

# Jewish Journal

Palm Beach South

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## World's Jewish Museum will celebrate Jewish contributions to humankind



**By Linda Chase**  
Staff Writer

Israel will reach its milestone 75th year of Independence in May of 2023. By that time, the creators behind the World's Jewish Museum/Hamakom hope to break ground in Tel Aviv on what will become an innovative gathering place showcasing the Jewish-Israeli experience.

I heard about the proposed project when I was invited to a recent event in Sunny Isles Beach attended by supporters for American Friends of the World's Jewish Museum. Several officials involved in the museum's development were on hand including Its President, Gail Asper, who took the time to graciously chat with me.

When asked what inspired the idea for the Museum, Gail said, "After building the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and supporting other tolerance and Holocaust memorial museums, we wanted to focus on something positive for the Jewish world. Since 70% of Jewish museums focus on our difficult past, we believe that changing the narrative from one of survival to something positive will strengthen Jewish identity and make our kids and future generations proud of who we are as a people."

"Accordingly, we are set to create an uplifting and distinctive experience that will celebrate Jewish contributions to humankind in every conceivable field throughout the ages — philosophy, reli-

World's Jewish Museum Treasurer/Secretary Moe Levy and President Gail Asper at a recent event in Sunny Isles Beach. PHOTO BY LINDA CHASE

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## Museum

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gion, medicine, technology, science, the arts, entertainment, justice and philanthropy. While we must never forget our difficult past, the World's Jewish Museum/Hamakom (WJMH) will demonstrate that we are not defined only by our tragedies."

I asked Gail why Tel Aviv was chosen as the site for the Museum?

"We wanted to set the museum in Israel since the history, faith, religion, culture, and identity of the Jewish people have always been tied to Israel, with the Jewish connection expressed every day through prayer and practices. Further, Israel is the hub of tourism for the Jewish world. There are many wonderful cities in Israel, however the site that we were offered in

Tel Aviv has a particular beauty to it since it overlooks the Mediterranean," Gail responded. "Further, Tel Aviv is a cosmopolitan city where the art, film, and music communities have grown rapidly. Its natural beauty, architectural profile and city lifestyle make it a great city to host this monumental landmark destination."

What is unique about this Museum?

"The WJMH will be focused on showcasing the Jewish people and Judaism's contributions to humankind throughout the ages with technology, media, the arts, theater, exhibition projects and social spaces," Gail explained. "It will include the Land of Israel Gallery and Covenant Theatre; a Creativity Gallery; Philosophy Gallery; Science, Inquiry and Innovation Gallery; Enterprise Gallery; Survivors and the Survivor Generation

exhibit; and the Tzedek, Tzedakah, and Tikkun Olam Gallery."

"The campus will also have spaces and amenities that will enrich Tel Aviv and Israel's cultural and social landscape including a Children's world, a Genesis Garden; a Creative Space with ateliers for artists to work, and a Beautiful Performing Arts Center that will entertain Israelis, tourists, Jews and Non-Jews from all walks of life."

"The content will include the vast history and contributions of Ashkenazi, Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews from around the world. Equally, it will reflect everything to do with Israel and its impact on the world today, from its founding to the Start Up Nation," Gail continued.

When asked if building has started yet, Gail responded, "Not yet. We are currently in discussions however, with Frank

Gehry, our local Israeli architect and the City of Tel Aviv regarding how the design works with the new City plan. We expect to begin building when we have secured an additional \$100 million in pledges."

"The goal is to put the shovel in the ground during Israel's 75th birthday celebration in 2023."

Gail explained where funding is coming from and what it will cost to build.

"The cost is approximately \$400 million and the funding is a worldwide effort from Jewish philanthropists throughout the world including The Asper Foundation, and approximately \$100 million in pledges has been secured. The land was donated by the City of Tel Aviv."

Gail, along with Moe Levy, The Asper Foundation's long-serving Executive Director, together with The Asper Foundation Trustees and many supporters, created the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. I asked her if there's a connection between the two museums?

"The connection is that The Asper Foundation has long supported tolerance projects/museums and Holocaust museums," Gail said. "After building the Canadian Museum for Human Rights - which has received international acclaim and is even on the back of Canada's \$10 bill - I and the Trustees of The Asper Foundation as well as Moe, decided to turn our attention to creating something uplifting and positive so that the Jewish story is not ONLY one of the tragedies we have suffered. I have seen firsthand how a world class museum can transform a community and also transform hearts and minds."

According to Gail, the new museum is going to be more of a cultural and entertainment venue as opposed to one that focuses on the Holocaust.

"It will be a hub of activity with performances,

programs, dining, shopping and celebrations. We expect our beautiful public spaces to be in constant demand for receptions, weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and other *Simchas*."

"WJMH will have a beautiful performing arts center and an outdoor amphitheater as well.

Since the WJMH is on the edge of Hayarkon Park, we are also looking into the possibility of projecting the concerts and events that are happening inside the performing arts center to the outside as well so that the general public can enjoy them as well."

"The museum will not only target adults," said Gail.

"There will be a Children's World as part of the museum, plus multiple educational programs for people of all ages."

I asked Gail why Frank Gehry was chosen as the architect commissioned to design the museum?

"Frank Gehry is one of the most respected architects of all time, and his design of the WJMH is already receiving worldwide attention," Gail responded. "This is Gehry's first project ever in Israel and with his track record, the architecture is sure to be stunning and an attraction in and of itself."

How many tourists are anticipated to visit the museum each year?

"McKinsey & Co were commissioned to do a Feasibility Study on the WJMH, and per their report, they expect 800,000 to 900,000 visitors annually, half of which would come from foreign tourists," Gail responded.

Gail expressed why this museum will be different from others in Tel Aviv.

"There is no other museum in Tel Aviv that will be of this magnitude and combine a spectacular site, iconic architecture, uplifting exhibits, fine dining and shopping as well as artistic ateliers and performance spaces. To tell the entire story of the Jewish people and

Judaism's contributions to humankind you need multiple grand pavilions and a very large space. While others may touch on the subject, this will be on a much larger scale in a world class breathtaking landmark."

"For example, I've always loved the area of Jewish contributions to the arts and feel you'd need a museum the size of the Louvre to properly explain just that one area," Gail continued. "When you think about film, Hollywood, literature, plays, artists, classical music, rock, musical theatre, dance, fashion, architecture, comic books and superheroes and of course, humor - you can see how much there is to cover. So clearly we need more museums focussing on these positive and fun aspects of our heritage. Further, the WJMH will be a place for both Israelis and tourists to visit and congregate - whether it is to visit the exhibits, see a concert, host artists or meet up with friends."

"Ultimately, the hope is that visitors, including Birthright teens, will fall in love with Israel, pay their respects at Yad Vashem, and then become inspired at the WJMH. Most crucially, the WJMH's mission is to enhance the bond between Israel and the global Jewish population through the strengthening of its collective identity," Gail added.

"It will interest people from different cultures as well."

"The museum will be designed to interest people from all walks of life. It will be an entertaining introduction to who the Jewish people are and how our Jewish values have impacted the world. We will also draw lines between Judaism, Christianity and Islam and hopefully build bridges and understanding."

Visit <https://worlds-jewishmuseum.com> for more information on the museum.

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