

Chaim Weizmann: A Biography

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Jehuda Reinharz and Motti Golani's *Chaim Weizmann* is an expansive and engrossing study of the Zionist leader and Israel's "founding father."

Born in 1874, Weizmann grew up in Russian-controlled Poland. Within his family, Weizmann noted how the return to a Jewish homeland in Palestine "was at the center of ritual, a longing for it implicit in our life."

Weizmann's initial career was as a chemist and a professor of chemistry. Educated in Germany and Switzerland, he found employment at the University of Manchester in 1904. Weizmann's chemical research offered significant aid to Britain's military efforts during World War I; this work later provided him with the opportunity to meet with major British political figures on Zionism's behalf.

The book delves into annual Zionist Congress meetings, chronicling the movement's various factions, alliances, and conflicts. Weizmann's relationship with Zionist visionary Theodor Herzl is explored, as well as his interactions with Emir Faisal, Albert Einstein, and Harry Truman. A fierce advocate for education and research, Weizmann founded what would become the multidisciplinary Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot in 1934.

Weizmann's charismatic public image is contrasted with his personal insecurities. His marriage to Vera Khatzman was an enduring partnership, but he pursued "infatuations" with other women. Beyond his magnetism, Weizmann could be melancholy and critical; he also sometimes felt as though he "labored thanklessly" in his constant cycle of travel, fundraising, speechmaking, and negotiations.

After the creation of Israel in 1948, Weizmann became the nation's first president. By then he had serious health problems and was troubled by Israel's militaristic shift. Still, he had lived to witness the establishment of a Jewish homeland and played a pivotal role in turning "dream into deed."

Vast and detailed, *Chaim Weizmann* captures Weizmann's tenacity, shrewd compassion, and the complexities of his diplomatic mission.

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