

**THE TENT OF
ABRAHAM: Stories of
Hope and Peace for Jews,
Christians, and Muslims
by Joan Chittister, OSB,
Murshid Saadi Shakur
Chishti, and Rabbi Arthur
Waskow Boston: Beacon
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218. Paperback 19.95**

In crowded conversations on religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogue, *The Tent of Abraham: Stories of Hope and Peace for Jews, Christians, and Muslims* stands out as a gem of a book. Through an inviting format and accessible prose, authors Joan Chittister, OSB, Murshid Saadi Shakur Chishti, and Rabbi Arthur Waskow offer readers a thoroughly refreshing take on the story of Abraham. The authors find the perfect tone for lay readers; they take little for granted, yet write without talking down to their audience. Furthermore, this work is especially valuable because it relies on three distinct voices to shape the story of Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. *The Tent of Abraham* is an ambitious work. Authors Chittister, Chishti, and Waskow weave to-

gether personal experience and theory while wrestling with difficult themes and historical issues. Their treatment of the story of Abraham is remarkably rich and includes commentary on hope, struggle, violence, religious identity, hospitality, peace, and reconciliation.

The authors of *The Tent of Abraham* view conversation between the Abrahamic faiths as a peace-building exercise. They turn to Abraham as a common ancestor and source of understanding between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Tapping into written and oral traditions, the authors first tackle a 21st century retelling of Abraham's story. These brief accounts orient the reader to some mainstream interpretations of the Hebrew Bible and Qu'ran. Following this outline, the three authors each offer a set of short reflections on aspects of Abraham's story. These reflections rely on the authors' experiences in interfaith dialogue and touch on the themes outlined here. Each reflection is no more than a few pages and offers a focused meditation on just a few words or a single compelling experience. This format guides the reader through many dimensions of inter-religious dialogue

and peace-building. One can easily imagine this format working well in personal devotions and study groups.

The authors reveal obvious concern for the implications of their work. They do not stop with informative exegesis and eclectic reflections, but go further by making the move from theory to praxis. The final section of the book is a set of helpful resources for applying the concepts found in the Tent of Abraham within and between religious communities. This section includes suggested guidelines for meetings, documents that have emerged from inter-faith dialogue, and suggestions for further action. The resources are especially helpful for religious leaders and give good examples of how to apply many of the ideas found in the rest of the text. The section could have been strengthened

by the addition of a bibliography of additional resources.

Perhaps the greatest strength of *The Tent of Abraham* is the fact that it is a collaborative effort. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are allowed to represent themselves and no one tradition owns the story of Abraham more than the others. This is a welcome break from single authored volumes. Even the change in writing style between Chittister, Chishti, and Waskow attune the reader to differences in perspective. In sum, the authors of *The Tent of Abraham* take on an enormous task, approach it with sensitivity, and offer the reader a solid note of hope through their reflections on experience and suggestions for action. It is a worthwhile read and valuable addition to any library.

– Erin Green