project?"

– Well, we have a synagogue and we have a motifs prayer room near each other. So we certainly look at serving all communities of Israel. The building is aimed to all religions, all parts of Israeli society and already today we see many active users of the building, the current building coming from the Arab communities.

– Excellent, excellent. Wonderful question here, which is one I was going to ask, but I'm glad someone else has asked it from Jennifer Malvin, "What was the most unexpected experience you encountered during the construction of this remarkable and timeless building?" Jason, you were very diplomatic about surprises along the way. We're now all friends, so I'm sure that we might all want to share something, either surprising or actually equally something you're most proud of or excited about the project. I'm going to start, Hannah, if I may with you.

– Oh, thanks a lot. That's a difficult question actually.

– It's very hard one.

– Jason's laughing. I can see he's quite pleased that it's been passed to me. I think actually funny enough, the most unusual thing that happened was we used to meet, this is sounds like I'm not answering the question, but I am actually, we used to meet in Basel, which is where Herzog & de Meuron offices were and there was a small hut outside the office. And all the library team... Oren's laughing. All the library team would come from there and then we would come from England and then obviously the Herzog & de Meuron people were there. And then we had these unbelievably kind of intense discussions and you know, there would be sandwiches here and there'd be coffee there and there'd be phones ringing and this, that and the other. And then at a certain time everybody down tools because Herzog & de Meuron have this wonderful thing that at I think, I can't think it's midday, everybody has to go down tools and they go to a communal room where there are loaves of bread which seem very symbolic and coffee. And you would then go and you would sit or stand or talk with whoever is very large office, whoever was there. So it was this rather wonderful thing that actually there was this safe space breaking bread, literally outside where we were talking. And that's something I'd like to repeat elsewhere. So I haven't really answered the question, but I do remember that that is one of my top memories.

– Thank you. No, that's really interesting. Jason, anything surprising, interesting, most proud of?

- Well I think that like many places in the world when we work in different environments, there is a time of learning and adjusting to local culture. And there was certainly, there were moments when... Although I'm not Swiss, I'm American, but you know, working with colleagues here in Switzerland, going into Israel, we had to all kind of learn how to work with each other. I think what was interesting for me, Hannah, the counterpoint to what you said is, in Israel on the construction site, where the team meets is way underground now and it's, you know, kind of in this loud crazy space and in the basement and there are meeting rooms and there are lots of days when you have really kind of intense conversations and shouting and, you know, everything that's a very vibrant atmosphere to say the least. But then, you know, people bring luncheon and I always amazed how food actually brings people together in that environment and we have hummus and pita and people sit around and suddenly they start laughing. And that was something that we learned from, because in Switzerland I, you know, here if there's that kind of tension, we probably would carry that through the rest of the day. And there we always found a way to work with each other and carry forward and laugh and we became friends.

- Right. Excellent. Which is why the question here from Sharon Abramson, "Will there be a restaurant cafeteria open to the public?" I think we've already answered the fact there will be, but actually that's probably also a significant answer to some of the other questions about how people will engage with each other and use the building. Oren, anything surprising or unusual on the project for you?

- Well, I would add to the culture differences in a project, in a very international project that has people from all around the world in this project, not only architect suppliers, consultants, users. I would pay and maybe add two antidotes that from the long road that we did. We have in the building a beautiful space that it is between the educational space and a coffee shop. It's like an hang patio or open courtyard in the middle of the building and it has an opening on the ceiling that when we asked the library asked the architects what happens in the winter? And we were arguing that for maybe two years, what will happen in the winter, how people will sit there? The answer that we got is, "What winter? You don't have winter in Israel." So I think that the final answer we got when we had the snow, maybe three, and we had one of the architects climbing on the roof and have a photograph there said, "Well, we do have winter and then we found a solution in there." And maybe a second antidote is one of the really, yeah, he deserves a huge tank it's Maxil Beckenbauer from HDM team that leads the planning project and he is on the ground all the time. He had to learn a lot of Jewish traditions in understanding why do we have to plant before Shoshoni gardens? Or what is mezuzah what he has to do that with that? So it's a mutual learning process between the architects, the clients, the constructors, the contractors, the

consultant that are working together. And I think one thing that Herzog & de Meuron said through the process is, "When we come to a local land we learn, we teach and it's a process of growth together."

- Yeah, I think that's such an important story about architecture and buildings. The last thing you need is someone who knows everything about everything. The point of it is curiosity and developing an idea together. And we're coming towards the end, I'm afraid. Just one simple question that's asked by Howit Golden, which is, "Any idea when the building will be finished and when we can have the opening ceremony?" So the ceremony is a key thing.

- Well, Oren, you're going to have that one.

- Who dares to answer to answer-

- Thank you. Well I think that libraries has a lot of mysteries in themselves and it's like open. So this is one mystery we'll keep to ourselves for the moment.

- Okay.

- But it's going to be open in '23, that's for sure.

- Okay, excellent. I haven't and I'm not going to ask you the question about whether you stuck the budget because that's always too complex. So we'll leave that one there. And really just to thank all of you Hannah, Oren and Jason for being so open and so engaging. This is clearly such an intelligent project and it shows in everything we've seen so far. I can't wait actually to see it physically myself because it's one thing seeing a building on screen and I don't think you can ever, ever, ever get a proper sense of it without walking around it and touching the stone and seeing the light. So, I hope that I'll get to do that and I hope that many of you who joined us tonight will also have a chance to do that. So having thanked our great panellists and I also thank the partners who made this evening possible, certainly the National Library of Israel at Jewish Book Week and the Lockdown University. So thank you all very much and have a good evening. Thank you.

- Thank you.

- [Oren] Thank you. Good evening.