

Limmud Presenters and Session details Durban 2016



Laurienne Baitz became involved with WIZO upon moving to Durban where she was warmly embraced by the WIZO women and the rest as they say is history! Laurienne has just 'passed the baton of World WIZO Aviv Chairmanship having spent the past 4 years travelling the world motivating young Jewish women to connect with each other globally. Their mission is to support the rights and lives of women & children at risk in Israel and globally enhancing their own lives in the process.

JDOV - Gratitude, Humility & Practical Zionism the WIZO way

I will provide an overview, insights & anecdotes of my encounters with many other Jewish communities around the world through WIZO. I wish to illustrate the joy & importance of connecting globally as a Jewish people and to motivate practical acts of Tikkun Olam to enhance our



Taddy Blecher (PhD) is the CEO of the Community and Individual Development Association (C.I.D.A.) which founded the Maharishi Institute (MI). MI facilitates university education, vocational training and employment for unemployed youth. A qualified actuary and management consultant, Taddy is passionate about the approach of Consciousness-Based Education, a system of education developing the full potential of every student.

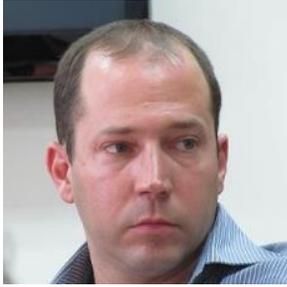
Tracks –Technology, Economy and Spirituality

The future of learning

Technology is changing the way we learn and the way that we should be educating. Dr Blecher will share about educating for the new economy, educating for jobs and educating by engaging the whole person and not just the mind. Through his work at the Maharishi Institute, he can share how this is being done and his vision for the future.

Driving entrepreneurship is the key to South Africa's future

South Africa has one of the lowest levels of entrepreneurship in Africa, and this is reflected in our GDP growth. We're all familiar with the stories of doom and gloom, but there is hope. Dr Blecher will share about exciting work being done in schools, universities and to assist small businesses with regard to driving the creation and growth of small business in our country.



Nir Boms is a research fellow at the Moshe Dayan Center (Tel Aviv University) and at the International Center for Counter Terrorism (Hertziya), and a co-founder of CyberDissidents.org – a network of Middle East bloggers that focuses on freedom of expression and the promotion of dialogue in the region. He is a member of the board of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in Schools and his recent book, ‘Expatriating Democracy’, focuses on technology and political discourse in the Middle East.

Tracks - History and Politics, Israel

Tikkun Olam? The case of humanitarian Diplomacy in Syria

In the past three years I am involved with a unique effort that so far provided over 5500 tons of humanitarian aid from Israel to Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Syria itself. Despite the uniqueness of this work and some [visibility it generated](#), this story remains largely untold. What I thought to do it is to speak on Israel and the Syrian dilemma and share the story that includes fascinating meetings between Israelis and Syrian, joined work and some glimpses of hope in the midst of the most dreadful strategy this region had seen in a century. I will first provide a very short analysis of some the major developments in Syria with a focus on how they influence Israel and move to describe the work involving Israeli groups while describing my own interaction with a number of key figures in the Syrian opposition.

What do Arabs Want? – Unconventional Wisdom from Middle East Public Opinion Polling

The Middle East is full of convictions and conventional wisdom. Arabs dislike democracy and will always ‘vote’ against it; Iranians hate Americans and the West; Israel will never be accepted in the Middle East; the issue of Palestine remains the central issue that galvanizes the Arab and Muslim world and to which there is no resolution in sight. While some of these assertions hold true, there is more than meets the eye, especially when the view is focused not toward the statements of politicians but rather to data generated from public opinion research. The lecture will focus on the unconventional wisdom of the “Arab Street” and look at some of the salient issues of the region through the lenses of public opinion data.



Noah Efron chairs the Program on Science, Technology & Society at Bar Ilan University and hosts “The Promised Podcast” on TLV1. He was a founder of the “Green Movement” political party and served on the Tel Aviv-Jaffa City Council. He’s written three books and many essays on the intertwine of Judaism, science, technology and politics.

Tracks – Israel, New Trends, History

Technology and the Jewish Question

The screens we look at, the pills we take, the food we engineer, and all the scientific technologies that we use affect what it means to be a Jew today (and the likelihood of our kids being Jews tomorrow). This informal lecture and discussion will consider how new technologies are affecting our spiritual and religious lives.

Bursting the Tel Aviv bubble: How the left lost Israel and how we can win it back

Noah Efron hosts The Promised Podcast on TLV1. Every week, he laments how he, the Ashkenazi elite and the Israeli left are becoming increasingly out of touch with the rest of Israel. Come hear Noah offer some solutions on how the Israeli left can get its mojo back, and maybe, one day even regain political power from the right. Naturally, this session will be accompanied by a healthy dose of self-flagellation.



Gila Fine is a teacher of the talmudic narrative who has taught at Hebrew University, Pardes, the Shalom Hartman Institute and WebYeshiva. She is the editor of Maggid Books in Jerusalem and the former editor of the quarterly journal *Azure: Ideas for the Jewish Nation*. She is also the ghostwriter behind several well-known books.

Tracks – Text, Talmud

Talmudic Heroines

Yalta, the Shrew

Why are shrews always so vicious? How did the ancient world view the male/female body? And what possessed Yalta to smash 400 bottles of her husband's wine? The comic tale of Yalta, read through Aristotle, Shakespeare, Congreve, Brontë, Jean Rhys, Adrienne Rich, and R. Kook.

Heruta, the Madonna/Whore

Why are women divided into saintly and seductive? How does a married couple go for years without intimacy? And why must the wife dress up as a prostitute to show her husband who she really is? The domestic drama of R. Hiyya and his wife, read through Demosthenes, Nahmanides, Freud, Wilde, Kant, Buber, Calderon, and Mad Men.



Sharonah Fredrick is an anthropologist who teaches and publishes in four languages-Spanish, English, Hebrew and Portuguese. She is currently the Assistant Director of the Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Her fields of expertise range from Judeo-Spanish history and poetry of the pre and post-Expulsion periods to Irish mythology to the formation of multicultural outlaw societies in the New World. She has been one of the most popular presenters on the Limmud circuit and will make her Limmud SA debut this year.

Tracks – Arts, Text, History

Jews, pirates, rebellion and empire

The conquest of the new world, with prohibitions of Judaism throughout the Spanish and Portuguese American empires, thrust fleeing crypto-Jews into contact with outlaws and rebels of all kinds, who were sympathetic to the plight of Judeo-Spanish refugees. Pirates such as Henry Morgan, and native American rebels, saw firm allies in Jewish outlaws.

Shabbat in Sherwood Forest-Medieval Outlaws and the Jewish Question.

"The *Ballad of Robin Hood* has fascinated scholars and laymen alike, and its emphasis on "outlaw content" makes it a natural candidate for the projection of aspirations of other marginalized groups of the European Middle Ages, such as Jews and Moors. What is the basis for these legends, and why did early writers of historical fiction, such as Sir Walter Scott, find it so easy to insert ostensibly "pro-Jewish" tendencies onto the legend? Is there a pre-Christian, druidical basis to the Robin Hood legend which lends itself to appropriation by those groups deemed beyond the reach of the Church? What was the role of the Churchman Hugh of Avalon, resident of 12th century Nottingham, in humanizing the otherwise vilified image of the Jew in English popular literature?"



Thomas Hagsphil is the headmaster of Durban Girls' College and has done presentations across the country and abroad on educational topics. Holocaust history has become of interest as his father was in the Hitler Youth. Mathematics and educating girls for the 21st century are his other passions.

Tracks –Holocaust, History and Politics

What else must fall?

This session describes a tour with SRC students from the University of the Free State to the death camps of Poland and Germany in response to the #Rhodes must fall and #fees must fall campaigns of last year. "Mandela sold us out"! Can there be reconciliation without justice? How do the youth of South Africa see the future of this country? These are some of the themes that will be discussed with the overriding question: "Is there hope for South Africa?"

Program subject to change.



Sara Hirschhorn is the University Research Lecturer and Sidney Brichto Fellow in Israel Studies at the University of Oxford. Her scholarly and public activities focus on the Israeli settler movement, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Diaspora-Israel relations. She is the author of the forthcoming book, “City on a Hilltop: American Jews and the Israeli Settler Movement Since 1967,” (Harvard University Press, 2017) and a frequent public speaker, writer, and media contributor on Israel/Jewish issues.

Tracks – History and Politics, Israel

The Unsettled Question: The History and Politics of the Israeli Settler Movement Since 1967

This session will explore the history and politics of the Israeli settler movement since the Six Day War in 1967. We will examine the ideological, religious, social, and cultural continuities and changes within this controversial enterprise over the past almost 50 years and what the future is likely to hold. A sensitive subject and no guarantees to ‘settle’ this debate, but please bring your questions!

How We Talk About It When We Talk About Israel/Palestine (AKA: How to have a Sane, Serious, and Sensitive Discussion over Shabbat Dinner, without starting WWII)

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an incredibly polarizing issue in our community. I’ll share lesson from the perspective of a historian in approaching this difficult topic and some strategies about how to have a more productive conversation that considers many points of view. I still can’t promise you’ll like your relatives, but I hope to provide some tools for more civil discussions over Shabbat dinner.



Laura Janner-Klausner is the first Senior Rabbi to the Movement for Reform Judaism in the United Kingdom. She is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4’s ‘Thought for the Day’ and BBC One’s ‘The Big Questions’ series of moral, ethical and religious debates and makes regular appearances on other programmes.

Tracks – Life, Community, New Trends, Tikun Olam, Text

Building Resilience in the Face of Adversity

It's hard just to keep going through pain and hardship. Building resilience, and achieving equilibrium amidst adversity are vital skills - and the subject of a book written by Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner. Join her as she draws on Jewish texts to discuss resilience-building as individuals, in families, and at work. This session will be a safe space to examine what knocks our resilience and how we may rebuild our resilience skills.

Jews and Muslims, starting difficult conversations.

It is often said that Muslims and Jews are opposites, but what is the real truth? Join Rabbi Janner-Klausner as she explores Muslim-Jewish relations in the UK with particular reference to a national project that enables Muslims and Jews to talk in separate faith groups about the most difficult issues – e.g. Israel and the Palestinians, religious violence, and extremism.



Benita Levin a news editor for Eyewitness News in Johannesburg which provides news for 947 Highveld Stereo and 702 Talk Radio, has been in the radio news industry for more than 20 years. As a working mom and an accredited life coach through Martha Beck from the United States, Benita helps people find the balance between work and their personal life. A regular guest on a relationship panel on Noeleen's 3Talk television show for 3 years, she is also an MC, voice over artist and motivational speaker.

Finding the Balance

A working Mom and Life Coach tries to make sense of the chaotic world of news in South Africa. Benita will share lessons learnt, insights, and some laughs.....



Benji Lovitt, American stand-up comic is based in Israel and has become one of the most popular comedians on the Limmud International circuit. His perspectives on life in Israel have been featured on Israeli television and radio and in publications such as USA Today, Time Magazine, Huffington Post, the Times of Israel, and more. His annual Yom Ha'atzmaut list of things he loves about Israel has developed a huge following and he works regularly with Jewish organizations to promote Israel. During 2014's Operation Protective Edge, his humorous observations on the war led to his being called in Israel "the only reason to go on to Facebook"

Tracks - Text, Inter-Faith, History

What War Zone? Stand-Up Comedy Show/Q&A

Benji presents a hilarious picture of Israel by deconstructing cultural differences and the immigrant experience in Israel. Benji's energy and enthusiasm will make you laugh out loud as he sheds light on embarrassing Hebrew mistakes, Jewish holidays, and exactly what makes North American and Israeli Jews different from each other.

Because The Middle East is Funny: Explore Israeli History through Its Comedy

It has been said that throughout our history, Jews have laughed to keep from crying. In a country which has experienced its share of ups and downs, Israel has developed its own unique brand of humor. Benji tracks the changes in Israeli society through classic movie, TV, and comedy clips enabling the audience to develop a richer understanding of Israeli society.



Eshchar Mizrachi was born in Israel, lived on various kibbutzim, but moved to Durban as a child. He is a Senior Lecturer in Genetics at the University of Pretoria and is affiliated with both the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute and the Genomics Research Institute. His interests encompass not only all realms of science but philosophy, art, and education. He sees his role in academia as developing tomorrow's science leaders.

Biotechnology in agriculture and medicine

The past ten years have marked a revolution in biology – resulting in radical changes in technology, such as the genetic engineering employed in agriculture that affects what food we eat. In this talk, Eshchar will review some of the most advanced technologies and discuss their implications for growing plants— for food, for replacing fossil fuels, and for producing medicines and vaccines. He will also consider what the implications of genetic modification could be for Kashrut and treatment of disease.

Bias in "popular opinion" - can we be objective?

When scientific methods are applied to social networks, fascinating data is revealed. In social networks, the pattern of connection is almost never equal, so that most of the time, a few individuals – a tiny minority—play a much more dominant role than the many. This has a profound impact on how we absorb information and interact with others. Eshchar will show, firstly, the polarization and the breakdown of constructive dialogue and, secondly, how many people become victims of a “spiral of silence”, failing to express moderate views for fear of a backlash from a polarized minority. So although we are *all* capable of applying objective thinking to a subject, we have difficulty doing so when issues most closely associated with defining our own identities are concerned, as for example, our Jewishness.



Eli Ovits is Chief Executive of Limmud. Representing Limmud in 43 countries, Eli supports the development of Limmud, its programmes and volunteers. Eli is the former COO of Jerusalem U, and also headed communications at The Israel Project. He has lectured and travelled widely working to combat extremism and strengthen the global Jewish community.

Tracks – Jewish world, politics

The End of Europe? A Global Jewish Response to Combating Extremism

With extremism on the rise, what is the Jewish response to this threat? Using film (that the presenter was involved in producing), this session will highlight some of the challenges facing Europe, South Africa, Israel and the civilized world. It will also present solutions and provide clarity on what we can do.



Caroline Rothstein is a New York City-based writer, performer, activist, and arts educator. Lady Gaga is a fan of her work, and her video 'Fat is Not a Feeling' has been viewed over 2 million times on Youtube. She has been speaking, facilitating and performing spoken word poetry at colleges, schools, and performance venues worldwide for over a decade.

Her work has appeared in *BuzzFeed*, *Narratively*, *The Forward*, and elsewhere.

www.carolinerothstein.com

Tracks - Community, Tikun Olam, Performance, Arts and Culture

A Letter from My Judaism to My Body

New York City-based spoken word poet Caroline Rothstein will perform a one-time only, unique set list of her original poetry about Judaism, Jewish identity, body image, healing, and triumph from adversity. Weaving together her personal narrative with ideals around social justice and change, Caroline's interactive performance will inspire all ages.

Jewish identity and body image - a writing and performance workshop

In this interactive workshop, participants will examine the connections between Judaism, body image, sexuality, gender and social identity, and explore how creating art – specifically through writing and performance – can offer healing, restoration, understanding, analysis and catharsis regarding these topics and themes.



Aron Turest-Swartz is a musician, producer, TV presenter and social entrepreneur from Cape Town, South Africa. In 2002, he started a band called Freshlyground – one of the most successful multicultural bands to come out of post-Apartheid South Africa. Aron was recently appointed as Deputy Director of the United Jewish Campaign in Cape Town, and is passionately committed to creating and sustaining a vibrant and thriving

global Jewish community.

Tracks – Tikun Olam, Arts and Culture

Somewhere over the Rainbow – Jews and Music Around the World

Some of the greatest songs of all times (including a few pretty shocking surprises) were written by Jewish songwriters. Join me on a journey across time and around the globe, exploring some of these songs, the musicians behind them, and the relevance to our Jewish world today.

Tikkun Olam – Idealistic Dreamer meets Post Apartheid Reality

What does Tikkun Olam really mean these days? How can we make real difference in this world? In South Africa we are surrounded by poverty, violence, crime and injustice on a daily basis. Five years ago

I had a vision. Using music, film and social media I embarked on a journey that changed my life and taught me about Tikkun Olam – the hard way.



Joe Wolfson is the Orthodox rabbi on campus at New York University and directs the Orthodox Union’s Jewish Learning Initiative. He hails from the UK and taught at the London School of Jewish Studies. He received his ordination from the Israeli Chief Rabbinate after studies at Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush) and Bet Morasha and has degrees in political philosophy from Cambridge and UCL.

Tracks – Bible, text, philosophy

‘Good Morning My New World’ – The Book of Jonah through Contemporary Israeli Music

Jonah is a difficult book to understand: one can read the text and still feel that one hasn’t touched the essence. Using contemporary Israeli music this lecture seeks to draw out some central themes of Yonah that lurk under the surface, and at the same time introduce a new and uniquely Israeli approach to spirituality.

In Search of the World to Come

The world to come, *Olam HaBa*, is considered by many to be a central Jewish concept, and yet it is curiously absent from the Bible. We will try to explain this absence and locate its origins and ask, how is it that such a key idea only came to the fore at a later stage in Jewish history, and what this might mean for us in this world too.



David Wolpe has been named the ‘most influential Rabbi in America’ by Newsweek Magazine and one of the ‘50 most influential Jews in the World’ by the Jerusalem Post. David is the Rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles. He has debated with Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris and is Rabbi to Kirk Douglas. He is the author of eight books, including the national bestseller ‘Making Loss Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times’. His new book is titled ‘David, the Divided Heart’ and has been optioned for a movie by Warner Bros.

Tracks - Text, Philosophy, Ethics, Integral Jew

How can Judaism help us solve modern ethical dilemmas? (David Wolpe & Paul Root Wolpe together)

Modern ethical dilemmas, such as cloning, or climate change, seem far removed from anything our ancestors could have anticipated. Yet Jews look to their traditional, ancient texts for guidance on how to approach such ethical problems. Can we really derive the insight and guidance we need from the Talmud and other such sources? In fact, Jewish perspectives are often sought out by the secular world. A rabbi and a sociologist/ethicist will explore together the wisdom the Jewish tradition offers for today’s thorny ethical dilemmas.

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Program subject to change.

A Jewish philosophy of love and relationship.

This session will help us understand how Judaism views both love and relationships differently from modern romantic visions. Why is the first mention of love between parent and child? What does romantic love mean in the bible and in modern Jewish life? Judaism is often said to have a positive and affirming attitude toward sexuality -- is that true and if so, in what way? We will attempt to create a clear, coherent idea of a Jewish approach to love.

King David - why does a murderer and adulterer get to be the ancestor of the Messiah? (If that topic title is too long then King David: The Divided Heart)

King David's story is the most detailed in the human bible. The book on which this talk is based is being made in to a movie by Warner Brothers, because David's story is so filled with intrigue, murder, sexuality and spirit. Why does this man get to be the ancestor of the Messiah, and what was unique about David's leadership, his relationship to women and his role as both son and father? This talk will review the major events in David's life and try to discern a pattern in the deeds of a King the Bible says was "a man after God's own heart."



Paul Root Wolpe is NASA's Senior Bioethicist. His TED Talk has been viewed over 1 million times and he is a past winner of World Technology Network Awards in Ethics. He is the Candler Professor of Bioethics, Schinazi Professor of Jewish Bioethics, and Director of the Center for Ethics at Emory University and the Editor-in-Chief of the American Journal of Bioethics Neuroscience.

Tracks - Science, Ethics, Text, Tikkun Olam

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Frankenstein and the Golem

The two paradigms of human-created 'monsters' have reverberated through modern history as two different models for considering everything from genetic safety to scientific hubris to man's relationship to the material world and G-d. In this talk we compare these two legends and discuss why they portray Humankind so differently and teach such different lessons for modern biotechnology.

Jews in Space!

Surprisingly, Jews have had a significant role in “Space Ethics”. Space travel challenges us with unique situations that evoke unique ethical and bioethical issues. Dr. Wolpe, for the last 15 years the Senior Bioethics Advisor to NASA, tells stories of being a Jew at NASA and explores some of the challenging ethical issues of long duration space flight to explore our solar system.



Stanley Wulf is a San Francisco based medical doctor who has found a third "career" in speaking about the conflict in the Middle East and the difficulties we experience as Diaspora Jews in hearing and sharing differing views. He serves on the Board of Molad, the Center for Renewal of Israeli Democracy. He was chosen by his peers as one of the “100 Most Inspiring People in the Life-Sciences industry. www.SpeakingAboutIsrael.com

Tracks - Israel, Community

Managing Conflict When Talking About Israel - How to have Constructive Conversations

Debate and dissent in the Diaspora Jewish community about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often result in hurtful judgment and high emotions. Shutting down conversation should not be an option on an issue so central to our identity.

This session will offer the concepts and guidelines of a proven approach to navigating such sensitive conversations— including “The 3 No’s”, the 3 areas that most often lead to conflict, how to side-step pitfalls, and how to facilitate a more constructive discussion.



Mandy Yachad born and educated in Johannesburg is a former South African cricketer and hockey player (indoor and outdoor) who represented the South African national team in both sports. He was part of the team which toured India in November 1991 marking the end of isolation. A Wits university graduate, Mandy is a qualified attorney, and an active business executive.

Tracks – Sport and Yiddishkeit

To Play or to Pray?

In this session Mandy will talk about his sporting career and his Judaism. He was brought up in a traditional Jewish environment and developed a passion for sport. As his sporting career progressed he also became more involved in Yiddishkeit. He will discuss how he attempted to deal with the conflict that arose around marrying these two aspects of his life, as well as some of the lessons learnt.