

# **Rabbi Magonet Address – Who Owns Abraham?**

**by Charmaine Ryan**

Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet continued his popular lectures on Sunday afternoon [8 July] in the Temple David Social Hall [Perth, Western Australia] addressing a packed audience of over 120, including members of the Abrahamic Alliance and the Council of Christians and Jews.

The topic of his talk, “Who owns Abraham?” addressed the centrality of the patriarch Abraham to all three contemporary monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Rabbi Magonet is a founding member of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim Annual Student Conference in Europe and is invited to address interfaith meetings all over the world, including the International Council of Christians and Jews. In addition, he is the author of a book on the topic; “Talking to the Other”. Even so, he claims his knowledge of interfaith dialogue or ‘trialogue’ as he calls it, is textual and not academic.

In spite of this the Rabbi eloquently summarized the different claims of each religion to Abraham as a patriarch, highlighting many of the similarities and differences, including the historical events and influences each religion has adopted to arrive at its present-day position.

Rabbi Magonet argued that the question, “Who owns Abraham?” is possible only in our modern world because historically none of the religions mentioned has been interested in dialogue with the other. Today that has changed and Abraham is perceived as a common link through which multi-faith dialogue can be nurtured.

Abraham is central to all three faiths not only because of his unique relationship with God, but also because of his life of righteousness and justice – important values to which all three religions aspire.

Between Judaism and Islam, especially reading from the Midrash and Qur’an, are many interrelated events. Among the more obvious is that both religions claim a direct heritage from Abraham’s sons, Ishmael and Isaac, and both focus on good deeds.

In contrast, Christianity is a religion focused on belief. However, Rabbi Magonet said, “Jesus is firmly locked into the Jewish tradition” and Christians share the Torah. Paul also uses Abraham as an example of ‘righteousness’ and writes that a belief in God is essential to become ‘children of Abraham’.

Concluding his talk, the Rabbi, commented that the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is perhaps the first example of interfaith dialogue.

At the conclusion of the afternoon, Rabbi Magonet was enthusiastically thanked by the Council of Christians and Jews and presented with a copy of the History of Jews in Western Australia.