

New Knesset Dedicated in Israel



The New York Times (by James Feron)

The Return to Zion, a 24-foot-high mosaic by Marc Chagall, covers reception hall wall

By JAMES FERON
Special to The New York Times
JERUSALEM (Israeli Sec-
tor), Aug. 30 — Israeli leaders
dedicated their new Knesset
building today before 5,000
guests, including speakers and
parliamentary delegates from
41 nations.

A sculptured beacon rep-
resenting the Biblical burning
bush was lighted to mark the
opening of the Parliament
building. The flame was a
signal, as in Biblical days, for
the kindling of other signal
fires on hills throughout the
land.

The new structure, a gift of
the House of Rothschild, is the
first permanent home for Is-
rael's Parliament. Its imposing
size and commanding position
make it a landmark in the
capital.

Called Symbol of Reunion

Mrs. James de Rothschild,
widow of the English baron
who gave the initial donation
for the structure, said that gen-
erations of Jews had yearned
for Jerusalem and mourned for
the Temple destroyed by the Ro-
mans A.D. 70.

"Plainly this Knesset can
never take the place of the
other building," she said, "but
just as the destruction of the
Temple was once the signal for
our dispersal, so may this new
Knesset be the symbol of our
abiding reunion."

Dr. Birgir Finsson, Speaker
of Iceland's United Althing,
which he said was "the oldest
Parliament in the world," spoke
on behalf of the parliamentary
delegations. He praised the
Jewish respect for law and said,
"Two-thousand years of wan-
dering are vindicated in the
dedication of a new Parliament
building in free Israel."

Building on Historic Site

The Knesset building stands
on a hill in what has come to
be known as Jerusalem's
"Acropolis."

Nearby are the buildings of
the Hebrew University, the of-
fice of the Prime Minister and
other Government structures
and until now the newest addi-
tion—the two-year-old Israel
Museum.

The historic setting is under-
lined by the adjacent Valley of
the Cross, said to be the site
where a tree was cut for the
Cross of the Crucifixion. A few
hundred yards in the opposite
direction is the site of the
Harry S. Truman Center for
the Advancement of Peace.

Like many buildings in Jeru-
salem, the Knesset has been

1st Permanent Home for the Parliament Built in Jerusalem

designed into the curve of the
hill. From the entrance, level
with the crest, the building
is three stories high. Three more
stories descend with the slope
to the south.

The new building is the Israeli
Parliament's third home. The
first, a converted cinema, was
in Tel Aviv. The second, to
which the Knesset members
moved 16 years ago, was a con-
verted bank in downtown Jeru-
salem.

Moving the Government to
Jerusalem was intended by the
Israelis to forestall any move
through the United Nations to
make an international enclave
of the Holy City, which was
divided in fighting between
Israel and Jordan in the 1948
Arab-Israeli war.

The bank building was ill-
suited for its new role but the
cramped quarters and narrow
corridors on different levels
seemed to fit the spirit of the
young, struggling country.

Governments fell in full view
of the greengrocer, and house-
wives joined office workers on
the sidewalk to watch ministers
come and go. Shouting matches
in the legislative chamber car-
ried to the street and crowds
gathered to listen. When a non-
kosher butcher moved next door,
the Knesset debate was like
a neighborhood quarrel.

This family atmosphere will
not be present in the new build-
ing. Knesset members will work
in splendid isolation. Demon-
strators will have to walk a
half hour from the center of
town to present their case, and
then only before a structure
that some see as more a monu-
ment than a house of legisla-
tors.

Cost and Size Criticized

The cost, estimated to be be-
tween \$6-million and \$8-million,
and the size of the Knesset
have been criticized sharply
and publicly by Israelis who re-
gard it as far too elegant for
Israel.

On a recent tour of the build-
ing, one Israeli said to his com-
panion, "It's too big, we can't
afford it." His friend asked,
"We can't — or Rothschild
can't?"

Baron Edmond de Rothschild,
who died in 1935, contributed
substantially to Israel's founda-
tion, backing the early Zionist

pioneers with funds to establish
villages and industry.

The baron's family continued
to develop huge areas of Israel
—Caesarea is an example—and
paid for vast projects, such as
the oil pipeline from Elath to
Haifa.

Synagogue in Structure

The new Knesset will contain
a synagogue.

Separate kitchens for meat
and milk dishes, conforming
with Jewish ritual require-
ments, will serve public and
private restaurants. A modern
reference library is provided
and there is enough wall and
floor space for display of a full
range of Israeli and other Jew-
ish art and sculpture.

A sculptured stone wall de-
signed by Dani Karavan of Tel
Aviv will face Knesset members
in the lofty chamber.

The material is intended to
arouse associations with Jeru-
salem. Included in the walls is
the famed pink stone indige-
nous to the site area. The stone
was removed from the Knesset.
Used also are massive stone
blocks from the Wailing Wall in
the Jordanian sector, now out
of reach to Jews.

The building's pride is a vast
reception hall decorated by Marc
Chagall. One wall is covered by
a 24-foot mosaic depicting the
Return to Zion. Twelve smaller
mosaics decorate the floor.

Tapestry Being Woven

A massive tapestry showing
the Creation, the Exodus and
the Ingathering of the Jews to
Israel will cover another wall.
The tapestry is being woven in
France and is to be completed
in a year.

The building, which was de-
signed by Yosef Klarwein and
the late Dov Carmi, has been
the subject of many disputes
over planning and technical de-
tails during its construction.

Argument still rages over
willingness of members to use
the new building. Despite the
16-year-old decision to move to
Jerusalem, the Knesset has con-
ducted much of its business in
Tel Aviv, the home of many
legislators.

The Speaker, Kadish Luz,
called on members recently to
extend their Knesset working
week from 2½ to 3½ days. Un-
der his plan, committee meet-
ings, that generally take place
on Thursday in Tel Aviv would
be transferred to Jerusalem. The
old excuse, that proper facili-
ties were not available, will dis-
appear with the opening of the
new building.