**Title:** Lord Rothschild’s Letter

**Year (Hebrew)**: 5684

**Year:** 1924

**Location:** Europe-Western

**Short description**

Lord Rothschild letter to Israel Cohen, June 6, 1924.

**Detailed description**

​​​This is the original letter sent by Lord Walter Rothschild to the journalist Israel Cohen, who was a leading British Zionist. In the letter Rothschild was responding to a request from Cohen for the original text of the Balfour Declaration. He explained that he had already deposited the document in the British Museum and therefore could not supply Cohen with the document. He enclosed a letter to the director of the British Museum which he hoped would enable Cohen to procure a copy. The Balfour Declaration is currently housed in the British Library.

This letter is fascinating for several reasons, not least the fact that a mere seven years after the Balfour Declaration, Rothschild had already demonstrated the foresight to deposit it in the British Museum and the museum directors had showed a similar awareness of its historical significance.

**Would You Like to Know More?**

**Israel Cohen** - Israel Cohen was a writer and journalist who had been deeply involved in the Zionist cause since first hearing a speech by Herzl and becoming a member of the Zionist movement in 1896. From 1909 until 1914, he was in charge of the Zionist Central Office in Cologne, and in 1918 he became the secretary for the World Zionist Organization in London. After World War I, Cohen undertook numerous Zionist diplomatic missions to Jewish communities in Europe, the Far East, and Australia. He later served as the general secretary of the Zionist organization in London and a member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. He wrote numerous books and articles.

**Teaching Suggestions**

​​​**​**​**Jewish** **History** teachers could use this letter to examine the historical significance of the Balfour Declaration. The letter could also be used as a trigger for a discussion on historiography and the ways in which a society preserves and memorializes its history.

**Art** teachers could use this letter to discuss the concept and significance of museums and the preservation of artefacts.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* Who wrote this letter?
* Who was the letter written to?
* What is the author of the letter responding to?
* Where, according to the letter, was the Balfour Declaration stored?
* What is Rothschild's explanation for placing the Balfour Declaration in the British Museum?

**Reading Between the Lines**

* Why do you think the British Museum decided to include the Balfour Declaration in its collection?
* Why do you think Israel Cohen wanted to see the original document?

**Connections**

* There are people who believe that the Balfour Declaration should be housed in Israel.  
  Do you agree?
* Would you like to see the Balfour Declaration?  Why?  
  Have you seen any other important historical documents?  
  Which have you seen?  
  What did you feel when you saw the document?

**Creative Ideas**

* Write a letter from the Israel Museum to the British Museum, requesting the transfer o​f the Balfour Declaration and outlining the reasons.

**Target audience:** Primary School, Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[Lord Rothschild's letter, PDF](http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/322a94_229e6cf739994f628187c89bba0c2563.pdf)

[The Secret Drafts of the Balfour Declaration](http://web.nli.org.il/sites/NLI/English/library/reading_corner/Pages/balfour.aspx)  
[Portrait of Lord Walter Rothschild](http://rosetta.nli.org.il/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE12125693)