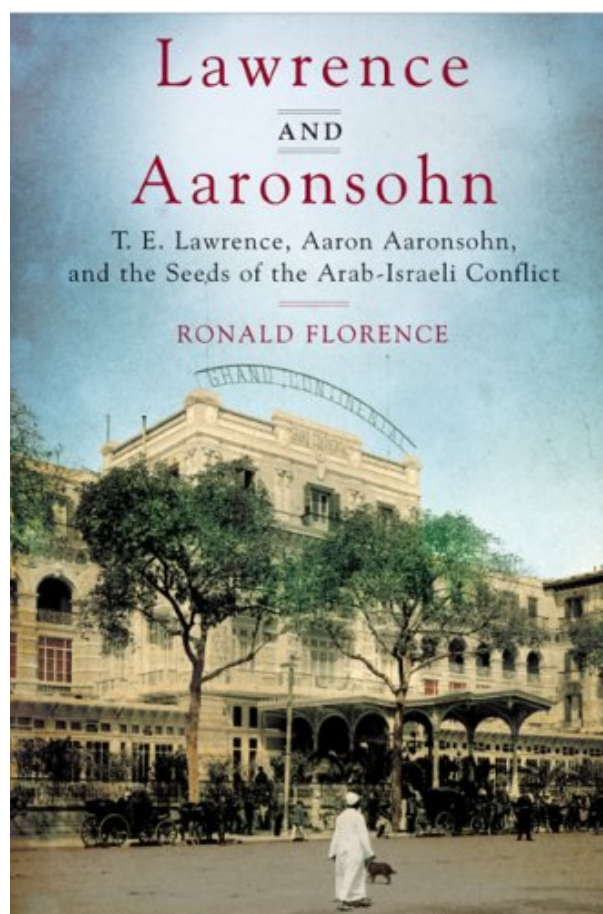
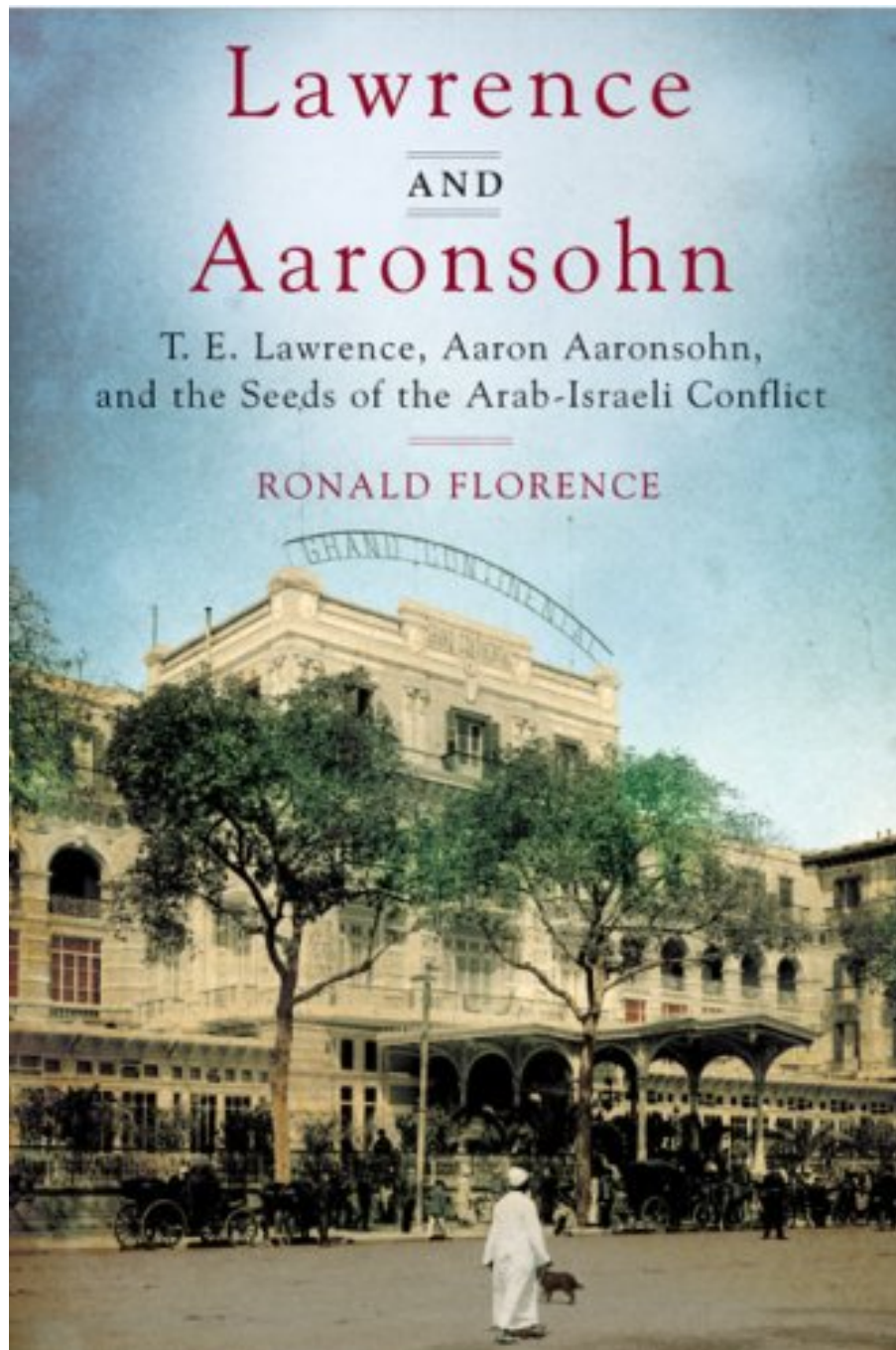


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How Lawrence of Arabia and a Jewish agronomist from Palestine mapped the land and conflicts of the modern Middle East

In the turmoil of the First World War, while the Great Powers secretly plotted the future of the Middle East, a second lieutenant from Oxfordshire and a Jewish agronomist from Palestine audaciously imagined new nations—Arab and Jewish—rising from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. T. E. Lawrence, who would later become the iconic Lawrence of Arabia, used his assignment of coordinating Arab support for British war strategies to advance the dreams of an Arab state. Aaron Aaronsohn gave up a distinguished career in science and, with his sister Sarah, established a secret spy network in wartime Palestine, providing the intelligence that enabled the British victory over the Turks.

Their arguments in wartime Cairo and at the Peace Conference in Paris presaged the political battles of the Middle East today. In this gripping narrative history, Ronald Florence resurrects the exploits and sacrifices of an unsung Zionist hero, deconstructs the legend of Lawrence of Arabia, and provides new perspectives on the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

- Sales Rank: #1408004 in Books
- Published on: 2007-07-19
- Released on: 2007-07-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.24" h x 1.60" w x 6.32" l, 1.68 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 528 pages

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A very interesting and original book

By Seth J. Frantzman

As in a number of new books such as Jerusalem 1913: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict this book seeks to examine the 'seeds' of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But the approach here is quite original, in a dual biography of a leading Zionist and Arabist the roots of the conflict are drawn by those actors who worked to create the facts on the ground after the First World War. T.E. Lawrence was one of the most celebrated figures of the war who helped lead an irregular force of Arabs under the Sharif of Mecca, the Hussein family, to victory in Damascus. But Lawrence was more than a British officer, he was a lover of the Arabs and adopted their cause as his own. He drew maps granting them new countries and wanted to decide the future of the Middle East based on his Bedouin friends. But time was against him as Ibn Saud conquered Arabia and Faisal and Abdullah were ejected, eventually pushed from Damascus they found themselves in Iraq and

Jordan. Only in Jordan would the legacy of Lawrence find root in a Bedouin state and a new Lawrence, Sir John Bagot Glubb, would help lead Jordan to a partial victory over Israel in 1948.

Juxtaposed with Lawrence is Aaron Aaronsohn, a Palestinian born Jew, he was a leading agronomist who desired to build a new Jewish state in Palestine. He worked to develop land purchased for Jewish pioneers. Aaronsohn saw in the British key allies of the Jews and as victors they would be the ones to help guide the Jews to statehood and safety.

The book is a series of vignettes of these two men as they lobby England to support their two causes and although originally the causes are mutually beneficial(King Faisal supported the Zionists in Palestine), eventually they become antagonistic by the 1920s.

The biggest drawback of this book is that these men are in-comparable. Aaronsohn is a Jew from a backward province, T.E Lawrence an Englishman from the greatest power of the day. Instead the book could have compared Lawrence with Richard Mienertzhagen or Orde Wingate, both of whom were pro-Zionists and were like a T.E Lawrence for the Jews of Palestine.

Nevertheless this is a well written and interesting book.

Seth J. Frantzman

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

"Lawrence and Aaronsohn"

By Robert S. Gregory

All too often nonfiction authors spin a captivating tale based on poorly researched nonsense, relying on secondary sources with an occasional dip into a primary source composed in the only language of which the author has full command. Ronald Florence is not such an author. He is a skilled historian with a talent for painting lush portrayals of great personalities while capturing fine details that surprise the reader. In "Lawrence and Aaronsohn," one of our heroes is a young and romantic scholar-soldier whose over-confidence drives him across the desert to victory in Damascus and personal suffering and humiliation in Deraa. The other is an ornery genius who, anxious over the fate of the starving Jews at the hands of the Turks, abandons science for espionage opening the doors of the Middle East to Great Britain while sealing the fate of his sister Sarah. Florence's narrative will not only entertain you but may also offer you some insight into the seeds of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

A dual Biography both entertaining and enlightening

By Bobby D.

Allow me to begin with a summary and then indulge me a bit more time to discuss Lawrence. This volume is a wonderful read and I much enjoy dual biographies that develop a time and place as well as intersect events. Florence's book is most entertaining and enlightening with the emphasis placed mainly on the story of Aaron Aaronsohn and his sister Sarah. Lawrence (yes, Lawrence of Arabia) is somewhat short changed and summarized too quickly. I think Ronald Florence's objective was to market the book to those who have interest in Lawrence literature only to introduce us to the amazing Aaronsohn family. Their support for Zionism through science and spying on behalf of the British against the Turks in WWI is simply an incredible story. I very highly recommend the book. Now let me digress for a while to say that I am a collector of T.E. Lawrence literature and purchased this book as part of that collection. My recommendation to those who want to explore Lawrence more deeply is to read two other great biographies. The first won the Pulitzer prize and is *A PRINCE OF OUR DISORDER, THE LIFE OF T E LAWRENCE* by John E. Mack (1976) and the second by Jeremy Wilson, *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, THE AUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF T E LAWRENCE*. I noted that Ronald Florence referenced that Jeremy Wilson reviewed his text and

made comments. Also, of note is that Jeremy Wilson and his wife Nicole own a private publishing house in England called Castle Hill Press. They have a web page and have printed several limited editions of Lawrence books, most notably the complete 1922 text of SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM which Florence mentions is his source reference. I recommend that you visit their web site and also pick up these two other volumes to really cover Lawrence in great detail. But a good place to begin is with Ronald Florence's creative and well written LAWRENCE AND AARONSHOHN. (I notice that Amazon.com has this title now at bargain price which is even all the more reason to pick it up.)

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