

Limmud International Newsletter

Issue 1—Adar II 5768 / March 2008

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From the Chair—Andrew Gilbert

Writing this I find myself back in Jerusalem Yet another city, where Limmud is on so many people's lips. Not a day goes by when someone is not asking us about doing Limmud somewhere around the world and at this rate, there will be not just one but two Limmud events around the world every week of the year! It is slightly unbelievable how much impact Limmud has made.

Already hardly a week goes by without an event ... so far in 2008, there has been the annual events from Netherlands, New York and the Baltics in Vilnius, all of which have been even more special, creative, bigger than anything

they have done before. We also want to congratulate the team in Los Angeles in pulling off a remarkable launch conference.

The next few months will see first time events in Romania, Atlanta (USA), Colorado, Buenos Aires (Argentina) , Moscow and the launch of Limmud FSU in Israel where they will be running their first of two events this year in Ashkelon. The next three months is topped off by Limmud Germany running their Berlin event.

Each of these events is organised by large teams of volunteers making quietly but clearly significant and often a



Andrew Gilbert

transformative impact on their communities.

This is the story of Limmud ... it involves us in building a community, a community that builds and re-builds Jewish Life, a community that is changing the Jewish world... thank you all for dreaming the dreams and making them come real!

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Limmud Conference 2007— Inspiring International Activists

In the biggest ever Limmud Conference, attracting more than 2500 participants. Limmud was proud to host a group of 90 International Limmud activists. A series of sessions called "Taking Limmud Back Home" was specially prepared for international activists. The main goal was to present and share best practises, experiences, network and to meet some of the people that have a particular place in the Limmud story, mainly from UK but also with other members of the Limmud International Family, that have great expertise to share.

With an average of 30/35 participants to each session the atmosphere proved extremely encouraging to discuss, exchange best practises

and dive deeper into common challenges. We scheduled these sessions at 8 AM, not to interfere with the normal programme from Conference, so we could allow international activists to take part in other sessions, especially in Chavruta.

The sessions were recorded and Podcasts / MP3 versions will soon be available for groups to download from the Limmud International website which will be launched in August.

Limmud International is proud to have been able to arrange the following sessions during Limmud Conference 2007.

Taking Limmud Home Getting the Best Out of Your Site

Choosing the right site and getting the best out of it.



Taking Limmud Home Marketing your event

There's no point in creating a fabulous event and then failing to communicate

Taking Limmud Home Enriching the Programme

One of the fundamental features for which Limmud has become rightly famous is its creative and diverse programming.

Taking Limmud Home The Essentials Pack

Several Limmud activists have been developing a pack with material that which will be useful to all Limmud groups.

Taking Limmud Home Participant Care

Just about everyone who attends Limmud Conference comments on the thoughtfulness of its planning and its concern for individuals. How do we ensure



that Limmud events make everyone feel welcome and included?

Taking Limmud Home - Managing Shabbat at Limmud Events

For many people, one of the most exciting features of a Limmud event is the way in which we include Jews with diverse opinions and approaches to Shabbat, hopefully without offending anyone's views or inadvertently being oppressive.

Networking

Limmud Conference proved an extremely useful space for networking between international delegations, where informal meetings were set up together with special meetings according to requested interests (families, IT, Fest, outreaching, etc). The goal of exchanging best practises and brainstorming was successfully achieved through the willingness of all international activists to share and be open.

Second Limmud International Board Meeting

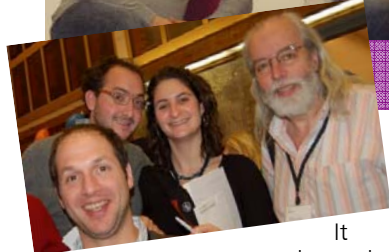
During Limmud Conference, the second Limmud International Board meeting was held. With an attendance of 60 delegates, and we were honoured to have the presence of special guests like Sandy Cardin from "The Lynn and Charles Schusterman Foundation", Julian Sandler from Hillel International, Marion Blumenthal and Dr Steven Cohen who offered the delegates a presentation called "The Limmud Experience: A Community of Individual Seekers, Growers and Leaders".

There was a general update regarding every different international group, and the Limmud International events calendar 2008 was presented. We are proud to have more than one Limmud event every month, with strong presence in 23 different communities spread over 6 different continents.

Limmud Conference, once more, proved to be a unique and extremely inspiring experience for every international delegate.



From the Netherlands—Limmoed Holland



It was a success beyond our dreams. With 550 people registered, the youngest at 6 months and the oldest at 98, the Limmoed dream was captured as it should be.

The day took place the Amsterdams Lyceum, a beautiful old school in the the Oud-Zuid

The core team had worked - as you all can imagine - and slaved, day in and day out - with tears and with ridiculous laughter to bring yesterday together. The energy, buzz of the new and old conversations, the "which-session-should-I-go-to-next" question that we are all familiar with -

was a pleasure to observe. New to the Dutch Jewish community was the opportunity for Limmoed to bring together all denominations of Judaism and be able to converse openly together. This happened yesterday!! What a step for Dutch Jewry and how proud I was of that fact..

The volunteers who came out on the day to help exceeded all expectations. The schlepping and the pouring of water into shabbat kettles to the madrichim from Habonim who ran the Young Limmoed program to the room monitors and volunteers on the registration desk were all infected by the Limmoed spirit by the end of the day. The bookshop was heaving and the box of toothbrushes that

were collected for World Jewish Relief was piled high! Who would have ever imagined!

The presenters themselves varied considerably, from educators who make their livelihood from Jewish teaching as well as those who had a drive to share their passions with the community.

As a taste, there was Raph Evers, the prominent Orthodox rabbi who spoke about the halachic ethical response to stem-cell treatment, Thalia Gur-Klein, a university lecturer who spoke on the illicit sexual relationships in the bible. Rita Iny introduced us to Brazillian music and percussion and Itai Cohn made us breath and think in his meditation and movement sessions. Emmy Kolodny spoke about Recon-

structionist Judaism and how we can bring it to Europe; Esther Erwteman spoke about HIV and the Jewish response... the list continues.

A special thanks to the guests from Limmud UK. I was lucky enough to have several close friends who made the trip for the weekend - it was a treat to have their support and their cheering at the end

I thank you all for your continuous support from close and from afar. Thank you. Bring on Limmoed Holland 2009!

Much love

Emma Sevitt
Co Chair Limmoed Netherlands

Limmud International—Around the world in pictures



What they say about us: Limmud in the media

A whole new, wikified Jewish world?

Haviv Rettig, THE JERUSALEM POST

Excerpt from the article

Twenty-seven years ago, a small group of British Jewish educators set out to create a professional conference modeled on the Coalition for the Advancement for Jewish Education in the United States. What they created has become one of the strangest and fastest-growing phenomena of the Jewish world, one that may be transforming how large numbers of Jews gather and study.

Limmud, which means "learning" and was initially limited to a small group of Jewish organizers and educators, is the most unusual conference you're likely to come across.

Some 25 sessions may be running at any given hour, with 11 different periods dividing the day starting at 8 a.m. and ending at 1 a.m. Some 600 presenters and 2,500 participants - distinguishing between the two groups is nigh impossible - taught and studied topics ranging from history ("Jews and Pirates in the Caribbean" is one session) and culture ("Humor, Identity and the Holocaust"), to politics in England ("Ken Livingstone and the Jews of London") and abroad ("A Jewish-Zionist Constitution for the State of Israel"), from education ("A Parents' Guide to Sex, Drugs and the Internet") to the Jewish bookshelf ("Mathematics and Mishna" and "The Rape of Dinah in Early Exegesis").

There are dance classes and almost-hourly musical ses-

sions. In three days, a group of participants put on a *Fiddler on the Roof* production, while others would chat and drink at the bar until 4 a.m.

The Limmud organization fields a small army of volunteers who are the manpower behind the operation, and only three salaried professionals watch the money and coordinate activities for some 7,000 participants in various Limmud conferences around the UK each year. The number of participants has grown by an average of 26% each year for the past 13 years, according to organizers. Meanwhile, dozens of Limmud conferences have begun sprouting up around the world, from Colorado to Hungary, from Glasgow to the Galilee.

"We want the teachers to know that they also come to learn. Everybody comes to learn and to teach," explains Clive Lawton, one of the original founders.

What can be made of this strange, democratic way of conducting Jewish education? It is often remarked that Jews around the world are profoundly a product of the society in which they live. This is also true of Limmud, but in an unexpected way. The Jews at Limmud, at least the young ones who form the volunteer backbone and the majority of participants, have also assimilated to a new kind



of identity...

Wikified - Limmud, too, is a "wiki." Anyone can offer to teach, and almost all offers are accepted. If organizers feel a topic is missing, or if only one side to a debate has come forward, organizers may seek out someone to fill the gap. But, beyond the fact that the content should be relevant to Jews, there are few other limitations on the identity or topics of presenters.

Autonomy - The young Jew who attends Limmud is a relatively new creature. To borrow an idea from the important book *The Jew Within* by Prof. Steven Cohen (who presented at Limmud) and current JTS Chancellor Arnold Eisen, these Jews derive their Jewish authenticity from within, not through a communal identity. Their Judaism is an inalienable piece of their identity, and it is theirs to do with as they please. They are on "personal journeys" to authentic personal meaning. Rabbis can offer them help along the way, but they are not loyal or subservient to any spiritual authority.

Conclusion

The best evidence that Limmud may be a new sociological phenomenon and not just a new way of organizing conferences comes in the Darwinian

way in which it evolved. Limmud's organizers, past and present, arrived at the current methodology through trial and error. Small individual changes in organization and membership over many years have slowly developed an institution unlike anything else in Jewish life. And while organizers can't quite articulate a broad theory of what they've created, they know that its popularity speaks for itself.

The growth of Limmud has been unintended. It speaks to young British Jews in a way that makes profound sense to them. . Simply, they say, it is a place where they feel comfortable, where identifying as Jewish "is actually relevant to my life," according to one young woman.

"If you've got what to say, the platform now exists," says one organizer. To anyone who grew up during any part of the 1990s, that's a familiar assertion.

If the recent past is any guide, it is highly probable that wherever Jews go online, Limmud will follow with great success.

To see the whole article, please visit <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowull&cid=1198517257169>

Learning with no Limits

Excerpt from J.T. Atlanta

Limmud means learning in Hebrew. The global movement of that name began in England some 28 years ago as a way to unify the British Jewish community despite denominational, geographical and other differences. About 2,000 Jews now gather for a week each December, and Limmud also holds a three-day event each summer and one-day sessions

throughout the year.

"Limmud may be Great Britain's best export since the Spice Girls or maybe even the Beatles," said Rabbi Jeff Salkin, the founder and executive director of Kol Echad: Making Judaism Matter, who has attended the British Limmud four times and will teach at Atlanta's Limmud. "What's charming about Limmud is the sense of commonality that you find with Jews of all generations and all deno m i n a t i o n s .

... Limmud is a way for Jews to create Jewish space as an island in the midst of a non-Jewish sea." "I think what's really exciting is it can be one of the few places where rather than worrying about the borders and boundaries on the outside, we try to give everyone a chance to explore what's best on the inside, and that makes a whole lot more sense," Rabbi Hirschfield said.

Limmud has been a hit in New York, though there

are many options for transdenominational learning there. The Southeast, on the other hand, has isolated communities and fewer nondenominational resources, making it more like Britain and perhaps a better fit for Limmud, o r g a n i z e r s s a i d .

Limmud is Jewish learning without boundaries:

If you want to read the whole article, please visit http://jtonline.us/ftp/pdfs/021508JT_Lowres.pdf

After Limmud LA -Sue Fishkoff

Calif. (JTA) -- It was the Karlin-Stoliner rabbis in the Havdalah congo line that had everyone buzzing. Sure, there were great workshops, spirited davening, morning yoga and late-night shmoozing, and all the other multigenerational, multidenominational, plura-palooza that Jews in the know have come to expect from the Jewish learning extravaganza known as Limmud, which made its Los Angeles debut this past weekend.

That's a big part of what the British-based, volunteer-driven Limmud is about: Jews of all stripes and ages coming together to study, worship and learn from each other.

Although world-class rabbis, scholars and literary figures show up to lead sessions, they don't get paid, and they're expected to stick around and learn with everyone else. People pick and choose from dozens or hundreds of offerings, sharing ideas that span the denominational and the political spectrum.

Limmud is a grassroots, intensive Jewish experience that has tapped into something profound and timely in the global Jewish community. And it seems to have happened by accident.

The first Limmud was put together 27 years ago by a group of British Jewish educators for an intensive

week of study and professional development.

Today, Limmud in the United Kingdom is a hugely popular undertaking, no longer limited to Jewish professionals: Some 600 presenters and 2,500 participants showed up last December for the 28th annual event.

From England the model is spreading quickly throughout the Jewish world. The first export was in 1999 to Australia. Holland followed next, then Toronto, Paris, New York, Lithuania, Hungary.

In the past two years, the number has more than doubled, as Russia, Germany, South Africa, Israel, Bulgaria and Serbia got on board. This year, new Limmuds will take place in Ashkelon, Israel; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Yalta, Ukraine; and Khabarovsk, Russia.

Altogether around the world, Limmud has reached more than 30 communities.

"There's been a huge response," says Andrew Gilbert, chair of Limmud International, the arm of Limmud in Britain responsible for spreading the model. "L.A. sold out, the Baltics sold out, the demand is remarkable. And it's all coming from the people, the volunteers who are running things." Limmud spreads by word of mouth. People come to one Limmud, get energized and go home to organize one of t h e i r o w n . Limmud New York started three years

ago, created by people who had been to Limmud UK. And now New York has spawned other Limmuds, from the Los Angeles event last weekend to Colorado, Atlanta, Georgia

Empowering people who are not Jewish professionals to run this large-scale Jewish communal event is integral to the Limmud concept, says Gilbert of Limmud International, as it gives people a stake in their own Jewish development.

"This is a culture of allowing people to go ahead and organize themselves, a bit like the open-source IT community as against Apple and Microsoft. It uses all the methodologies of social networking, of Facebook and MySpace."

If Gilbert's enthusiasm can be a bit overwhelming -- he posits Limmud as a new organizational matrix for Jewish communities around the world -- there are others who are turned into true believers by a weekend at Limmud.

Jessica Kendler, 26, is a program associate for Hillel at the University of Florida in Gainesville. She volunteered for Limmud LA because, she says, "I always have a better experience when I'm involved. The second you get involved, you claim the experience as your own."

If you want to read the full article, please go to <http://www.jta.org/cgi-bin/iowa/news/article/2008021920080218limmudLA.html>

Recent Events....

Limmud NY



This year's fourth annual conference, held at the Nevele Grande Resort in Ellenville, NY, over the Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, brought many more participants than in previous years. 893 participants from all over NY joined this fantastic event, and there are already indications that the numbers are growing for next year. Everyone interviewed for the evaluation promised to return next year and get more involved.

Sessions began early in the morning and run until late at night, offering eight to 12 choices at a time, including presentations on culture and the arts and sessions on ritual, prayer, Jewish law, history, Talmud, feminist discourse, universalism, and everything in between. Again, Kol Ha Kavod Limmud NY!!!

Limmud LA



The idea of LimmudLA, was to bring L.A. Jews together to study and learn. And it worked. More than 600 participants joined for a stimulating weekend of 260 sessions, 21 films, 2 concerts, and 1 off-Broadway play.

"I get tears, really, just walking the hallways," said Moshe Shapoff, an outreach coordinator for the Karlin-Stoliner Chasidic sect who flew in from Jerusalem for the conclave.

That's the essence of Limmud -- not just Jews learning from other Jews but experiencing the breadth and depth of tradition, culture and spirituality in one place, in a weekend.

The vast majority of Jewish conferences set a bar that excludes the vast majority of Jews: but Limmud succeeded in breaking down those barriers for a long weekend. All

the credit goes to volunteer conference organizers Shep Rosenman and Linda Fife, who tapped their personal networks to ensure diversity from the start; Executive Director Ruth Rotenberg, and the whole team of volunteers, that managed to make this dream come true: Limmud LA



Limmud Keshet Baltics



In the name of the Jewish Community of Lithuania and the Vilnius Jewish Community it was a great pleasure welcoming you in the capital of Lithuania – the Jerusalem of Lithuania. It was the fifth conference and notably the interest towards the conference does not decrease but increases every year. People are eager to get closer to knowledge, want to know as much as possible about our traditions, religion, history, culture and arts.

For many years the Jews in the Baltic States just like in the whole former Soviet Union were torn away from the centuries-long traditions of their people. One of the most major aims of the "Limmud" conference is helping Jews to learn about their roots. I am absolutely sure that this was greatly facilitated in this fifth conference. I want to thank specially our volunteers who did not spare their efforts and strength in doing all possible for the conference to be a success. Through learning we enjoy life. Do not forget to share your knowledge and happiness with the others, that is the essence of Limmud.

Dr. S. Alperavičius,
Chairman of the Jewish Community of Lithuania



Limmud Atlanta + SE



"Though I could never capture the feeling of an entire Jewish University condensed into one beautiful day, I will always remember the discussion in one session when I, a conservative Jew, discussed Torah with an Orthodox Jew, in a class led by a Reform Rabbi, with lively and engaging discussion from men, women, young and old, in town and even people from outside the perimeter! At Limmud, differences evaporate; only the common bond of a love for Jewish learning and community remain."

"Limmud was wonderful! There was something for everyone and everyone felt welcome. Yasher Koach to the Limmud organisers, you brought us together in a way that enabled us to experience, to learn, to question, to socialise and most of all to feel a sense of belonging to a wonderful Jewish community. "

"Limmud was absolutely, positively, enthusiastically, amazingly wonderful!!!! Congratulations and thank you to everyone who established this tradition in one fell swoop.

"Thanks for helping to make it all happen. This was a very important event for the Atlanta Jewish community, with the potential to change this community in powerful ways. I hope to be part of the debriefing of this one and the planning for the next one."

Upcoming events



Limmud Colorado was established by a group of volunteers who are enthusiastic about bringing this dynamic celebration of Jewish life, learning and culture to Colorado. The inaugural Limmud Colorado conference will be held Memorial Day weekend, May 23-26, 2008 at the Keystone Resort. This location was selected for its inspiring setting in the Rocky Mountains, as well as its proximity to Denver for more information contact Beth at beth@limmudcolorado.org

www.limmudcolorado.org

Limmud Keshet Argentina was established by a group of volunteers who were inspired after participating at Limmud Conference 2004. They decided to create a group of volunteers and will be having their first event on June 29th 2008, which will be the first ever Limmud event in South America. Immediately after launching the event in the local media, dozens of presenters contacted the organisers to take part in the event. So if you are up for a bit of Jewish Tango; Limmud Argentina is your place.

For more information contact Eli at info@limudkeshet.com.ar

www.limudkeshet.com.ar



Limmud FSU After the great success of their last conference in October 2007, Limmud FSU is organising a series of events all over 2008. In the coming months, there will be two different Limmud FSU events in 2 different continents!!

Moscow, will have their second residential conference organised by the great team of local volunteers, and Ashkelon, will be launching with a training seminar for the local team organising the first Russian language Limmud event in Israel. Yishar Koach !! B'Hatzlacha!!

For more information info@limmudfsu.org



Limmud.de – From 16 to 18 May 2008 the first big Limmud Conference in Germany will take place north of Berlin. It will be an opportunity to study all kinds of Jewish topics, to learn together, to discuss and to celebrate - in German, in Russian and in English. There will be workshops on difficult topics and more relaxing ones, food for thought and more practical courses such as cooking or singing. And if you need a break there will be lots of opportunities for sports or taking a walk in the beautiful nature of Brandenburg.

For more information info@limmud.de



Limmud. Galil Fest – From 22 to 24 May 2008 the first Limmud Galil Fest will take place in the Galil area. It will be the right opportunity to study all kinds of Jewish topics and to learn together, surrounded by the beautiful scenery of the Galil enjoying the warmth of their people.

For more information, contact Rina at limmudgalil@walla.com



Limmud volunteers are organising events all round the globe. You may be far away from a Limmud event, or there may be one happening only a few miles from your doorstep.

If you want to get involved with an existing event, contact us and we will help connect you

If you want to bring Limmud to your own community,

contact Andrew Gilbert at internationalchair@limmud.org and we will help you get started.

What do we all have in common?

We all love our communities, and we all play an active role in making them a better place for each one of us. We strongly believe that by learning we will take a step further into our Jewish Journey.

That is why we are involved in bringing Limmud to our own communities.

In the First Limmud International Board meeting, every member of the Limmud International family agreed to adhere to the following principles, and you will find them in every Limmud event around the world.

Learning: we believe that every Jew should be a student and any Jew can be a teacher

Expanding Jewish horizons: we strive to create experiences which will allow all to strengthen their Jewish identity

Community and mutual responsibility: we strive to create community - together we can achieve more than as individuals

Commitment to respect: we expect our participants to act respectfully to each other, including to all volunteers. We believe it is important to make presenters' biographies clear enough to aid informed choice. We are committed to treating all of our participants, and all sessions

presented, with equal respect. No-one is more important than anyone else.

'For the Sake of Heaven': we do not seek to place greater or lesser value on one way of Jewish life, thinking or belief over any other

Religious observance: we recognise that in private areas people will behave as they choose, but we believe in the importance of enabling Shabbat and kashrut to be kept in all public areas as far as possible, so that Jews do not have to separate themselves one from another

Empowerment: we believe in the importance of supporting individuals to enable them to maximise their contribution to the community

Participation and voluntarism: we believe that all have an important contribution to make, and that this is best done through voluntarism. Limmud is not for profit but for the benefit of the community. As far as possible, any excess resources should always be ploughed back into improving Jewish education

Valuing diversity: we value choice, diversity and accessibility in all our learning. We seek to have the greatest possible diversity of Jews participate in our activities.

Enabling connections to be made: we strive to create opportunities for connections across communities and individuals, by providing the space for these to happen.

LIMMUD International 2008

Events Calendar April—August

April

11-13 Limmud Moscow
www.limmudfsu.org

May

TBC Mini Limmud FSU – Ashkelon, Israel
www.limmudfsu.org

16-18 Limmud.de - Germany
www.limmud.de

22 Limmud Galil Fest - Israel
www.limmudgalil.com

23-26 Limmud Colorado -
www.limmudcolorado.org

June

21-24 Limmud Oz – Melbourne
www.limmudoz.com.au

29 Limmud Argentina
www.limudkeshet.com.ar

August

22-25 LimmudFest— (UK)
www.limmud.org/fest

29-31 Limmud Capetown
www.limmud.org.za

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