



The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

January 2021 • Tevet–Shevat 5781

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Dear members, friends and supporters,

We wish all members, friends and supporters a healthy and happy new year 2022! Please remember to pay your membership fees. We also kindly ask members of our Friends to transfer their contribution. Thank you very much!

Rabbinical Thoughts

We were so disappointed when our Hanukkah celebration and concert, which we had been looking forward to for such a long time, had to be canceled. Shabbat and holiday services, lectures and community events also had to be suspended for December. Whenever possible, we offered a digital format. Due to the skyrocketing number of Corona infections, and lacking clarity about the new Omicron variant, it was advisable to avoid meeting inside. The reasons are understandable and the synagogue board was pro-active with its decision. The various views expressed in politics, science, the medical profession, and on the street can be confusing. Sometimes contradicting statements about vaccinations, risk of infection and closings of schools and public institutions cause emotions to rise.

Since almost all of us are not medical, pharmaceutical or epidemiological specialists, we rely on information from our health officials and by the far-reaching decisions that are required of us. Therefore, as a rabbi, I would like to explain which Jewish principles have been formulated in the past two years for dealing with the pandemic. They can give us orientation for our individual behavior and for the management of our communities and institutions.

Tradition and Halachah have values that can serve as guidelines. We are beginning to understand that the current wave will not be the last, new virus variants will emerge and it will still take time until vaccinations and mitigating drugs keep the pandemic under control around the world.

In Judaism, the principle of “Pikuach Nefesh” (the saving of human life) has priority and even supersedes most of the other commandments. This primarily refers to situations of life and death, in which action must be taken immediately. Living with the pandemic can be better described with the term “Sakanat Nefaschot” (endangerment of life), which demands that we are constantly aware of the risk of transmission and infection. In order to avoid endangering other people, Jewish tradition requires us to take protective precautions. And there is the principle of “Schmirat HaGuf” (preservation of the body), which obliges us to maintain our own health and, for this purpose, to take advantage of medical help, the tried and tested medicines and vaccinations.

These two aspects explain why it seems advisable to be vaccinated against COVID. It is known to offer protection against severe disease, albeit not from getting infected. And although those who have been vaccinated can infect others, transmission is less than that of those who have not been vaccinated. Fears of side effects of vaccinations must be taken seriously and discussed individually with the treating physician, but overall, based on the worldwide experience and tests of the past year, it can be said that the benefits of the vaccination outweigh the risks. That is why the common vaccines used in Western countries are also rated as “Refuah Bedukah” (tried and tested drug), which is recommended to be used. A one hundred percent protection against infection, transmission or side effects cannot be expected from any drug, but the vaccination is our best insurance.

We all have individual responsibility for ourselves and others. We are not alone in this world. Many operations and treatments have had to be canceled, which is why many patients, including some of our community members, continue to suffer severe pain and impairment instead of healing. The immense costs of hospital care caused by risk behavior and collectively borne by our health system have not even been addressed here.

Under the current circumstances this means in concrete terms that the commandment to protect oneself (“Schmirat HaGuf”) as well as that to avoid endangering other people (“Sakanat Nefaschot”) can be best achieved by keeping your distance, wearing masks and by accepting vaccination offers.

When people express criticism and concerns, we shouldn't immediately assume bad intentions or political motives. There is a red line when false reports, threats or conspiracy theories are spread. In a previously unknown form, this pandemic calls on us to behave responsibly. What does this mean for our congregation?

Month after month we have to reassess the situation and weigh the various risks. Not only infection is a danger, but also loneliness, the loss of sociability and the renouncement of religious and educational offers.

The board has therefore decided to open the synagogue in January again. Please be aware that this is subject to change. We will follow the 2G rules, only vaccinated and convalescent people will be able to enter the building.

Our office staff will be contacting everyone and requesting a copy of Covid vaccination, which we will hold on file. This will expedite entry. In the synagogue we will need to wear masks, and Kiddushim will consist of “Kiddush to Go” packages. Rabbi Ulrike will send out links for services and classes online. The online courses have been a great success and people join us from different Reform congregations worldwide.



We are asking everyone to take care of neighbors, keeping in touch with phone calls, visits if possible and other forms of contact. Hanukkah parcels and letters cannot replace a real gathering during the holidays; we have to find new forms for many things, but it is precisely in difficult times that it becomes clear how important community is.

May the New Year 2022 be shaped by community and social cohesion. I wish you, your families and friends good health, well-being and joy,

—Your Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

December in Review

Hanukkah

Due to the increasing number of infections, our congregational Hanukkah celebration and candle lighting ceremony and the concert with “Trio Scho” had to be canceled. In order to offer a little Hanukkah feeling, we met almost every evening on Zoom for candle lighting and Shabbat. The children’s group also met to celebrate Havdalah and lit the seventh Hanukkah light together. Many members sent photos of their Hanukkah candles glowing in their windows or rooms, which you can see on the last page of this newsletter.

If you would like to attend the Zoom services but do not have our prayer book at home, please contact the parish office so that we can send it to you.

Jewish life in January



Tu B'Shvat

The 15th Shvat, the “New Year of the Trees,” falls this year on the 16th and 17th of January. We hope to celebrate our popular Tu-B'Shvat-Seder in a pandemic-friendly way after a shortened Shabbat service on Friday, January 21.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

On January 27, 1996 a nationwide day of remembrance was established. On this day in 1945, Red Army soldiers liberated the last survivors of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, the largest extermination camp of the Nazi regime. The United Nations has also declared this day to be International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Again this year various national and local events will commemorate the victims of the Nazi persecution.

Senior Retreat in Bad Kissingen

Once again the Jewish Central Charities are offering a retreat for seniors. Sign up quickly, as the registration is limited. Registration forms are available from the office. Please remember—our congregation has no influence on the decision of who is allowed to participate. This lies solely with the Jewish Central Charities board.

Jewish-Muslim Dialogue

Last year the monthly Zoom event, “Shanah & Sanah” enriched our cultural horizon. Rabbi Offenberg and Imam Andrea Reimann discussed the Jewish and Islamic calendars, described holidays and topics of the respective month, and exchanged views on similarities and differences.

Jews, Muslims and Christians from different parts of Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland and as far away as the U.S. joined in interfaith discussion with one another! This series, which was funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Foundation “Do you know who I am,” will be continued in 2022. In the coming year the theme will concern itself with life cycle events, “Chayim & Hajah”: What rituals do Judaism and Islam offer to mark important stages in life? We will study how we celebrate birth, learning, growing up, marriage, divorce, aging, physical maladies, death and grief. The first event is planned for January 3rd, 6:00 pm, via Zoom. Interested? Let us know.

“Through the Jewish Year”

In November, the book by the Jerusalem Rabbi Professor Dr. Dalia Marx, “Through the Jewish Year,” was published. This important work invites readers to discover the history and traditions surrounding the Jewish calendar. The book was translated from Hebrew and edited for a German-speaking audience by Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg. We congratulate both women for this immense effort. Mazel Tov–Kol haKavod! A copy of the book is available for loan in our library. It was published by Hentrich & Hentrich Publishing House and can be ordered in any bookstore.

Donate — Tzedakah

We would like to thank the members and friends who have supported our community life and the maintenance of the synagogue with donations. We say thank you: The Ovsievitsch family for their monthly donation, Ute Niedert, Sabine Demuth, Dr. Brigitte Löwe and the Dohme family. May all donors be



blessed for their generosity. Special thanks also go to the Hameln-Pyrmont County for their annual funding. We are so very grateful.

Get well wishes — Refuah Shlamah

Who blessed our fathers Abraham, Issac and Jacob, and our mothers, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, also send blessings and healing to all who are ill. May they be blessed with patience and strength of heart and may they enjoy full recovery of body and mind.

January Yahrzeits

Chaya-Rahel Kruchkovitch	1/29/2003 / 26th Shvat 5763
Larissa Shapira	1/04/2013 / 22nd Tevet 5773
Suya Varshavska	1/13/2021 / 29th Tevet 5781

May the memory of our beloved be a blessing to us. Kaddish is spoken with family members during services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.



Shalom,

Your board of directors

Program for January 2022 • Tevet–Shevat 5782

Daily Office Hours: 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Monday, January 3	6:00 p.m.	Chajim & Hayah. Life cycle ceremonies in Judaism and Islam with Rabbi Offenberg and Iman Andrea Reimann, via Zoom
Wednesday, January 5	6:00 p.m.	Shiur, Haftarah Shabbat “Bo,” via Zoom
Friday, January 7	5:30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, January 8	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
	12:30 p.m.	Kinderkehillah
Wednesday, January 12	11:00 a.m.	Informational meeting with Margarita Suslovic, Hanover
	6:00 p.m.	Shiur, Haftarah Shabbat “Beshalach,” via Zoom
Wednesday, January 19	6:00 p.m.	Shiur, Haftarah Shabbat “Yitro,” via Zoom
Friday, January 21	5:30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat and Tu-B’Shvat-Seder
Saturday, January 22	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
	12:30 p.m.	Kinderkehillah
Wednesday, January 26	6:00 p.m.	Shiur, Haftarah Shabbat “Mishpatim,” via Zoom
Other events		
Thursday, January 6	6:00 p.m.	“The Jewish Year” with Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg discussing the month of Shvat, hosted by Christian and Jewish Encounter Group via Zoom
Thursday, January 20	6:00 p.m.	“Bible Dialogue” with Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg and Dr. Katrin Großmann in conversation about Sh’mot (Exodus), hosted by Christian and Jewish Encounter Group via Zoom

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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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Chanukkah

