



# The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

February 2017 • Shvat–Adar 5777

[JHG Home](#) [Program](#)

**Dear members, friends and supporters,**

Please remember to pay annual membership dues. The congregation depends on everyone to pay promptly in order to enable us to continue our work. Thank you!

Please note our bank information:

Sparkasse Weserbergland

IBAN: DE47 2545 0110 0031 030380

BIC: NOLADE21SWB



The New Year 2017 is well underway, and we have many ideas and plans for our 20th year.

With cold and snowy days upon us, we still reflect on what a lovely Chanukkah we celebrated together. The synagogue sparkled with decorations, candles, Channukiot und Dreidels. Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg brought the children up to the Bimah and, led by our former Bar Mitzvah “boy” Benyamin, the blessings were recited. Chanukkah songs were sung and for many of the older generation, childhood memories evoked. Rabbi Ulrike had planned a Chanukkah quiz in German and Russian. It was fun for everyone and educational too. Prizes were of course edible—decorated sufganiyot. The youngsters received Chanukkah gift bags with sweets, a Chanukkah pencil and a ticket to the movies. Smiles were on every face as we celebrated together, enjoyed latkes and sufganiyot, sweet wine and good conversation with neighbors and friends. Nes Gadol Haya Sham—we can also say a miracle happened here!

Our members returned in January for a New Year’s Reception. A musical theater program was performed by and for our members. Familiar and lively singalong tunes got everyone in a happy mood and ready to dance. The artists deserved all the applause and more. Performing were Larissa Dvortsis, Mark Osievych, Borys Uchitel, Faina Pelts, Dora and Valerij Bogatchyk and Inna Weinberg. Our kitchen wizards Dora, Lyudmila, Valerij und Yevgenij are always deserving of mention. It was a lovely evening of love and friendship.

Our Shabbatot weekends with Rabbi Ulrike are always full and a pleasure for all.

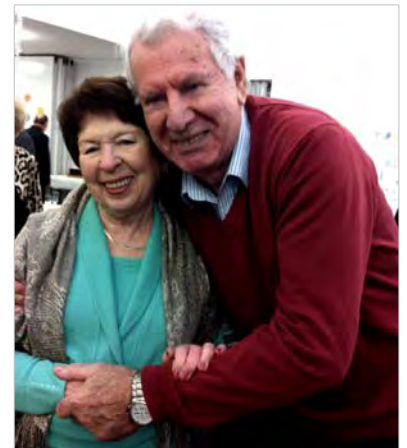
On January 14th congregational president Rachel Dohme traveled to Hamburg for the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany (UPJ) annual “President’s Day.” Seventeen from twenty-five congregations were represented there. The idea of an annual “President’s Day” was the brainchild of Michael Lawton from the Cologne congregation and Rachel Dohme. It was to be a day-long exchange of ideas, brainstorming and problem solving between leaders of our UPJ congregations.

Embedded in this year’s meeting was an award ceremony for Rabbi Joel Oseran, Rabbi Emeritus of the WUPJ. Rabbi Oseran was in his function as vice president of the WUPJ, responsible for congregation development and a loyal and helpful friend and supporter of our congregation. Through our positive communications, the WUPJ put our German Reform congregations on their radar. The 2018 President’s Day will be held in Bad Segeberg and in 2019, here in Hamelin.



Photos: Matthias Hauke

Page 2 has a collage of happy moments from last month.



## Jewish January

### Tu Bi'Shvat

We welcome everyone to join us for a festive Tu B'Shevat Seder on Shabbat morning, February 11th at 11:00 a.m. after Shacharit services. Come to the table and celebrate this Jewish tradition, which originated in the 16th century. Since we established our congregation in 1997, we have held a Seder to celebrate the "New Year of the Trees" every year. We will read and reflect upon texts, psalms and poems as we enjoy tasting fruits, nuts and seeds and drink the prescribed four glasses of wine or juice as directed in our Seder. We will reaffirm our solidarity to the land of Israel. Everyone in attendance will receive a lovely spring plant to nurture and brighten their home.



### Our 20th Year

This year is a very special one. The Jewish Congregation of Hamelin, "Beitenu" will celebrate its 20th anniversary! Please join us on Sunday, February 19th at 4:00 p.m. for our celebration.

Our choir "Shalom" has prepared a concert for us. Rabbi Offenberg will insert reflective readings between the musical selections. A delicious buffet will tempt every tongue, prepared by Dora, Valerij and Lyudmila.

Our congregation was established 20 years ago on February 17, 1997, with 18 men and women who had a dream and a hope to reestablish Jewish life in Hamelin. The conviction was to create a Jewish space in a country new to us all. It was an awesome task.

Who could imagine a stranger scenario—a Jewish American with three small children working with FSU Jews to build a Jewish community in Germany?

We came together, we met, we talked as best we could in a language none of us spoke well, we learned, we got to know each other and a group was formed. The Catholic Church St. Elisabeth gave us shelter for the first year. We grew. The wish crystalized to recreate religious structures as had been known at home or as been heard about from elders. Some merely wanted a safe space to be together culturally. To most readers, this describes just about every congregation in the world.

We saw then and see ourselves now as the religious descendants of the congregation that came before us. We consciously decided to carry on the religious Reform tradition, which was celebrated in Hamelin until the congregation and Jewish life was destroyed in 1938. We tried to emulate our predecessors and eventually in 2011 succeeded in rebuilding a synagogue on the very soil the Hamelin synagogue had stood when dedicated in 1879.

Everything we achieved we achieved with and through the hands, minds and hearts of so many who were inspired by God. Jews and non-Jews, young and old, rabbis, organizations and people from Germany, the FSU, America, Israel, and Britain all were part of our tapestry. We are indebted and grateful to all those who helped build what we have today.

In our 20th year we will celebrate our past, present and future and hope you will all take part.

### A Message from Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg

In the middle of February when the earth is still frozen and our gardens are bare, we celebrate the New Year of the Trees. Tu Bishvat was originally tax day and was eventually transformed into a ceremony with study, singing and a symbolic meal. The holiday honors the trees that give us oxygen to breathe, fruit to eat, shade in the sun and wood for our homes. The Bible tells us that in the middle of the Garden of Eden, a Tree of Life and a Tree of Good and Evil stood. It is no wonder that a tree is often symbolically used to represent life's great mysteries.

A tree grows in two directions—its roots stretch down deep in the earth and its branches reach for the heavens. In biblical and rabbinic literature one finds many examples of comparison between trees and people. "He shall be like a tree, planted next to a stream of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither and in whatsoever he does he shall prosper." (Psalm 1)

People as well as trees are vulnerable. Well cared for, they can reach old age but if inconsiderately treated, they suffer. They reflect their environment. Trees symbolize the relationship between the generations and remind us of our responsibilities for the future.

In Midrash Tanchuma we read, "God warned Israel: When you reach the Land that I am giving you and you see it is bountiful with trees and everything good, do not say, 'We do not need to plant this place.' You should plant and cultivate the Land just as those before you planted it for you, so you too shall plant it for your children. No one should say, 'I am old. Why should I trouble myself, I could be dead tomorrow.' We do not have the right to slack, what you have found planted so you should plant for the next generation."

## Our Internet Presence

Those of you reading this newsletter in English are reading the internet version. The newsletter is also available in print form in [German](#) and [Russian](#) for members and supporters here in Germany. Many hours and many hands and heads go into producing this monthly informational newsletter. Keeping us online is no small expense for our small community of 90 percent Russian-Jewish immigrants. We recognize the importance of this media tool in connecting and informing others of our congregational efforts and developments. And this newsletter has been the most efficient and successful outreach tool in our attempts to network internationally. Many new relationships have been established and built as a result of this newsletter and we are grateful to all involved. If you would care to help us stay online, please contact Rachel Dohme at [racheldohme@ighreform.org](mailto:racheldohme@ighreform.org). We appreciate any and all support.

Enjoy the banner of pictures on our Web site at [www.ighreform.org](http://www.ighreform.org).

## Annual Membership Meeting

Members are invited to this year's membership meeting on March 26th with a separate invitation. Make your voice heard.

## Russian Consulate

As a public service we host the annual visit from the Russian embassy for those members still holding Russian passports. This service is open to our members and Russian citizens in Hamelin. The visit is scheduled for February 2nd.

## Transportation to the Synagogue

We offer members who wish to attend services the opportunity. Call the synagogue office no later than two days prior and we will have a mini-van pick-up arranged. This service is being offered to our seniors or those who cannot get to synagogue any other way.

## New Members

We are happy to extend a warm welcome to Mrs. Rica Shoshana and her seven children as our newest members. Welcome in Hamelin.

## Refu'ah shlemah

We pray for the complete recovery of all who are ill and everyone who is going through difficult times. We will recite Misheberach for them during services.



## Donations — Tzedakah

We wish to thank Mrs. Zisckle-Henßen and her groups from the Seminar Center Ith, Mr. Schultner, the 11th grade classes of the HLA Gymnasium and Mrs. Spangenberg, the 8th grade classes of the Barntrup Gymnasium and Mrs. Wahren, Mrs. Klein and the Confirmation class from Bodenwerder, Mrs. Nicole Schwigon, the Fischer Family, Mrs. Stella Bogdanova, Mr. Arkadij Zyranov, Mrs. Gibas and the Rachel Dohme.

We thank Nani and Austin Beutel for a most generous donation which will help fund our summer day camp program.

May you all be blessed for your generosity.

## Etz Chayim — Tree of Life

Winter is upon us but our tree needs to keep its leaves and add more. The Tree of Life offers our members, friends and supporters the opportunity for two mitzvot (good deeds) at once. One can commemorate special occasions, such as births, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, weddings, Yahrzeits and special honors and also support the maintenance of our synagogue.

Leaves added last month were donated from:

- Akadij Zyranov: "In memory of my son Dmitriy"
- Rabbi Irit Shillor: "Congregational rabbi Irit Shillor 2001–2016"
- Dohme family: "In beloved memory of Hanna and Johnny Jones"

New orders were donated from:

- Stella Bodganova: "In honor of the birth of my grandchild Teodor Kummer"
- Akadij Zyranov: "In beloved memory of Nataliya Zaychenko"



## Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Rabbi Joel Oseran and receiving the Abraham Geiger Prize!

Mazel Tov to Dr. Rebekka Dohme on receiving her PhD in Psychology from the University of Indiana, USA!

Mazel Tov to Stella Bogdanova and her family on the birth of her grandson Teodor!

## Thank you — Todah Rabah

We thank everyone who help in making our holiday and cultural events very special. Our thanks go to everyone who plan and organize activities in our community.

## February Yahrzeit

Anna Raik            February 12, 2000 / 6. Adar I 5760  
Vladimir Legkov   February 7, 2003 / 6. Adar I 5763  
David Saks           February 6, 2008 / 30. Shevat 5768  
Michael Lazer       February 5, 2012 / 12. Shevat 5772

May their memory be for a blessing. Please join family members during Sabbath services as we recite Kaddish. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.



Shalom!

—The Congregation Board

## Program for February 2017 • Shvat–Adar 5777

**Office hours: Monday, Wednesday & Friday: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; Tuesday & Thursday: 8.00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.**

Thursday, February 2            10:00 a.m.    Russian Embassy visit  
Thursday, February 9            7:00 p.m.    In cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews  
Lecture Series “Remembrance” Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg  
Friday, February 10            2:30 p.m.    Monthly Board Meeting

### **Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg**

Friday, February 10            3:00 p.m.    Bnei Mitzvah class  
   4:00 p.m.    Kinder Kehilla  
   5:30 p.m.    Friday night services  
Saturday, February 11        10:00 a.m.    Saturday morning services  
   11:00 a.m.    Tu Bi Shvat Seder  
   2:30 p.m.    Giyur class  
Sunday, 19                        4:00 p.m.    20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, Concert: “Shalom”

### **Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg**

Friday, February 24            3:00 p.m.    Bnei Mitzvah class  
   4:00 p.m.    Kinder Kehilla  
   5:30 p.m.    Friday night services  
Saturday, February 25        10:00 a.m.    Saturday morning services  
   12:30 p.m.    Torah study  
   1:30 p.m.    Giyur class  
Sunday, January 22            3:00 p.m.    Video Afternoon: “My Uncle’s Dream” in Russian

## [Newsletter Archives](#)

### **Jewish Community of Hamelin**

Member of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany, the World Union of Progressive Judaism, and the Central Council of Jews of Germany

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