10:15

**Beit HaKehillot**

*Beit HaKehillot in Jerusalem* is a new museum and media experience designed to tell the story of the Jewish People: its origins, its teachings, and its revolutionary role in history.

The exhibit will present Judaism’s rich spiritual and cultural heritage through the lens of the innumerable Jewish communities (*kehilot*, in Hebrew) of the diaspora. These diverse communities first grew up in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple and the exile of the Jewish People from the Land of Israel in 70 CE. Throughout the generations, they were linked by a shared adherence to traditional Jewish heritage and by constant communication—in the form of letters, legal rulings, poetry and prayer, and biblical and talmudic commentaries—between rabbis, merchants, mystics, and thinkers, the outstanding Jewish figures of their day.

The *Kehillot Yisrael Experience* will use precious Jewish manuscripts (*kitvei yad*), historical events, and extraordinary personalities to tell a story encompassing the differences and essential commonalities of Jewish communities everywhere.

The ultimate goal of the center is to inspire Jewish pride and to connect contemporary Jews to their own rich heritage. By bringing the past to life, Kehilot Yisrael aspires to make every Jew feel at home in his or her own culture and to recognize how Jewish tradition remains indispensable in building a better future.

The exhibition will be accessible, inclusive, and engaging for a broad audience.

**Conceptual Narrative**

An introductory film sets the scene for the exhibition. The film begins with the birth of the Jewish people and retells the familiar stories from the Bible.

1. Viewers watch Abraham become the world’s first messenger of monotheism.
2. The Jewish People suffer as slaves in Egypt for four hundred years.
3. Moses receives the Torah at Mount Sinai, a new moral code for the Children of Israel and all mankind.
4. The Jewish People fail to adhere to their covenant with God and are resented by their neighbors for their seemingly strange ways. After the destruction of the Temple and exile, the Jews are scattered to the four corners of the earth.

**Main Gallery**

1. Despite hardship and oppression in the diaspora, far-flung Jewish communities develop a rich culture and heritage around the ever-expanding realm of *Torat Yisrael.*
2. The vast body of manuscripts, of all manner and type, produced by these communities expresses the remarkable fact that they remain both closely connected and deeply engaged in preserving and expanding the Jewish heritage. This tradition is the glue that binds the dispersed people together.
3. After a majority of the Jewish People return to their ancestral homeland, how will this rich heritage continue to be an integral part of Jews’ national and individual identity?

**Kehillot Yisrael Institute**

Beit HaKehillot is just one piece of the puzzle. The Kehillot Yisrael Institute includes a Jewish studies research institute; an advanced center for documentation and digitization; a department for the research, documentation, and preservation of Jewish cemeteries throughout the world; and a department for research of Jewish poetry and liturgy. The Institute’s research facilities will be made available to visitors as part of the *Beit HaKehillot* museum experience, allowing those who wish access to more in-depth information on particular topics.

**History of the Project**

*Phase 1 Concept Development* was approved in November of 2018. This stage clarified the goals and narrative details of the project.

*Phase 2 Concept Design*, currently in progress,includes:

* Hiring a local media production team, including project coordinator
* Additional concept development and refining the visitor experience
* Preliminary visualizations of the exhibition
* Architectural blocking and interior design
* Joint workshops with Kehilot Yisrael head Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Hillel to insure that all desired content elements are included in the visitor experience.
* Initial budgetary estimates and breakdowns

A successful client presentation was conducted in July 2019, midway through the Phase 2, providing a chance for the client to confirmation the project direction and to discuss further developments. It is estimated that this phase of the project will be completed by the end of 2019, when the client will be presented with a summary report, including a five-minute movie based on a virtual walkthrough of the visitor experience.

Initial Budgetary Projections

The initial estimate for completing the visitor experience section of the exhibit is approximately $25M. This cost includes building costs, concept design and development, exhibition and multimedia design, and fabrication of all experiential elements and exhibits. Detailed breakdowns of the budget for each project element are available upon request.

**Concept and Design: About BJA**

In 2017, the Kehillot Yisrael Institute invited Berenbaum Jacobs Associates (BJA), an internationally recognized museum design firm specializing in Jewish themes, to enter into a collaborative effort in designing *Beit HaKehillot.* BJA utilizes unique storytelling methodologies, creative applications, and pedagogical techniques to deliver meaningful messages in a way that has lasting impact and inspires visitors to take positive action. *Beit HaKehillot in Jerusalem* will be a groundbreaking exhibition using cutting-edge technology to create an experience that is is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally compelling.

More information about BJA projects can be found on the [BJA website](https://berenbaumjacobs.com)

Projects opened in the past year include:

[Holocaust and Humanity Center (VIDEO)- Cincinnati, Ohio, Opened January 2019](https://berenbaumjacobs.com/portfolio/the-hhc-humanity-gallery/)

[Holocaust Memorial Center (VIDEO) Skopje, North Macedonia, Opened March 2019](https://berenbaumjacobs.com/portfolio/holocaust-memorial-museum-of-macedonia-2/)

[Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum (VIDEO - pending)](https://berenbaumjacobs.com/portfolio/dallas-holocaust-museum/) - Dallas, Texas, (preview ln ABC News), opened September, 2019