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## Rabbi: See through eyes of enemies

By Dawn Baumgartner Vaughan, The Herald-Sun  
January 18, 2007 10:50 pm

DURHAM -- Only when we see the world through someone else's eyes -- our enemies' -- can conflict be resolved, Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks told a packed auditorium at Duke University's Bryan Center Thursday night.

Sacks, leader of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Commonwealth, was on hand to present the 2007 Kenan Distinguished Lecture in Ethics, titled "The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations."

He said that in today's globalized world, the Internet has provided the opportunity for conflict anywhere to become conflict everywhere.

The Internet is the fourth key moment in literary history, Sacks said, adding that it was preceded by writing, the alphabet and the printing press. Just as printing revolutionized Christianity by bringing the Bible into individuals' homes, predictably the fourth moment would affect Islam, the youngest of the Abrahamic religions, he said.

Sacks mentioned the Danish cartoon mocking the Prophet Mohammed and the papal comments about Islam as events that instantly went from local to global, sparking protests. Religious revolution within Islam is what is needed to resolve the current conflict, he said. Just as Jews were bystanders during the Protestant Reformation -- in some sense Jews and Christians will be the bystanders this time, he said.

Sacks used Biblical examples from Genesis to convey what he believes is God's message about brothers in conflict. The surface narrative of the stories of Isaac and Ishmael and Jacob and Esau show that the younger usurps the elder.

"Are we destined to fight forever as those brothers did?" Sacks asked.

"All three faiths act as if the surface narrative is all there is," he said. Christianity is younger than Judaism, and Islam younger than both. But there's a bigger pattern in the series of stories of Biblical brothers, Sacks said. It ends in forgiveness.

"Conflict is not endemic to the situation," Sacks said. The Bible's narrative literary style tells us to see the world through others' lives, he said.

"Only when Jews, Christians and Muslims see the world from the point of view that is not them. It is only when we do role reversal that we become human," he said. Only when seeing through enemies' eyes will they reach spiritual depths shown by God in Genesis, he said.

"Peace will only come to our world when the children of Abraham learn to live graciously together," said Sacks. He believes that it begins with respectful conversation and the ability to listen.

Sacks spent Thursday meeting with various Duke groups. Today, he visits Lerner Jewish Community Day School in Durham. He will present another public lecture at 8 p.m. Saturday at the Freeman Center on Duke's campus. The topic of the Rudnick Lecture is "On Jews, Judaism and the World: The Jewish Experience as a Model for Global Citizenship in the 21st Century."

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