

# newsletter

ISSUE 5 SIVAN 5769 / JUNE 2009

# Different faces of Limmud

Limmud events happen because of people who want something to happen and stand up to make it happen.

All over the world, in over 46 different communities, volunteers got inspired and decided to "Limmudise" their communities.

#### But, what is Limmud for them?



Limmud means a big "thank you" for me. Thanks for being aware that I am Jewish, thanks for being encouraged, thanks for creating, thanks for the sincere intense teamwork and thanks for the never ending learning that enriches me. Lisya—Limmud Turkey



I choose to be involved because it is the only Jewish space where a young Jewish person like myself can play a

meaningful role in my community in a leadership capacity

Daniel—Limmud South Africa



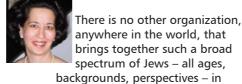
Limmud presents a unique opportunity to broaden my exposure to Jewish life and connect to members of our Jewish community.

Mark—Limmud Colorado



Limmud is it's about providing a respectful and dynamic place where everyone can find expression and identification for their Jewishness, and about bringing being Jewish to life, all over the world.

Michael Limmud OZ



such a warm and welcoming atmosphere Karen—Limmud NY



Limmud is to learn, share, debate and to have fun – you all do this things with Jews. What an implausible event in the world! .To enrich my Jewish Identity .Volunteering

at Limmud adds vitality to human

Semih—Limmud Turkey



Limmud cuts across all boundaries, engaging Jews of every background and experience and enabling them to "do Jewish" together in a radically egalitarian context." Gregg—Limmud Colorado

Limmud offers the potential to

plant seeds that we are then

free to nurture and harvest as

"Limmud volunteering is a special privilege for me: I am valued, thanked and made to feel part of something ground breaking. I feel inspired to want to volunteer for Limmud, not forced."

David-Limmud



Limmud is a Jewish home; exploring all there is to explore in being a teacher and in being a student. Fostering your talents. And creating something together that you could not have created alone.

Volunticipate;)

Tuvit—Limmoed—Netherlands



I volunteer at Limmud so that I can be part of building this incredible experience.

By volunteering, I became friends with people I would never have met or befriended otherwise. I feel like I'm needed, which is a wonderful feeling.

Debbie—Limmud LA

I volunteer at Limmud Because it attracts, involves and inspires all types of Jews

Mirjam—Limmoed—Netherlands

individual participants. Merle—Limmud South Africa

LIMMUD INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER 1

### From the Chair - Andrew Gilbert



# Making Limmud the model for the moment

Whatever one is involved in today, it is clear we live in uncertain times.

People around us are feeling less

secure and are concerned how the changing economy will affect them. Charities are not only not exempt from this but often can suffer harshly in such a climate.

The lessons Limmud has always learned is to be thrifty and to keep the Limmud model simple. I honestly believe if we do not only can we consolidate our current groups but continue to expand the Limmud community which has now reached 50 locations. We rely on volunteers, we rely on keeping costs down and making the model affordable.

Limmud is needed by many at this time, as they reflect on the world around them, they need that

sense of being helped and being part of a larger community, to find the next steps on their Jewish Journeys.

I am delighted to announce that Avraham Infeld has joined Limmud International as Roving Ambassador. "He is an old friend who has much to offer, and we are thrilled that he has chosen to volunteer his time to helping Limmud International grow"

In Limmud our leadership is constantly evolving and there are often changes. One of our key anchors has been Mariano Schlimovich, our Project Co-ordinator, who is shortly to leave us to take up new professional ventures. We wish him well, and thank him for his role over the last 18 months where he has been central in our work

The events continue, and they are wonderful. The groups develop and invent. The Limmud community grows. We must tread carefully but the dance continues!

Andrew

#### Taking a step further, time to say goodbye

By Mariano Schlimovich

Dear Friends,

By the end of June, I will not be anymore the Limmud International Project coordinator. After such fantastic time, I decided it was the right time to take on new professional ventures.

Not easy to say goodbye, as undoubtedly, Limmud has changed my life. It made me realise of many new and important things.

By being part of Limmud International, I was able to see with my own eyes how communities could strengthen and develop by enabling grassroots initiatives to grow locally.

I was able to discover how fulfilling was able to be to learn something new with someone that you had never met before. I was able to realise that you can create links and friendships with people that are not from your same background and that attending a different kind of services does not mean you do not have many things in common.

I was able to meet great people that are committed to bring change to their own communities by believing in their own teams and empowering their local peers.

I was able to participate in extremely rich and assorted events where people meet and after 2 hours it seems that you met them for your whole life.

I was able to work together with people that extremely enriched myself by being able to share time, knowledge and experiences.

I was able to follow visioneers

that truly believe that Limmud is the right tool to combat apathy in dormant Communities

But I also was able to discover that professionally, I was ready to take on. But I wanted specifically to thank all of you that made of this 18 months a great chapter of my life.

Thank you to Andrew, for having such passion and vision and managing to arrive to every corner of the world and get them enthusied by the Limmud bug.

Thanks to Elliott, and the Limmud Exec for being such a strong support and referent body for Limmud around the world.

Thanks to the Limmud International Team, which brilliantly raised their own amount of time volunteering in order to support new Limmud initiatives wherever they might happen.

Thanks specially to Raymond, who will be relieved from the hours of decoding Spanglish documents, but mainly for sharing his limitless knowledge and for knowing he was there when I needed.

And last but not least, THANK YOU to all the Limmud volunteers, from UK and from all over the world, who I am glad to have created links that will be nurtured and I am proud of having met them.

And, am sure we will cross paths again, as becoming a Limmud volunteer it is on my plans, so hopefully, we will meet in any team meeting soon.

Thank you all for this extremely rich period of my life.

Mariano

# **Limmud Conference 2008**

## **Inspiring communities**

After a year loaded with Limmud activities across the world, where over 20,000 people created, facilitated and participated in Limmud events from Bucharest to Los Angeles, from Yalta to Buenos Aires, from Stockholm to Cape Town - and 40 other communities, where else to gather together to share the outcomes of the hard work of each one of the teams?

Limmud Conference 2008 presented the right place for all the international delegates to share best practices, exchange experiences, network and be inspired to go back to their communities recharged.

Now, with Limmud events in every continent, and with growing numbers of new Limmud groups, Limmud Conference is the best place to come, understand and feel how Limmud International is changing the whole Jewish world.

> **Limmud Conference 08** in Numbers

**105** International activists from 23 different Limmud groups participating in 11 dedicated Limmud International sessions

"We were incredibly impressed by our fellow presenters, but most of all by the way that the program was so thoughtfully crafted, was so professionally run, and became a real meeting of the minds. ..... We loved the fact that my sessions were full to begin with and continued to grow with each session and we really enjoyed the fact that so many participants asked such intelligent questions, questions that indicated that they were deeply engaged. This unique energy we felt, we can only characterize as distinctly Limmud. we want you to know that you have created a learning community— of which you can be greatly

Marc Michael Epstein & Agi Veto

Participants and presenters from NY, US



A couple of other things add to the magic at Limmud. The hospitality of the volunteers approaches the Disney level of customer service with a sense of the genuine that is heart-warming. At the same time, Limmud is far from perfect and that's good. Things can go wrong. But the difference is that, at Limmud, no one is angry. Because the whole event is put on by volunteers, there is understanding. Things are dealt with and people move on, empowered by the ability to problem solve and be a part of the solution.

Jodi Mansbach—Limmud Atlanta



#### **Limmud International Core Principle:**

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

Limmud works because it uses a simple formula to unlock the magic of Jewish learning. The secret is that everyone should be a student and anyone can be a teacher' Yediot Ahronot Online—Ynet.com

Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from all men, as it is written (Psalm 119:99) "I have gained understanding from all my teachers." Pirkei Avot 4:1

#### LIMMUD IN THE MEDIA

### Why Limmud is now the festival of festivals

Simon Rocker—The Jewish Chronicle 8 January 2009

Excerpt from the article http://www.thejc.com/articles/why-limmud-now-festival-festivals

At the closing gala of the recent Limmud conference in Coventry, the historian Deborah Lipstadt recalled an earlier conversation with some young people who were struggling to think of any contemporary Jewish heroes. But instead of suggesting a few examples herself, she did something else. She asked members of the audience to stand if they had been part of the Limmud organising team; next she asked anyone who had presented one of the 900-plus conference sessions; and so on, through to visitors from abroad; or anyone who had supported a Limmud event . By the time, she had finished, almost the entire auditorium had risen to its feet. "You," she declared, "are the Jewish heroes."

In little under 30 years, the Limmud winter conference has grown from a small retreat for Jewish educators in the UK over Christmas into an international phenomenon. The conference itself may still remain a centrepiece, attracting more than 2,000 participants, but it is no longer a one-off. It is now a festival of the festivals, part of an expanding network of residential weekends, day learn-ins and cultural jamborees across 46 cities from Johannesburg to Yalta in the Ukraine — all of which have adopted the Limmud model.

And while Limmud may increasingly draw on the support of major philanthropic funds and established organisations, it nonetheless remains a movement built on grassroots volunteerism.

Limmud has caught the imagination of Jews worldwide because it offers a broader, more open experience of Jewish community, rather than one bound by hierarchy and convention or driven by religious compartmentalisation. A place of "yes, we can" rather than "no, you



can't". Here no one asks who is a Jew or what kind of Jew you are. Young and old, traditional and alternative, religious and secular, affiliated and unaffiliated mix in a spirit of free inquiry and exchange.

Cocooned in a temporary Jewish campus, it is easy to think that this is the Jewish community as many think it should be: democratic, egalitarian, inclusive, willing to encourage experiment and exposure to different ideas and views. "I just like the whole concept of creating your own little universe," said Sissy Block, a participant in Coventry and volunteer with New York Limmud, which takes place next week. While the conference itself may be a short sabbatical break, its influence travels well beyond the last ride home.

Limmud has given momentum to the growing cross-communalism that has catalysed several projects.

Removing institutional barriers, Limmud enables educators to step bevond their own immediate denominational circles and reach wider audiences. Nir Nadav, from the Montefiore Kollel — the Orthodox rabbinical programme run by the Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation — was gratified by the questions he was asked about halachah by Reform students. In this atmosphere of cross-fertilisation, Limmud has helped to bring the shared study of Jewish texts demonstrated by morning chavruta sessions at the conference — out of the yeshivah hall into wider Jewish

society. It has also helped move concern for social action or the environment into the mainstream: even kiruv (Orthodox outreach) rabbis these days talk of tikkun olam. This time conference participants carried their handbooks in "Bags of Peace", made of Fairtrade cotton and the logo was designed by 11-year-old Sara Kay, a pupil at Calderwood Lodge Jewish Primary School, Glasgow as part of a school project about co-existence in Israel.

Limmud's growing international dimension is also fostering a new sense of Jewish fellowship, united by a quest for knowledge rather than any particular religious or political programme. So year in, year out, this great gathering of Jews continues to win new admirers. More than 600 people at the conference were firsttimers. Among them was Juliet Landau-Pope, who came with her husband and two young children, but not without overcoming reservations. In the event, the family were persuaded by relatives, who were returning for a second year. "It was amazing. It wasn't too crowded, it was spread out enough to find your own space," she said. "I decided to do at least one thing each day that I wouldn't normally do. Overall, she said: "I felt I was taken back in time to student days with all the idealism you associate with being younger. But you also driven forward by the inspiration and positive energy. There is an emphasis not only on learning but commitment to social change and community building.

"With all the doom and gloom, and people talking about the credit crunch, it's inspiring to be reminded of the power of volunteerism. All your material needs are taken care of, your food and accommodation, and you get the chance to reflect on what really matters in your life."

### **Limmud LA Fills 3 Days and Nights** of Doing Jewish Right

Danielle Berrin and Julie Gruenbaum Fax

Excerpt from the articles

http://www.jewishjournal.com/community/article/limmudla fills 3 days and nights of doin g\_jewish\_right\_20090218

David Suissa

http://www.jewishjournal.com/opinion/article/bumping into judaism 20090218/

More than 700 Jews of various denominations, ages and motivations gathered at the Costa Mesa Hilton for three days and nights of Jews doing Jewish right.

At the second annual LimmudLA conference, at any given time, from 8 a.m. to midnight, at least a dozen simultaneous classes, films, concerts, panels, prayer services pulled at participants, creating a frenzy of wanting to get it all in. The 184-page schedule included 272 sessions, 19 prayer services, 17 musical performances and workshops and 24 films. And that's not including special programming for kids and teens.

But more than what you learn, LimmudLA is about with whom you learn: It offers a chance for Jews of various and often opposing backgrounds to study, eat or just sit together and in the process learn about one another and about things they might never have known could move them. Volunteers power the whole conference.

Nearly all presenters pay for their own travel expenses and conference fees, including some internationally respected Jewish teachers and star musicians, as well as local residents with their own gems of expertise.

Limmud, the Hebrew word for learning, was founded in England more than 25 years ago, and in the last 10 years, volunteers have

#### LIMMUD IN THE MEDIA



established the conference in 38 cities. Here, attorney Shep Rosenman and full-time Jewish volunteer Linda Fife, the conference chairs, began working toward bringing that energy to Los Angeles three years ago.

If last year's inaugural LimmudLA was characterized by a wild intensity, this year offered a more relaxed mania, as both organizers and second-time participants (maybe less so for the 435 newcomers) now understood that, in the end, the spiritual and communal boost could be huge.

The goal for LimmudLA is to help make something cohesive of the region's sprawling, often fractured community. To that end, for those who weren't there, here is a taste of what you missed:

## **Bumping into Judaism**

by David Suissa

It's one thing to go to a Jewish event, shmooze a little, meet the speaker, take a few notes and then write a column. But what do you do when you go to a Jewish event that lasts for 72 hours, has about 200 classes and activities, 150 speakers and 700 Jews buzzing in and out of each event until the wee hours?

How do you write about that? How do you capture hundreds of little moments of discovery and celebration in just one column? How do you summarize in a few paragraphs three days of nonstop Jewish learning that covers just about any Jewish subject?

As I kept meeting more people and having these impromptu moments, it struck me that our lives are filled with great conversations that never happen. These are not conversations that call for a lunch or an

appointment or even a phone call. They're

conversations that happen when you bump into people; the kind of conversations,

perhaps, that you would see among people who live, shop and hang out in a close-knit neighbourhood.

The classes at LimmudLA were great, yes, but it's what happened between the classes that ended up moving me the most. It was the space between the notes, the



Maybe this is the secret of Limmud's success. It's more than a Jewish event. It's a Jewish neighbourhood.

#### **LIMMUD IN THE MEDIA**

# **Beyond the Classroom: Limmud Prompts Food** for Thought

The Jewish Exponent - Bryan Schwartzman http://www.jewishexponent.com/article/18335/

> Limmud means "learning" in Hebrew, and part of the idea behind the movement is that Jews of all religious affiliations and backgrounds should gather in one setting to engage and challenge one another.

The breakdown of the traditional barrier between student and teacher, the encouragement of free-flowing discussion and the idea that no topic should be off limits are all part of the Limmud conference model.

"We are all students, and we are teachers," said Robert Neff, who sits on the steering committee of LimmudPhilly.

#### Beyond the Classroom

According to Ross Berkowitz, executive director of LimmudPhilly, part of the ethos is all about expanding the definition of learning to go beyond just the classroom, so a Yiddish theater performance, jazz enable and a "Torah Yoga" session were also included on the

Berkowitz, stressed that they're meant for the entire community, and pointed out that they'd even had a day's worth of children's activities run by volunteers. Josh and Tracy Maleef, a couple in their 30s, explained that they often find Jewish events off-putting, especially



when tied to a particular denomination or synagogue. They said they were drawn to the event by the absence of any "label," coupled with the fact that it included secular and cultural topics.

#### LIMMUD BY ITS PARTICIPANTS

# Limmud NY - Limmud Antarctica? By Karen Radkowsky

With over 40 Limmud events taking place each year, not everything always goes to plan. We seek to learn from these experiences and to share the lessons with the other groups around the world.

The fifth annual Limmud NY conference took place over Martin Luther King Weekend, January 15-19, 2009 (Thursday-Monday), at the Nevele Resort in the Catskills. The event had nearly 900 people registered, 58% of whom were firsttimers, and over 350 sessions were scheduled.

As this was the second Limmud NY conference at the venue, everyone expected smooth sailing.

However, the event was nearly cancelled at the last minute after the heating system at the hotel broke down just before one of the coldest weekends on record. Some participants chose not to come at all after hearing this news, and others came on Thursday night or Friday morning only to depart before Shabbat (many of them on extra buses of - the serious challenges the team Limmud NY provided for that purpose).

Yet, the vast majority of LimmudNYks (approximately 700) hung in



throughout the weekend.

With many participants offering to help, the team worked tirelessly round the clock, revising plans for rooming, programming, and other affected

Despite - perhaps even partly because faced, the extraordinary spirit of learning and volunteerism that we love about our shared community was more in evidence than ever. The team was deeply gratified by the

tremendous energy, enthusiasm and innovation of presenters and participants.

As a small token of appreciation, all 2009 conference registrants were invited as guests at the annual Limmud NY Spring Sampler fundraising event, an opportunity to gather together once again, as one community, to enjoy the best of Limmud NY - in a warm place. The evening featured a robust sampling of seven different one-hour learning sessions (including some programming that could not be offered at this year's conference), followed by music, comedy and dessert. The team has also had a 'Town Hall meeting' where we debated ideas for future Limmud events within the community.

Planning has begun for the 6th annual Limmud NY conference, chaired by Sissy Block and Rachel Gershman. They and their team hope you will join them: January 15-18, 2010 when the event returns to the warmth of the first Limmud NY venue, the recently-renovated Hudson Valley Resort in Kerhonkson, NY.

#### LIMMUD IN THE MEDIA

### Cold Temps, Warm Spirits At Limmud NY

by Sandee Brawarsky Special To The Jewish Week

Excerpt from the article—http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36\_a14642/News/New\_York.html

Only at Limmud NY could one learn traditional texts with heads of seminaries, ice-skate with Russian Jews, listen to musicians rapping about the Bible, and talk about God and ethics and philosophy with openness as well as rigor.

This year, several sessions included reflections and responses to current events, like "Jewish Approaches to Economic Downturns: Can We Find Answers in Jewish Texts?" and "The Sky is Falling, For Real! What's a Not-for-Profit to Do?" Other sessions explored the relationship between ethics and theology, as well as issues of social justice. Many of the best-attended sessions, often with audiences overflowing into the hallways, featured serious study of Jewish texts, taught by rabbis and rabbinical students.

At Limmud NY, the atmosphere is somewhere between a graduate seminar and a late-night dorm room conversation, with the geniality of a camp reunion.

Sessions included discussions of Israeli politics, ethical standards and kashrut, and conversion, as well as opportunities to understand the subtext of photographs and the



healing properties of the foods of Eastern European Jewry. Among performance pieces, Yossi Vassa's one-man show, "It Sounds Better in Amharic" depicting his immigration from Ethiopia to Israel, and the culture clash he experienced upon his arrival, stood out.

Participants could attend (or not) religious services, yoga, "High Octane Havdalah" with rocker Josh Nelson, a film festival including "Blessed is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh," or join an instant choir that performed at a Catskills-inspired variety show on Sunday evening.

"Limmud is about stepping out of your own box," says Joe Septimus, a management consultant who teaches Torah at various continuing education venues in New York. He led several sessions at Limmud NY, and for him, the weekend is an opportunity not only to learn from the teachers, but from participants. "You never know who's going to walk into the room," he says.

Over one of the days, I shared meals and conversation with a professor of English, a poet/waiter, a Yiddish cultural organizer, a banker, a retired couple, a physician specializing in international global health, a professor of Talmud, rabbinical students, college students, members of 3 generations of a family, and Rabbi Shmuel Simenowitz, who runs a project blending Torah and environmental sensibilities and operates Vermont's only organic, kosher, horse-powered maple farm (and taught "Making the World a Better Place — One pint of maple syrup at a time").

After Shabbat, Rabbi Simenowitz changed out of his satin bekeshe, the garb worn by chasidim, for his weekly clothes, and took out his guitar, joining fiddler, composer and klezmer historian Yale Strom and others for an impromptu jam session, with participants singing along to bluegrass, folk tunes and Beatles songs. It was, as one crooner said, a Limmud moment.

### Taste of Limmud and keep learning with Limmud all year long!

A chance to learn from some of the most exciting and innovative Jewish educators the world over. It offers a thought on the weekly parsha [Torah reading] from educators who have presented at Limmud events throughout the world, together with alternative voices sharing a thought on the themes raised by the parsha.

A Taste of Limmud is unique because it draws on some of Limmud's key principles. It offers the chance to engage in regular, high- quality and accessible Jewish learning from an incredibly diverse range of educators from every perspective. We invite you to join the Limmud community around the world in shared Jewish learning.

To subscribe to the weekly Taste, email iwantatasteoflimmud@limmud.org

or visit www.limmud.org/tasteoflimmud

# **Limmud events**













# around the world











LIMMUD INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER 9



### **Calendar of Events**

#### **MARCH 2009**

Limmud Netherlands—Limmoed—www.limmoed.nl
 Limmud Atlanta—www.limmudatlanta.org
 Brighton & Hove Day Limmud—www.limmud.org/day

#### **APRIL 2009**

17-19 Limmud FSU – Moscow – www.limmudfsu.org 30– May 3 Limmud Germany—www.limmud.de

#### **MAY 2009**

21 Limmud.de Munchen—www.limmud.de
 20-22 Tiyulimmud Galil—www.limmudgalil.com
 22-24 Limmud Colorado – www.limmudcolorado.org
 22-24 Limmud FSU—Karpat, Ukraine—www.limmudfsu.org
 24 Manchester Day Limmud—www.limmud.org/day

#### **JUNE 2009**

3-7 Limmud Bulgaria

14 Newcastle Day Limmud—www.limmud.org/day

**22-24** Limmud Oz—www.limmudoz.com.au

July 2009

1-3 Limmud FSU in Israel—Jerusalem—www.limmudfsu.org
5 Limmud Argentina— www.limudkeshet.com.ar

31-Aug 2 Limmud South Africa—Cape Town—www.limmud.org.za

#### **AUGUST 2009**

3-4 Limmud South Africa—Durban—www.limmud.org.za
 9-10 Limmud South Africa—Johannesburg—www.limmud.org.za
 27-31 Limmudfest - www.limmud.org/fest

TO GET THE MOST UPDATED CALENDAR OF LIMMUD EVENTS AROUND THE GLOBE PLEASE VISIT www.limmudinternational.org

# **International Chavruta Project**

For the last ten years or so, one of the most exciting experience and Limmud Conference and events around the world has been chavruta study. The word 'chavruta' means 'partnership' or 'friendship' and applies to a traditional method of one-to-one Jewish learning. For Limmud Conference, a team of volunteers in the UK have taken on the responsibility each year of compiling a book of texts - some modern, some ancient, some religious, some secular - to act as a catalyst for study.

A chance conversation at LimmudPhilly between volunteers from the UK and New York has given this year's project an exciting twist and an international dimension. They had the vision of the wider Limmud community coming together by creating a joint Chavruta project, compiled by teams from around the world.

The result is that the Chavruta project for 2009 will led by teams based in the UK, Israel, New York, and South Africa/Australia on the theme of 'One'. The book will be used for learning b'chavruta at events in these countries and available to other Limmud communities: a truly international learning programme.

The sub-themes are "One G-d", "One Language", "One People" and "One World".

The teams have begun to collect the sources for their sections of the book and we have regular, international, Skype-conferences to keep each other up-to-date on our progress and to share ideas.

This project is open for everyone in Limmud around the world to participate, and the teams putting together the book would like your input. If you'd like to see the outline of the days, then please contact hannah.kaye@gmail.com for more information and how to take part.

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