

Egypt on the Brink: From the Rise of Nasser to the Fall of Mubarak
by Tarek Osman.

Yale University Press 2011 (Revised Edition)

The turmoil in Egypt that started in late 2010 and rumbled on through the deposing of Hosni Mubarak in 2011 necessitated the revision of this excellent book following its original publication in 2010. By their very nature books such as this may find that events move too fast for the material to keep up to date, but this need not matter too much, especially when the value of Egypt on the Brink lies as much in its coherent telling of the past as in its prognostications for the future.

Between an Introduction and Conclusion, Osman has seven chapters, through which he charts the Egyptian story on every level, political, social, military and strategic: Egypt's World, Nasser and Arab Nationalism, The Islamists, The Rise of Liberal Capitalism, Egyptian Christians, The Mubarak Years, Young Egyptians.

It was fascinating to read Tarek Osman's broadly optimistic conclusions, about the potential synergy between Egypt's Liberals and Islamists, the future role of the Muslim Brotherhood, the development of a new economy and the redefinition of Egypt's strategic and geo-political position in the 'new' Middle East, against the background of on-going popular dissatisfaction with their current military rulers and the first stage of democratic elections.

Time alone will prove him right or wrong.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh