



The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

December 2017 • Kislev–Tevet 5778

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Dear members, friends and supporters,

Thank goodness for Chanukah! The holiday symbolizes beautifully the triumph of light over darkness. We as a People have experienced many dark moments in our history. Before we ready ourselves for the joyous holiday of Chanukah, let us reflect on somber moments we shared in November.

Shoah, the murder of six million Jews, was the greatest tragedy in the history of Judaism and is still felt today in every Jewish community around the world. We held two very different events to remember and honor those who came before us.

On the 2nd of November, the Hamelin Theater in cooperation with our congregation offered *To an Unknown Friend*, performed by Gilles Welinski. Every seat in our sanctuary was taken as guests and congregants were deeply moved by the original piece composed and brilliantly performed by the famed French dancer Welinski. We thank the Hamelin Theater again and look forward to new shared projects.

On Thursday, November 9, as every year, we gathered at the memorial in front of our synagogue for the commemoration, together with the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation Hameln e.V. church leaders and citizens of the city. On November 9, 1938, 79 years ago, the synagogue in Hameln was set in flames and destroyed during “Pogromnacht.” We commemorated the murdered and emigrated Jewish children, women, and men of our city. Moving texts and painful memories were recited. Local high school students read the more than 100 names of the murdered. Wreaths were laid by our members Aron Kaplan and Dieter Vogelhuber, as well as many from other religious and civic organizations.

We opened the synagogue doors and invited everyone inside for an evening with Alois Prinz as he read from his book *A Living Fire—The life story of Milena Jesenska* in the synagogue. It was a moving end to a difficult day.



Aktion Mensch

As promised in the last letter of November, we report here on the Boris Kagan’s lecture on “Kharkov’s Jewish architects,” which took place in October as part of the project “Aktion Mensch.” Mr. Kagan introduced us to several architects of his hometown, whom he knew personally and whose buildings he presented in words and pictures. Many of these architects had moving life stories and we learned a great deal about the buildings they had left behind. We enjoyed a thorough discussion over coffee. We thank Boris Kagan and all those who helped on this day, as well as the project Aktion Mensch for the friendly support.



Jewish life in December

Hanukkah without light would be like Passover without matzah—the light in our darkest season simply makes people nicer to each other. Hanukkah is a family celebration that is celebrated every night for eight days. Every day, another one of the eight candles of the Hanukkiah is lit. The Hanukkiah is placed visibly in a window. There are gifts, sweet and oily pastries, Dreidel games, Hanukkah songs and colorful Hanukkah decorations. We take a little more time to enjoy our families. This year our festival of lights begins on the 12th of December and ends on the 20th of December.

Rabbi Offenberg will be celebrating Hannukka with us on Tuesday, December 12. We will light the first light and then, thanks to the support of the Central Council of Jews, our festival will be enriched by a concert by the “Berlin Oriental Group” conducted by Alexey Kochetkov (violin). We are looking forward to our Hanukkah celebration.

Get well

We wish all the people of our community, who are going through hard times, a good recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them.

Mazel Tov

We congratulate Landesrabbiner Dr. Henry G. Brandt on his 90th birthday and wish him above all health, joy and many more years. We say Mazel Tov!

Donations — Zedakah

We sincerely thank the members and friends who support our community life and the synagogue construction with generous donations. We would like to pay special tribute to the 11th grade class of the Handelslehranstalt with Mrs. Spangenberg, the two 11th grade classes of the Elisabeth Selbert School with Mrs. Held, Mr. Späth, Mrs. Dohme, Mrs. Niedert and Mrs. Gibas. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.





On Sunday, November 19, “Mitzvah Day” took place in our community. This initiative is held throughout the Jewish world and we take part every year. Its purpose is to raise awareness of social and cultural concerns and encourage people to become more involved in community affairs. As this year's project, we decided to arrange a special day to honor the elders of our congregation. Polina Pelts read a sermon written by our Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg from “Lech Lecha,” which addressed the migration experience of our members.



“The generation of Soviet Jews, who grew up almost completely without Jewish education are symbolized by the experience of Abraham and Sarah. The generation of the departure, the ‘Lech Lecha,’ may not yet feel absolutely at home in their adopted country, but the house they have built is called ‘Beiteinu’ (‘Our House’) and it is a synagogue.” On this day we all felt at home in our synagogue “Beiteinu.”

Our younger members came to socialize over coffee, tea and a variety of homemade desserts and listen to the wisdom of our elders. Many elderly members of our community feel lonely and enjoy every opportunity to be with others. The music ensemble "Simcha" gave a concert of Jewish and Israeli songs. We thank everyone who committed to give our elders a wonderful day.

Rabbinic Word



Once again, we have the “December dilemma.” At the Christmas market in Hamelin it smells enticingly of mulled wine, roasted almonds and gingerbread. Fairy lights, evergreens, Santa Claus and angels—everything is decorated all around—for a party that is not ours. How should I behave if someone wishes me “Merry Christmas!”? Shall I just say hello or say "I celebrate Hanukkah"? How many of these surrounding customs do I allow into my home?

Just as Purim celebrates the physical survival of the Jewish people, Hanukkah celebrates the spiritual survival of Judaism. Then Jews asked themselves how much of the Greek culture could be adopted without endangering the existence of Judaism. This eventually culminated in the uprising of the Maccabees. Although today we no longer have to resolve these questions militarily, the questions

remain the same. How much should we insist on delineating our Christian-secular environment so that we can recognize our own practices of Judaism? How different can we afford to be without feeling alienated and disrespected by society? And how do we educate our children in this tightrope walk between adaptation and self-reliance?

Hanukkah is a happy celebration of lights, songs, latkes and other delicious food. But it is not superficial. It stimulates us to think again and again about these existential questions.

—Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg



Tree of Life — Etz Chayim

You cannot miss our synagogue’s "tree of life". Buy a leaf to donate to the synagogue or to commemorate special occasions: births, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, weddings, thanks, Yahrzeits, memories or honors. Forms for ordering leaves are in the office.

Yahrzeit in December

Roza Chirita	12/1/2000 / 4. Kislew 5761
Frida Dachkevich	12/3/2001 / 18. Kislew 5762
Grigori Drabkine	12/7 /2005 / 6. Kislew 5766
Igor Fuksa	12/5/2006 / 15. Kislew 5767
Genrich Leimunski	12/29/2006 / 8. Tewet 5767
Ira Leimunskis	12/3/2011 / 7. Kislew 5772
Milja Golberg	12/18/2012 / 5. Tewet 5773
Mikhail Timonin	12/14/2015 / 2.Tewet 5776
Jakovs Judelsons	12/15/2015 / 3. Tewet 5776



May the memories of them be a blessing to us. Kaddish is spoken during the synagogue services with the attending family members. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.

Please note

The community office will be closed from December 25, 2017 until January 2, 2018. We wish all community members a Happy Hanukkah and a Merry Christmas to all our Christian friends, and a happy 2018 to all!

The congregation welcomes 2018 with a New Year’s celebration on Tuesday, January 9 at 4:00 pm. Many members are involved in the preparation of this ceremony, which makes us very happy. There will be a colorful entertainment program and plentifully set tables. Please register at the office until the 20th of December. Admission: 10 €, per person.

Shalom!

—The Congregation Board



Program for December 2017 • Kislev–Tevet 5778

Office hours: Monday–Friday: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 7	1:00 p.m.	Lecture: “SGBIX- Guidelines for handicapping conditions” Felix Krasnij, Central Board of Jewish Charities
Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg’s weekend		
Friday, December 8	4:00 p.m.	Gijur class
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
	8:00 p.m.	Mishna Study Group, Tractate Berachot
Saturday, December 9	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
Monday, December 11	7:00 p.m.	In Cooperation with the Society of Christian-Jewish Solidarity “The History of Chanukah” with Rabbi Offenberg
Tuesday, December 12	4:00 p.m.	Arts and Crafts, Songs and Stories of Chanukah
	5:30 p.m.	Congregational Chanukah Party, 1 st candle lighting with Rabbi Offenberg. Chanukah concert, “Berlin Oriental Group”
Sunday, December 17	3:00 p.m.	Sunday Café. Lecture “Albert Einstein’s Jewish World” Evgenij Berkovitch, Hannover

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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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