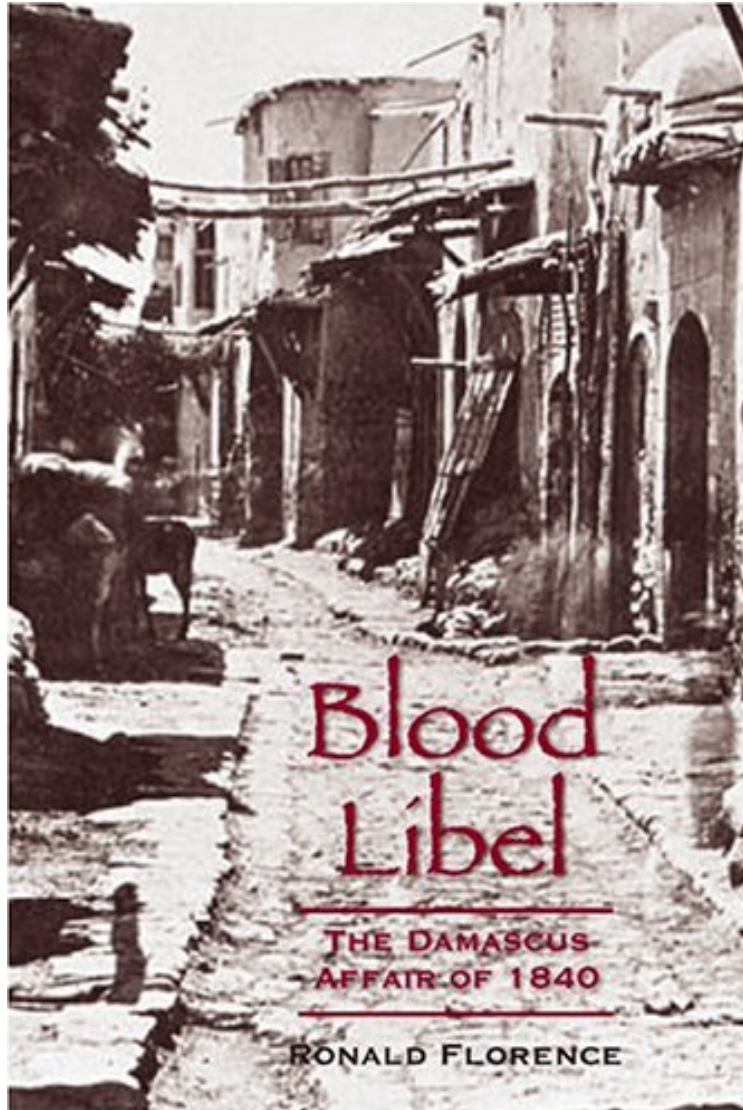


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Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840

Ronald Florence

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Ronald Florence : Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By Rebecca Hopper Great resource for a deeper dive into anti-Semitic mindset during a period of continental upheavals. Readable. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I'd recommend this to anyone By steven The storytelling was clear, evenly detailed, and very moving. I'd recommend this to anyone. 0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting . Very long By badbaruchwell researched book - i found it way too long . but very interesting . i felt as the story could of been told in

a shorter way .

In Damascus in February 1840, a Capuchin monk and his servant disappear without a trace. By the end of the day, rumors point at the local Jewish community, a tiny minority in the city. Within weeks, the rumors turn to accusations of ritual murder—the infamous blood libel. Torture, coerced confessions, manufactured evidence, and the fury of the crowds are enough to convict the accused Jews. By the time the rest of the world learns of the events in Damascus, the entire leadership of the Jewish community is awaiting execution. Blood Libel is a story of unexpected history. If the charges of ritual murder seem familiar—similar accusations have been heard in Europe for centuries and are heard in the Middle East today—nothing in Damascus happened as we, or contemporaries, might have anticipated. The accusers of the Jews were not the Muslim majority. The French consul, the representative of the nation that had given the world the Rights of Man and had been the first to grant Jews the full right of citizenship, was the chief prosecutor. The British consul, serving under the enlightened Lord Palmerston and the new Queen, aided the prosecution. The American consul supported the charges. The Sultan, famed for the excesses of his court and his arbitrary rule of the vast Ottoman empire, and the Austrians, who tightly restricted the rights of Jews in their own empire, defended the accused Jews. The venerable London Times printed reports that defied its liberal reputation, while conservative Austrian and French newspapers took the equally unexpected opposite stand. As news of the Damascus accusations spread, diplomacy and confused loyalties made for strange bedfellows. Misperceptions, mutual fears, and isolation fueled the passions in Damascus. When the affair and the implications for the perceptions of world Jewry became a cause célèbre in Europe and the Americas, the priorities of diplomacy intervened: a rescue mission forgot the real victims in Damascus, and the fabric of a society that had once stretched to tolerate minorities finally burst in an outrage of fears turned to fury. The legacies of that torn fabric are the divisions of the Middle East today and the continuing myths that feed and sustain the fervor of anti-Semitism.

From Publishers Weekly
On February 6, 1840, Father Thomas, a Capuchin monk, and his assistant disappeared in the vicinity of Damascus after paying a not unusual visit to the city's Jewish quarter. Within a day, the small, multid denominational Christian community banded together, claiming, "The Jews sacrificed the Father." This blood libel (the charge that Jews killed Christians to use their blood in religious rituals) shattered the relative peace in which the Jewish community had lived under Muslim rule. Two Jews confessed under torture and then died in prison, unleashing a massive assault in which 65 Jewish schoolboys (some as young as five) and 75 men were imprisoned. As the situation dramatically escalated a noted rabbi converted to Islam and the French, British and American consuls became involved with the prosecution the case became an international cause célèbre and eventually a goad to political change in the area. This is great material, and Florence, a novelist (Zeppelin) and historian, handles it with dramatic flair and meticulous documentation. While this is not as complete a historical account as Jonathan Frankel's magisterial 1997 *The Damascus Affair*, it's an excellent work of popular history. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "These days, when old, outdated anti-Semitic lies are being used in too many circles against the Jewish people, this book is important to all those who feel compelled to denounce them." Elie Wiesel "There are few more dramatic stories of nineteenth century Jewish history than that of the Damascus affair. Ronald Florence tells a mesmerizing tale with all the flair of a master story-teller, blending the story of what happened in Damascus and the horrifying torture of the Jews therewith the parallel and equally compelling story of the international struggle among the world's great powers that ultimately determined the Jews' fate. The epic clash of Jews, Muslims, and Christians of over a century and a half ago, the Damascus case resonates all too painfully today. Filled with mystery and suspense, *Blood Libel* is an engrossing read." David Kertzer, author of *The Popes Against the Jews* and *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* "Florence shapes his work around the history of events in Damascus in 1840, pulling readers in from the beginning in a way that characterizes a well-told novel while never giving way to the temptation to abandon historical accuracy and well-grounded research." Maud Mandel, author of *In the Aftermath of Genocide: Armenians and Jews in Twentieth Century France* "The blood libel legend [is] one of the most pernicious pieces of traditional folklore ever created. This splendid book could well serve as a valuable cautionary tale warning of what terrible consequences such malicious legends can cause." Alan Dundes, editor of *The Blood Libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore* About the Author Ronald Florence is an historian and novelist. He is the author of *The Gypsy Man*, *The Perfect Machine*, and *The Last Season*. He lives in Providence, Rhode Island.