

The Way of the World – A Story of Truth and Hope in an Age of Extremism by Ron Suskind.
Simon and Schuster 2008.

Ron Suskind is a Pulitzer prize winning author, a former Wall Street Journal staffer and a most astute observer of the American political scene. In *The Way of the World* he turns his attention to the way in which America, together with her allies, lost her way during the disastrous double term of George W Bush, now mercifully over.

Suskind's narrative is highly readable and very pacy, and takes the reader across the world as it tells its story. Many of the protagonists that one would expect to find in such a book are there, but so are many others who are less well known and some of whom few would ever have heard: Rolf Mowatt Larsen, the head of intelligence at the Department of Energy, charged with trying to ascertain whether terrorists are preparing to unleash a small nuclear bomb on an American city, or at least acquiring the materials to do so; Candace Gorman, a lawyer struggling to help an inmate of Guantanamo Bay; Usman Khosa, a Pakistani living and working in Washington who falls foul of Secret Service paranoia; Mohammed Ibrahim Frotan, a brilliant Afghani exchange student staying with a family in Denver; Wendy Chamberlin, former US ambassador to Pakistan; these and many others comprise the jigsaw puzzle which Ron Suskind has created, and which he fits perfectly together, their individual narratives interweaving with national and international affairs, and regional and global players.

The Way of the World reflects the way in which the world in general, and the United States in particular, have been changed, not just by the assaults on New York and Washington of September 11th 2001 but by the response to them of the world's sole remaining superpower.

Suskind's narrative reflects the impact of those events, and the further impact of the man made aftershocks that were created in Washington. He portrays the mood that has enveloped so many throughout the world as a result, but nevertheless makes clear that in spite of the malevolent cabal at the top of the United States at the time of writing, there are still men and women of fine intention and good will trying to make something positive out of a terrible mess.

In spite of the fact that there is much in *The Way of the World* which is difficult and depressing Ron Suskind ends on a positive note, built on the good people that fill his story; since the change of President in the US there is far greater reason to feel a small sense of confidence that his hope will be well founded.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh