

Apples, Bones, and Conkers: The ABCs of the Nation of Israel

Our production spans the period from 1885 to 1917. It begins with hope, the hope for a national homeland for the Jews. The family of Chaim Weizmann, living in Russia, read and rightly understood from the Old Testament scriptures that God had promised them the land of Israel and would regather them as a nation again, like dry **bones** being knit together to reform a body (Ezekiel 37). The play focusses on the declaration by Lord Balfour promising British support for a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. It concludes with General Allenby, the British commander, accepting the surrender of Jerusalem, freeing it from 400 years of Ottoman control. This dramatic change set the stage for the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

Scenes 1 and 2: The future first President of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, as a schoolboy of 11, reads a letter showing his passion for a homeland for his people in Israel. Chaim's teacher encourages his parents to send him for higher education.

Scene 3: At the First Zionist Congress in Switzerland in 1897, Weizmann talks with Theodore Herzl, a man passionate about finding a safe haven for his people, safe from the increasing horrors of anti-Jewish Europe. Herzl hoped to find that safe haven in Africa, but Weizmann knew that they belonged in Israel.

Scene 4: Lord Balfour of Britain meets Weizmann in England, and expresses an interest in Zionism and the destiny of the Jews.

Scenes 5 and 6: In the land of Palestine, Jews become afraid that the horrific way that the Turks are treating ethnic minorities (such as the Armenians), would intensify and include them. As the Great War is about to begin, the Aaronsohn family decide that they must help the British to defeat their overlords, the Ottoman Turks. (An **apple** is a symbol of the Turkish capital, Istanbul.)

Scene 7: In 1914, the British are at war with the Ottoman Empire and Germany. Weizmann has discovered a method of producing acetone through fermentation, from sources such as **conkers** (horse chestnuts). Acetone was an essential component in making explosive cordite. Balfour declares him "indispensable" to the war effort. Weizmann is able to ask for support for the Zionist cause.

Scene 8: The Aaronsohn siblings form part of the Nili spy ring, and at great personal risk, inform the British of what is going on within Palestine, giving General Allenby the information he needs to defeat the Ottoman forces.

Scene 9: On November 2nd, 1917, the Balfour Declaration was officially put in writing. Balfour tells Weizmann of the British intention to support a national home for the Jews in Palestine.

Scene 10: On December 9th, the British are waiting to attack Jerusalem. There are rumours that the Germans are trying to convince the Turks to surrender the city, and not to destroy it.

Scene 11: The Turks having withdrawn, the mayor of Jerusalem attempts to hand over the keys of the city. The first British soldier he finds is an army cook, Private Murch. Eventually Officer Watson takes control.

Scene 12: General Allenby accepts the official surrender of Jerusalem on behalf of the British Government.



Chaim Weizmann

A Russian Jew born in 1879 near Pinsk, he became a famous chemist, as well as a Zionist leader. In 1948 he became the first president of the State of Israel.



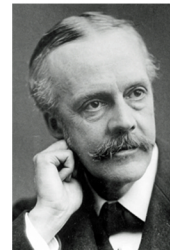
Theodor Herzl

A Viennese journalist who organized the First Zionist Congress in 1897, because of anti-Semitism in Europe. The Zionists sought a homeland for the Jews, and many Jews were encouraged to return to the land of Israel.



The Aaronsohn Family

A Romanian Jewish family, which came to Israel as pioneers in 1882. Aaron (top), Alex (left), Rivkah (bottom left), and Sarah (right) formed a spy ring known as Nili, and worked with the British against the Ottoman occupiers of Palestine. Aaron was a world-famous botanist, which enabled him to travel freely.



Lord Arthur Balfour

The Foreign Secretary of Britain who represented the British government in its decision to "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people".



General Edmund Allenby

The leader of the British forces which took Jerusalem from the Ottoman Turks in December 1917. Out of respect for the Holy City, he entered the city on foot to receive its surrender.



Hussein Selim al-Husseini, Officer Davies, Private Murch, Officer Watson Al-Husseini, mayor of Jerusalem under the Turks, surrendered the city to the British. "The Romance of the Last Crusade", by Major Vivian Gilbert, provided the names and details of the events of the surrender.