

SIX DAYS – HOW THE 1967 WAR SHAPED THE
MIDDLE EAST by Jeremy Bowen.
Simon and Schuster 2003.

Jeremy Bowen was Middle East correspondent for the BBC between 1995 and 2000. He was widely recognised and celebrated for the quality of his reporting, and his genuine efforts to represent both sides of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which at that point in the 20th century was growing ever more bitter.

Six Days tells the story of the Six Day War in June 1967 which transformed the map of the region, granted Israel a stunning victory over its enemies, and set in motion a series of actions and reactions which continue not only to bedevil Israel and its neighbours but which exert a wholly disproportionate influence over the world.

The events of the six days of war, and the prelude to the commencement of conflict, have been widely documented and written about by others, though writing several decades on Bowen has the advantage not only of perspective but of enhanced sources of information not necessarily available to earlier writers. Where Six Days stands out from the field is in Bowen's analysis of the way the '67 war marks the source of so many of Israel's, and its neighbours', current problems. It is a deeply depressing dimension of the book.

Yet Bowen is not an irredeemable pessimist, and proclaims his belief that a two state solution is possible, as is peace, for the many good men and women on both sides of the divide. We must hope that his trust in the ultimate assertion of common sense will be proved correct.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh