

Creative Contest: „Christian-Jewish Dialogue –  
Why? What for?

Contribution by  
Borbala Lakos

# The video of Talmud NOW - Talmud ON Stage project – you can find [here](#).

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## Description of the project by Borbala Lakos:

### ***Talmud NOW & Talmud ON Stage***

#### **What is it about?**

*The Talmud NOW (Talmud Not Only for Women) project draws attention to the importance of questioning and critical thinking, offering interactive lectures, round-table discussions and improvisational theater performances.*

*These events are linked by the idea that the Talmud, as we believe, is a strong symbol of interaction and debate. It is an endless conversation that anyone can join at any point, and it can teach us to listen and talk to each other. The Talmud is one of the most important collections of texts in the Jewish culture, consisting principally of legal texts. It can also be considered as the record of 900 years of debate and opposing text interpretations.*

*We lay emphasis on the diversity of our guest speakers; thus, we invite rabbis, Jewish community leaders and members, Christian theologians, sisters, and experts belonging to other religious traditions, and academics. The project has been running for six years—in numbers: 45 events (including live streaming and recently added online events) at 22 venues with 43 guest lecturers and with the participation of more than 1.000 people and thousands more followed us online.*

#### **What gave me the idea for creating Talmud NOW?**

*The curriculum of Paideia included a year-long introductory course on the Talmud. This was my first encounter with Talmud studies. During the semester I was fascinated by the structure of this collection of Jewish legal texts, the endless debates and the idea that opposing opinions also can be recorded on the same Talmudic page.*

*I believe that this idea can be still relevant in our daily life regardless our gender, age or affiliation. Therefore, I wanted to use Talmud, the Talmudic tales and thinking to create dialogues and connection between different people as well as communities.*

*I chose the name of the initiative Talmud Not Only for Women – Talmud NOW for several reasons.*

*First of all, it is a play with the words which refer to the fact, that there are a very few stories about women in Talmud. Second of all, I also wanted to reflect on the Jewish tradition and its changes: It was not accepted for women to study (read) Talmud for a long time. This idea and Judaism itself have changed a lot the last one hundred years. Many of the religious Jewish communities have accepted women studying Talmud as well as it is available among academic studies.*

*I still feel the relevance of spreading the words and core values of Talmud, such as those questions can be examined from almost endless points of view. We live in an open, multicultural society in the 21st century in the middle of Europe but people with different views and cultural backgrounds rarely talk, discuss or debate at the same table.*

### **Talmud ON Stage**

*The Talmud on Stage is an improvisation-based theatre play, inspired by Talmudic stories. For more details, please see our video.*

### **Talmud NOW Team, partners, supporters**

*Even though I am the founder and organizer of Talmud NOW, I always prefer to run the events with partners such as JCC-Budapest Balint House (the Jewish Community Center in Budapest) which we have been cooperating with for many years. Talmud NOW receives professional and financial support from the Mozaik Jewish Community HUB. Among our partners and supporters, I have to mention also the Limmud Hungary Foundation, the Paideia Institute, the Keller Foundation and the Here and Now Theatre Company.*

*Besides a team of volunteers (four-five people) I work with a Talmudic scholar, theatre companies, a photographer, a graphic designer and a video crew.*



### **Short biography Borbala Lakos:**

Borbala was born and raised in Hungary. She holds a B.Sc. in tourism management and works as a tourist guide in Budapest. In 2013 she studied in Stockholm at Paideia – the European Institute for Jewish Studies. Currently, she is working towards an M.A. in History of Jewish Culture at the University of Jewish Studies and Theological Seminary of Budapest. In addition to her work and her studies, Borbala volunteers at Haver Foundation which holds interactive workshops for high school and university students in order to introduce the richness of the Jewish culture. She also runs a project of her own: Talmud not Only for Women – Talmud NOW which became an important platform for dialogues in the Jewish community of Budapest in the past years.