

*“Complicity with Evil”-The United Nations in the Age of Modern Genocide
by Adam Lebor.
Yale University Press 2006.*

Adam Lebor is that rare combination of fine journalist and author of books of the highest quality. Following his poignant history of Jaffa, City of Oranges, comes “Complicity with Evil”, a detailed and damning indictment of the workings of the United Nations, focussed on and around the acts of genocide committed under the eyes of the UN, and the world at large, in the Balkans, in Darfur and in Rwanda.

As a former Yugoslavia correspondent, Lebor describes in exhaustive detail the genocide committed by Serbs against the Moslems of Srebrenica in 1995, when through a combination of active UN complicity, a misguided desire to be even-handed, bureaucratic inefficiency and military incompetence, some 6000 boys and men were murdered.

Similar patterns of behaviour are evinced by the situations in Rwanda and Darfur, where it is clear that for the United Nations global realpolitik is much more important than individual human life. The United Nations secretariat emerges from “Complicity with Evil” with little credit, and certain individuals cited in its pages should hide themselves away with shame for their actions (and inaction). Lebor is coruscating in his final chapter detailing the UN’s skewed priorities and the way its power blocs push through votes and resolutions that condemn some to a ridiculous degree – Israel, of course – and completely ignore others, such as Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, and in spite of everything, he seems to feel that with all its inherent flaws it is worth saving, though internal reform is essential.

His best proposal is that the UN should award itself the right to suspend or even expel countries from its ranks, believing that the moral shame inherent in such a facility might just force some repeat abusers to toe the line.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh