

Virtual Tour of Israel's Independence Hall: An Educator's Guide

About Independence Hall

Independence Hall (Heichal Ha'Atzmaut/ היכל העצמאות) is the site where David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, announced the establishment of the State of Israel and read Israel's Declaration of Independence (Megilat Ha'Atzmaut/ מגילת העצמאות) for the first time. This building is now a museum in Tel Aviv.

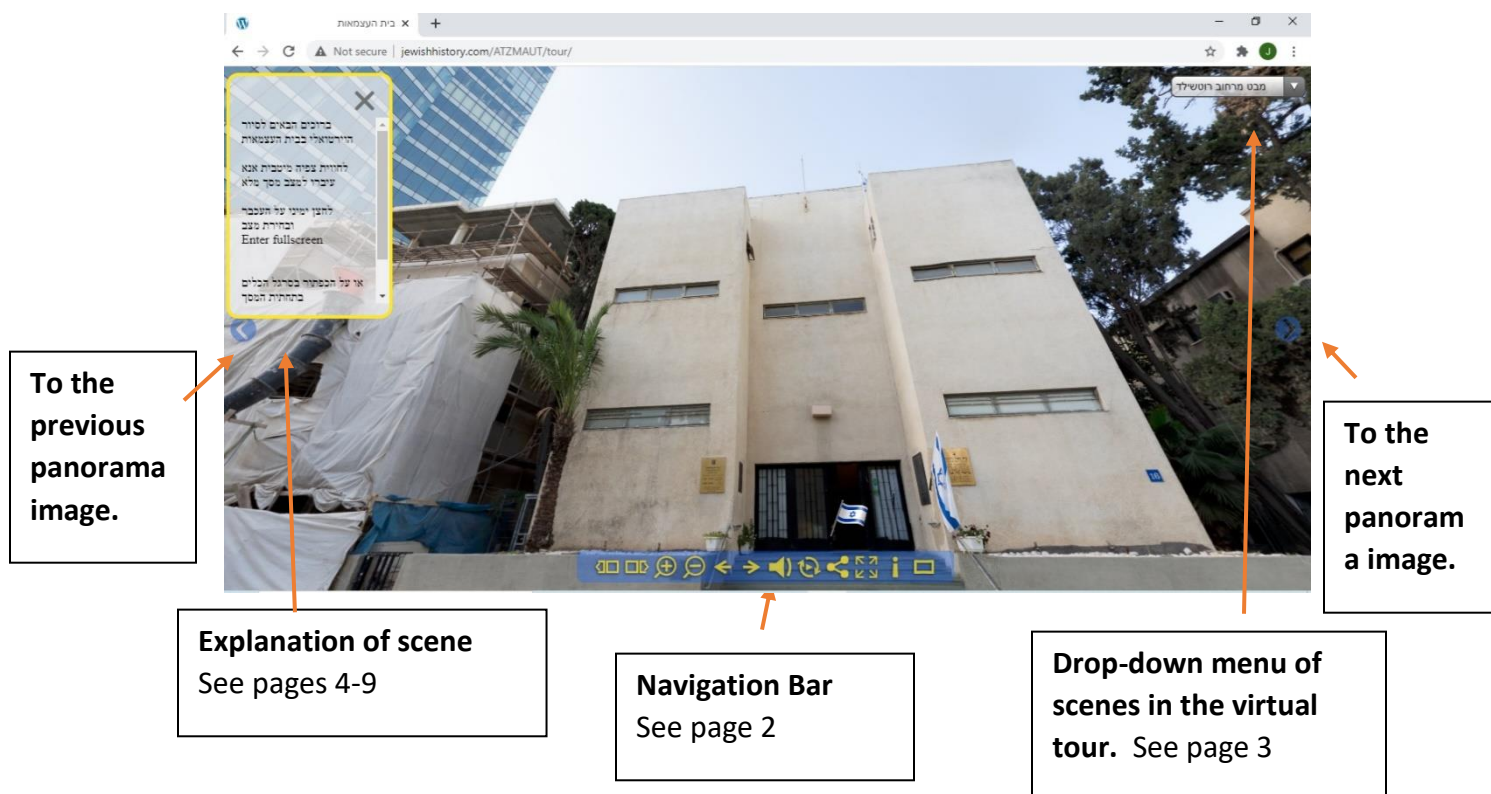
About this Virtual Tour and Educator's Guide

The tour was produced by Israeli photographer Ardon Bar Hama with funding by JewishHistory.com, a project of George Blumenthal. The tour was developed with the cooperation of the Office of the Prime Minister.

This guide will assist educators in presenting this virtual tour. Additional resources and questions for further discussion are available at the end of this guide.

Launching the Virtual Tour

This is the opening screen when launching the virtual tour of Independence Hall. Navigation features of the tour are identified below.



The Navigation Bar



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

1. Navigate to the Previous Panorama Scene
2. Navigate to the Next Panorama Scene
3. Zoom In
4. Zoom Out
5. Face Left
6. Face Right
7. Adjust Volume
8. Automatic View Rotation
9. Share this Virtual Tour with Others
10. Show/Hide in Full Screen
11. Show/Hide Explanation Box
12. Show/Hide Navigation Bar

In addition to using the navigation menu, you can also use your mouse to move, change your view, and zoom in and out of each scene.

Clicking on the animated Israeli flag will also move the viewer from one scene to another.

Scene Menu

There are six main scenes of the virtual tour. Use this menu to change scenes.



1. View from Rothchild Street (Boulevard)
2. Entrance
3. Lobby
4. Visitor's Auditorium
5. Main Hall – View 1
6. Main Hall – View 2

Scene Explanations

Scene One: View from Rothschild Street

This is the opening scene when starting the tour. You are facing Israel's Independence Hall, which was built by Meir Dizengoff, the first mayor of Tel Aviv, for him and his wife Zina. When Zina died in 1930, Dizengoff donated his home to the city to be used as a museum. The home served as the Tel Aviv Museum of Art from 1932 to 1971.

By scrolling left and right, you can view a 360-degree panoramic scene of Rothschild Boulevard. Today, Independence Hall is located at 16 Rothschild Boulevard. The statue in front of Independence Hall (scroll with your mouse 360-degrees to view it) is of Meir Dizengoff on horseback.

Scene Two: Entrance

A view from the entrance steps of Independence Hall. By scrolling left and right, you can view Rothschild Boulevard and the two commemorative plaques at the entrance to the building.



Translation:

This building was the home of Zina and Meir Dizengoff. On Friday, the 5th of Iyar, 5708, the 14th of May 1948, the members of the People's Council, representatives of the Jewish settlement and the Zionist movement gathered to announce the establishment of a Jewish State in the Land of Israel to be

Plaque to the Right of the Entrance



Plaque to the Left of the Entrance

Scene Three: Lobby

The lobby presents several historical photographs, a reproduction of Israel's Declaration of Independence, a verse from the Prophet Amos, and a quote from Theodore Herzl.



This quote from Theodore Herzl, and the photograph of Herzl at the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland, appear on the left wall of the lobby.



Photograph from the First Zionist Congress, Basel, Switzerland, 1897



This quote from the prophet Amos 9:14, and the photograph of the first settlers of Tel Aviv, appear on the right wall of the lobby.



This photograph depicts the lottery for the first building lots of Tel Aviv. The area pictured in this photograph was developed into Rothschild Boulevard on which Independence Hall was built.



Meir Dizengoff



David Ben Gurion



Reproduction of Israel's Declaration of Independence

Scene 4: Auditorium

The auditorium offers visitors a brief film about the history of Independence Hall and the announcement of Israel's independence. Clicking on each poster will open a larger image. Clicking on the screen will play a video of about Israel's Declaration of Independence, David Ben Gurion's announcement of independence, and the history of Tel Aviv. This video is only available in Hebrew.

Scene 5: Main Hall – View 1

A view of the Main Hall from the stage where Israel's independence was announced. Clicking on the center microphone will play a recording of Ben Gurion's reading of Israel's Declaration of Independence. Each painting can be clicked for a larger image and information about the painting. Clicking on the link in the information box will open an article about the artist in Wikipedia, if available. This article may be available in Hebrew and English. You can view this entire room by moving your mouse to the left or right.

Scene 6: Main Hall – View 2

A view of the Main Hall from the left side. Each painting can be clicked for a larger image and information about the painting. Clicking on the link in the information box will open an article about the artist in Wikipedia, if available. You can view this entire room by moving your mouse to the left or right.

Additional resources and questions for further discussion are available on the following pages.

Additional Resources for Educators

Additional information about Israel's Independence Hall and Israel's Declaration of Independence is available on the following websites:

- Eretz Yisrael Museum of Tel Aviv - <https://www.erezmuseum.org.il/e/99/>
- Jewish Virtual Library - <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/independence-hall>
- Israel's Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (English) - https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/megilat_eng.htm
- Israel's Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel (Hebrew) - <https://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/images/megila.jpg>
- Information about the 37 Signatories of Israel's Declaration of Independence - <https://mfa.gov.il/MFA/AboutIsrael/IsraelAt50/Pages/The%20Signatories%20of%20the%20Declaration%20of%20the%20Establis.aspx>
- Knesset's Explanation of the Declaration of Independence - https://www.knesset.gov.il/lexicon/eng/DeclarationIndependence_eng.htm
- Center for Israel Education's (CIE) Activity Guide for the Declaration of Independence - <https://israeled.org/israels-declaration-of-independence-activity-guide/>
- Video of May 14, 1948 at Independence Hall (Hebrew with English Subtitles) – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZDSBF5xtoo>
- Maccabeats music video based on the video above – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J6UcozPpJvs>
- For the Sake of Justice: Exploring Megillat Ha'Atzmaut – Produced by The iCenter and the Israel Democracy Institute <https://idi.theicenter.org/module-1-israel-and-united-states-tale-two-democracies/index.html>
- Encountering Israel's Declaration of Independence – Produced by The iCenter <https://theicenter.org/resource/encountering-israel%E2%80%99s-declaration-independence>

Questions to Expand Your Use of this Virtual Tour

- When you view the first image of the virtual tour, is it obvious that you are in Tel Aviv, Israel? Take a panoramic view of the street and notice all the items that suggest this building is in Israel.
- Does anything about the outside of Independence Hall surprise you? Explain why or why not.
- Why does the lobby of Independence Hall include a quote from Amos and a quote from Theodore Herzl? What is the connection between these quotes? What is the connection between these quotes and the images that accompany them? What message(s) do you feel this conveys to visitors as soon as they enter?

- Look at the picture of the group standing in the area that would become the city of Tel Aviv. How do you imagine people in this photograph may have felt?
- Look at the picture of the First Zionist Congress of 1897. How do you imagine that guests at this meeting might have felt?
- The lobby has a reproduction of the Declaration of Independence. How is it similar and how is it distinct from the [U.S. Declaration of Independence](#)?
- Meir Dizengoff, the first mayor of Tel Aviv and the original owner of the building which is known today as Independence Hall, died in 1936, twelve years before Ben Gurion announced Israel's Independence. How do you imagine Meir Dizengoff would have felt if he had known that Israel would be declared a state in this building?
- How do you imagine that David Ben Gurion felt in announcing the establishment of the State of Israel?
- How do you imagine the audience felt when listening to David Ben Gurion read the Declaration of Independence?
- It is difficult to see the details of the reproduction of the Declaration of Independence. You can [see here](#) an English translation and clear list of the names who signed it. Notice how many Rabbis signed, and how many women. Does this surprise you? Why or why not?
- Listen to a short clip of David Ben Gurion's declaration, even 30-40 seconds. Are there any Hebrew words you understand? Even if you do not understand Hebrew, can you understand Ben Gurion's tone. How would you describe it?
- What question might you have asked:
 - a guest at the reading of Israel's Declaration of Independence?
 - a participant in the lottery of building plots for the founding of Tel Aviv?
 - a participant at the First Zionist Congress?
- Look carefully at the name plates on the long table. Some of the signatories changed their last names to Hebrew names to sound more Israeli. What is the story behind your Hebrew name? When do you use it? If you have a separate English name, do you feel different when you are called by your English name or your Hebrew name?
- What is one thing you would tell the world if you were announcing Israel's independence in 1948?

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