

*It's Easier to reach Heaven than the End of the Street.
A Jerusalem Memoir by Emma Williams. Bloomsbury 2006.*

Emma Williams is a doctor who lived in Jerusalem between 2000 and 2004 with her husband, a diplomat working for the UN, and her three children. Her timing brought her to Israel just in time for the Intifada and the terrible damage and chaos it brought to countless Palestinian and Israeli lives.

An eagle-eyed reader, perusing the acknowledgements and seeing the thanks to her father-in-law Ian Gilmour, might well jump to the conclusion that this very personal and profoundly depressing memoir would be heavily biased in favour of the Palestinian side of events. I am happy to report that there is no trace of bias but rather an admirable even-handedness which does the author great credit.

Williams lives through the devastating events of the Intifada, and particularly its impact on Palestinian lives disrupted by multiple army checkpoints and heavy handed policing. She observes the corrosion in attitudes and the brutalisation of Israeli and Palestinian societies and suffers for both peoples in equal measure. She also faithfully chronicles some of the more petty and unnecessary actions of the Israelis, as well as the self-defeating actions of Palestinian politicians.

I concluded this book full of admiration for its author and deep depression about the general situation and the impossibility of achieving a lasting and peaceful solution.

This is a searing work, and should be read by all those who seek to understand the realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh