NES MOOSSAN: The Aleppo Blood Libel, 1853

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“Blood libel also called blood accusations, the superstitious accusations that Jews ritually sacrifice Christian children at Passover to obtain blood for unleavened bread (matzot).”

Encyclopedia Britannica.

Blood libels were, unfortunately, very common. When a body of a Christian child was found, and the murder case could not be immediately solved, the Jews were the usual suspects or scapegoats. The accusations were ridiculous and preposterous: Jews using human blood to bake matsot? This is perhaps the best and most outrageous example of the demonization of the Jews. No matter how much Jews insisted that we are not allowed to consume even a drop of blood found in an egg, many gentiles spread the rumor that there was a secret ritual in which Jews extracted the blood of Christian children…

Historians have explained that these accusations gave the masses the excuse they needed to persecute Jews, seeking to take their money, their power, and positions. Probably the most famous blood libel in modern history was the “Damascus Affair” in 1840. When a Franciscan priest, Father Thomas, disappeared, the Jews were accused by the French authorities, their plea was ignored by the British and many were tortured by the Turkish authorities of Damascus. All done with the purpose of taking the assets and positions of the wealthiest families of the local Jewish community (see this). Needles to say, the Damascus affair had devastating consequences for its Jewish community…

In Aleppo, 1853, a blood libel was averted just on time. The body of a murdered gentile boy was planted in the house of a Jewish baker at midnight. The plan was to come in the morning with the police and accuse the baker of “ritual murder”. A Jewish baker was the perfect target and easy to accuse of “using the Christian blood to knead matzot” . Miraculously, the baker (named Moossa) woke up in the middle of that night, he discovered the body, understood the potential threat, and got rid of it. When the authorities came in the morning they

could not find anything. The baker informed the rabbis of the city of what had happened and they said that HaShem in His mercy saved the Jewish community of Aleppo from a terrible tragedy. They instituted that the 13 of Sivan be remembered as “Nes Moossan” (The miracle that happened thru Moossa) and in remembrance of this miracle, Viduy should not be said on that day.
(There is another explanation as to why Viduy is not recited: in the Diaspora, the days of tashlumim for Shabu’ot are finished on the 13th of Sivan, not the 12th.)
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