

Duet in Beirut by Mishka Ben-David.
Halban Publishers Ltd., 2013.

A thriller plot that involves an undercover team in a foreign city going after a high profile target may sound very routine, especially if the hit squad is from the Mossad, but that is as predictable as Duet in Beirut gets.

The author, Mishka Ben-David, has been a high ranking officer of the Mossad, and the action, planning and methodology woven into the story have the ring of truth as a result. Ben-David creates considerable tension, not least because the original 'hit' goes wrong when the shooter, Ronen, fails to pull the trigger because the target appears with his young daughter.

As everything unravels Ronen is consumed with guilt, self-loathing and anger and returns in secret to Beirut to complete the mission; because the undercover teams are close, and because the commander, Gadi, feels ultimate responsibility for the failure, he goes after Ronen – unauthorised – to try and prevent him shooting his terrorist target.

The story unfolds in Beirut, and in Israel, as senior Mossad and government figures debate what needs to be done, believing that were the hit to be carried out it would have terrible repercussions for Israel itself.

Duet in Beirut deserves the description 'nail biter' as the tension ratchets ever higher; it is a superb, convincing read and a powerful reminder that a nation that feels forced to take tough steps against its enemies still has a beating, human heart.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh