



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **BLOOD LIBEL: THE DAMASCUS AFFAIR OF 1840**

### **AUTHOR RONALD FLORENCE TO SPEAK ABOUT HIS BOOK**

**American Sephardi Federation with *Sephardic House*  
at the Center for Jewish History  
15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10011**

*Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840* reads like a first-rate murder mystery thriller. But it is not a thriller. It is an account of a disastrous accusation against an entire community. Nor is it only history. Tragically, today the same horrible accusations—long thought to be buried—are once again being voiced. All this makes *Blood Libel* a book of contemporary significance. —Deborah Lipstadt, author of *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

**New York, NY – March `4, 2005 - On Wednesday evening April 6, 2005, at 7:00 PM**, author Ronald Florence will speak about his new book *Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840* and about the Jewish Community of Damascus today. The lecture will take place at the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House, 15 West 16<sup>th</sup> Street, New York (between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenues.)

*Blood Libel: The Damascus Affair of 1840* explores the events following the disappearance of a Capuchin monk and his servant in Damascus in February, 1840. Rumors of guilt point to 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 Damascus Jewish community is awaiting execution.

*Blood Libel* is a story of unexpected history—nothing in Damascus happened as might have been anticipated. 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. The affair became a *cause célèbre* in Europe and the Americas. When 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.

Admission is \$5.00/free for American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House members and can be purchased by calling the box office at (917) 606-8200. For more information, visit [www.sephardichouse.org](http://www.sephardichouse.org).

Ronald Florence is the author of eight books, both fiction and historical. *Gypsy Man* is about the fate of the gypsies in the Holocaust. *The Perfect Machine*, a definitive story of the building of the Hale telescope on Mount Palomar, is being adapted as a television documentary for *The American Experience*.

**About the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House:**

The **American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House** is a national Jewish organization dedicated to ensuring that the history, legacies and traditions of the great Sephardic communities throughout the world be recorded, remembered and celebrated as an integral part of Jewish heritage through lectures, exhibitions, publications, *The Sephardi Report* and a dedicated Sephardic library and archives. Visit [www.asfonline.org](http://www.asfonline.org) for more information about the American Sephardi Federation with Sephardic House.