

# ONE BOOK ONE JEWISH COMMUNITY

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**MARTIN FLETCHER** was NBC Middle East correspondent and Tel Aviv Bureau Chief for more than 3 decades.

Born in London, Fletcher graduated from the University of Bradford in 1970. He worked as a French and German interpreter for the Common Market before beginning a career as a television news programming writer for VisNews in the UK in 1970. He joined the BBC, writing on the main evening news program, the *9 o'clock News*, until returning to VisNews after learning to be a news cameraman. After four years in Belgium, Israel and Rhodesia, he joined NBC News.

Fletcher began his NBC career as a cameraman in 1977 and then moved over to his Tel Aviv assignment in 1982, becoming Bureau Chief in 1996. He has won 5 Emmy Awards for his work on the first and then second Palestinian uprisings, the horrors of war in Rwanda and Kosovo, and then for his story on trauma medicine in Israel. Other awards in his distinguished career include the television Pulitzer, the DuPont from Columbia University, five Overseas Press Club Awards, several Edward R. Murrow awards, a Hugo gold medal for a documentary on Israel which he shared with other NBC staffers, and an award from the Royal Society of television in Britain.

His previous books include *Breaking News* and *Walking Israel*, for which he won a Jewish National Book Award. Today he serves as an NBC News Special Correspondent. Fletcher and his wife and family live in Israel and the US.

At the close of World War II, Jewish immigrants whose lives and homes were shattered and destroyed, are scattered about Europe. Georg and Edith, having fled Austria and the Nazi atrocities, have landed in London. Georg, a lawyer, is unable to find work. His wife Edith, pregnant with their second attempt at a child, having lost their first baby, mends clothes in an attempt to earn some pittance of money. The immigrants in London may be safe from the horrors of war but they are looked down upon and work is scarce at best with the reason they are all given that all jobs and good homes must be saved for the returning soldiers from the war.

Every day Georg and Edith check to see if any word has arrived about surviving family members. It is arduous and painful trek each day resulting in the same sorrow and disappointment. Georg continues to cross off names of family members, his own and Edith's. Did any of their family members survive? Edith struggles to hold out hope that her father might someday walk through their door and be reunited. But each day, the prognosis seems more and more dire.

When Edith's young cousin Anna arrives in London, hopes are renewed somewhat as Anna comes with news of where certain family members were last sighted, last headed to, including news of Edith's father. Did her father make it out of the camps alive? Did he survive being shuttled back and forth to Russia and back? The stress is taking a toll on the expecting Edith and Georg does all he can to prevent a similar sad fate from befalling their hoped-for child.

The cast of characters surrounding Georg and Edith are enchanting and mysterious: their landlords, caring and thoughtful; their neighbor, the anti-Semitic-spewing Egyptian, Ismael, who is nonetheless a protective friend to them; the newly arrived Anna; and the friends they all make who have arrived in London following the war. Each one is a rich and vibrant persona, adding wonderful layers to the texture of Fletcher elegant prose and storytelling skills.

As the daily struggles mount for the Jewish refugees in London there is a force at work in another part of the world. With the war ending, and England's hold on Palestine tenuous at best, Jewish survivors clamor to go to there to live. The territory, and Palestinians living there, are under British rule. To the leaders in England, the Palestinians can be controlled. But they know an influx of Jewish refugees could set off an uprising they are not prepared for. With this concern in mind, England prevents Jews from emigrating in large numbers they feel unmanageable. For Jews throughout Europe with dreams of Palestine, they are homeless in war-torn Europe and now prevented from finding a home in the Middle East.

As the struggle throughout Europe continues an organization functioning around the globe and in Palestine, is underway to get Jews to the home they desire. Their means of achieving their goal however, is at times nefarious despite all intentions. Georg accidentally stumbles across a plot riddled with terrorism and assassination spearheaded by the most unlikely of characters. Does he go public and save the life of a British cabinet member who has been anti-Jewish in his thinking about Palestine? What does it mean if he goes public? Does he get caught up in a web of deceit? What will become of Edith and their soon-to-be-born child? With time running out he will be forced to make a decision with international ramifications.



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