

The Bad News Bible by Anna Blundy.
Headline 2004.

The title of this book is taken from the manual provided to journalists full of helpful advice concerning what to do when things go wrong. The main protagonist of this hugely enjoyable novel is a foreign correspondent Faith Zanetti, sent to the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem to investigate a big story concerning the Israeli army.

Anna Blundy, among other things a foreign correspondent herself, clearly knows that about which she writes! All of the journalists in the book are larger than life, and each of them is in one way or another damaged. Anna Blundy sparsely but chillingly details the life of a correspondent – periods of frenetic activity, danger and gore, interspersed with sustained intervals of excess. She also does not spare the reader the compartmentalisation which correspondents adopt to survive the rigours of their work, and the cynicism which is all too credible.

I read this book quickly and enjoyed it all, coming to admire Faith Zanetti for her courage and determination as much as I felt for her inability to handle the loss in her life.

This is a great holiday read that also opens a window on the non-working side of the lives of those who report for us from the most dangerous places in the world.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh