

From Babel to Dragomans – Interpreting the Middle East. Bernard Lewis.
Weidenfeld and Nicolson 2004. £20.00.

Over the last forty years Bernard Lewis, the English born but US-based Professor Emeritus of Near Eastern Studies at Princeton, has carved out for himself an unparalleled reputation as an insightful and scholastically impeccable expert into the Near East in general, and into Islam in particular.

His recent publications, notably *The Crisis of Islam and What Went Wrong?*, have served to illuminate and explain Islam and its world-view at a time when many in the West have found it utterly incomprehensible.

Babel and Dragomans is a collection of Lewis's essays, some published elsewhere others published here for the first time, and divided into three sections, Past History, Current History, and About History. The essays, each of which carries a brief summary as well its place of prior publication – if appropriate – cover a very wide range of subjects. These include: Iran in History, Monarchy in the Middle East, Europe and Islam: Muslim Perceptions and Experience, The Emergence of Modern Israel, The Shi'a, The Roots of Muslim Rage, Not Everybody Hates Saddam, Deconstructing Osama and his Evil Appeal, and On Occidentalism and Orientalism.

This is a perfect way into the genius of Bernard Lewis, an introduction to the breadth of his scholarship and a superb collection of essays of enormous pertinence and authority.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh