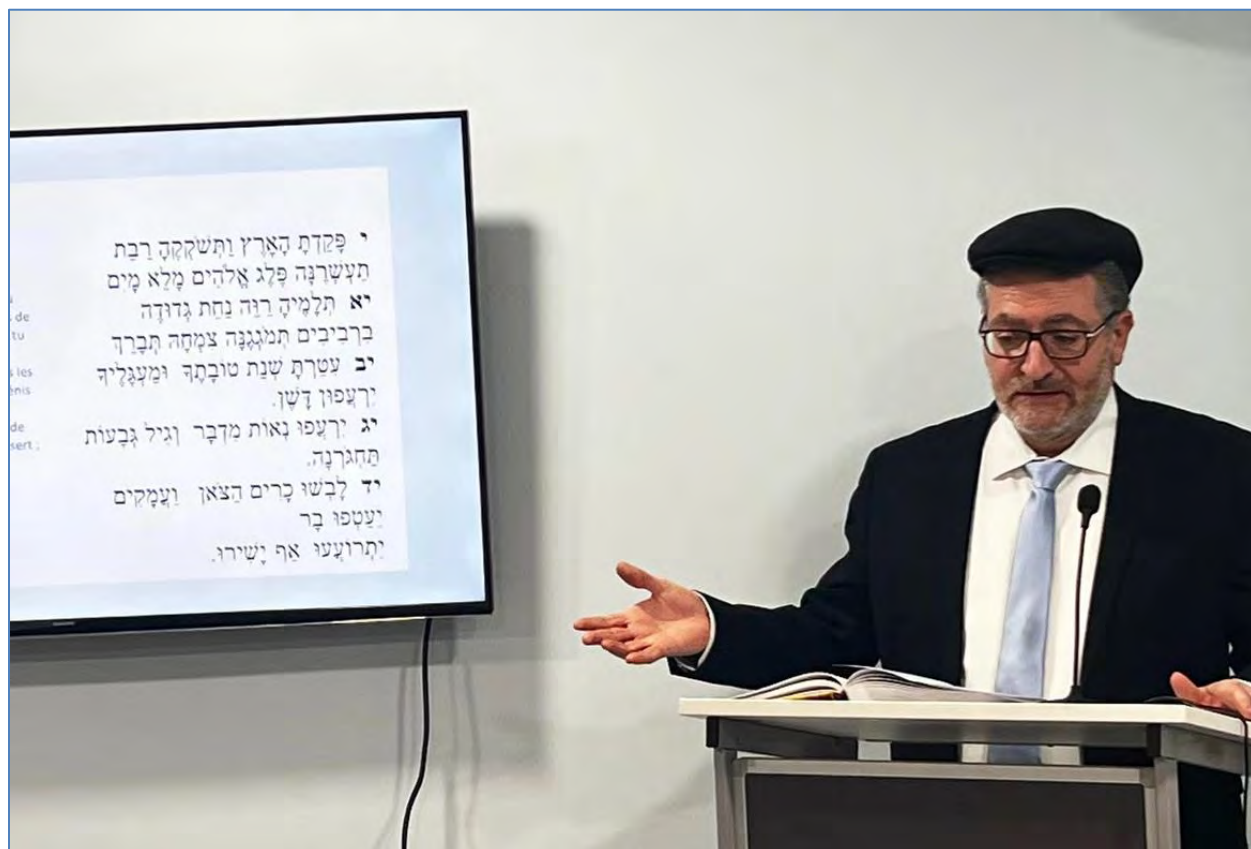


Dialogue & Alliance Interfaith Francophone Group Explores Theme of Gratitude

Jean-François Moulinet
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UPF Dialogue & Alliance Circle



Paris, France – With the theme “Let’s Be Grateful,” UPF-France’s Dialogue & Alliance Circle held an online and in-person interfaith meeting on Sunday, November 24, 2024, giving a nod to the US holiday of Thanksgiving. Celebrated every year on the fourth Thursday in November in the United States, this typically American feast also has universal significance. This is evident from the sacred texts of various traditions on thanksgiving and the attitude towards nature’s bounty.

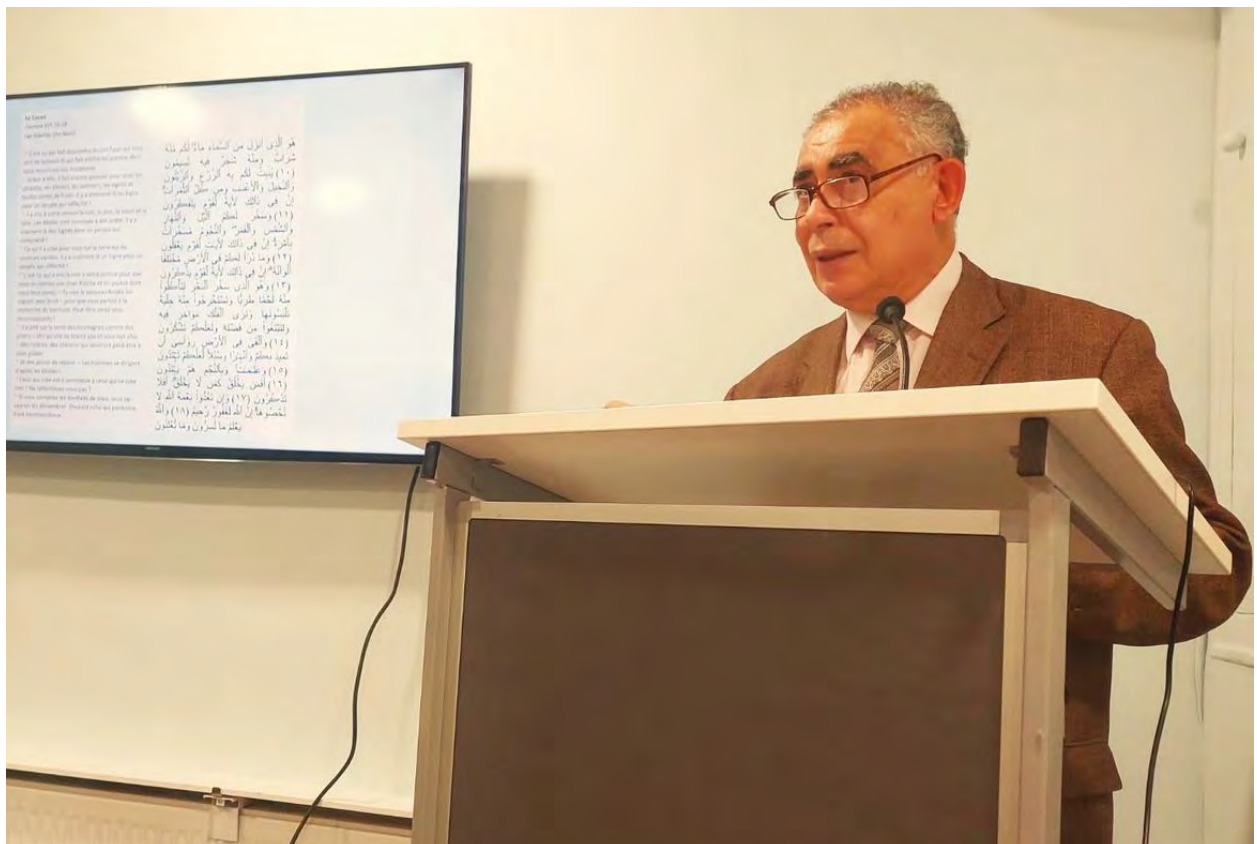


Journalist **Ms. Cíntia Cabral** led the face-to-face meeting at the Espace Barrault in Paris. People from nearly ten countries also followed the program by videoconference.

Dr. Mohamed Larbi Haquat, president of ASILEC (Association de Solidarité pour l'Intégration par les Langues, l'Éducation et la Culture, in Sarcelles), read and commented on several verses from the Qur'an. The concepts of recognition and gratitude appear in 59 surahs and 71 verses. He selected around ten of them and presented a number of hadiths from the Prophet Muhammed that confirm the importance of gratitude in relations between people and God, and also in interpersonal relations, especially in the family and in the city. Gratitude goes first to God, then to our fellow human beings, so that we can better live together.



The second reading, by **Rev. Robert M. Baxter**, founding pastor of Le Bon Berger Church in La Plaine Saint-Denis, brought an American and Christian perspective. Rev. Baxter read and commented on verses 4 and 5 of Psalm 100. He and his wife have been missionaries in France for 37 years. He recalled that Thanksgiving celebrates the first harvest of the Pilgrims who sailed on the Mayflower to Massachusetts and settled there. He also explained three major waves of spiritual awakening and spoke about the historical context in which this celebration was created. The values expressed by this festival are truly universal.



A short musical break followed, from the album “Reconnaissance” by Christian musician **Mr. Sylvain Freymond**, with the group Louange Vivante. Mr. Freymond, a Swiss national and graduate of the Lausanne Conservatory, has been a music teacher for over 30 years. He serves churches in French-speaking countries through teaching and worship.



The third speaker, **Rabbi Dov Lellouche**, Rabbi Mohel of Creil, Hauts-de-France, introduced the Jewish perspective with colourful anecdotes. This remarkable speaker knows how to bring the message of the Bible up to date for any audience. He emphasised that Judaism calls on its adherents to acknowledge mistakes, and recognise the goodness and patience of God, who helps everyone to get back on their feet.

The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session, moderated from Paris by **Dr. Laurent Ladouce**.