



Dear members of the community, friends and supporters,

We ushered in the festive holiday of Purim with an interesting historical lecture and concluded it with a happy costume party. A good combination! Unfortunately, many members were unable to attend due to this year's serious flu epidemic and the extreme cold weather

On Erev Purim morning, Rachel Dohme welcomed yet another student group from the Ith Training Center. The young adults were very attentive during the 90-minute introduction to Judaism lecture. There were, as always, many questions, many answers and a lively discussion.



In the afternoon, members and guests attended an event organized by the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation in our synagogue. Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg and Hans-Georg Spangenberg talked respectively about the Book of Esther as seen from a Jewish and Christian perspective. Our rabbi spoke about the historical background of the Esther story during the Persian Empire and the societal position of the Jews in the midst of that reign. It was the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora Era, and the questions of assimilation and preservation of Jewish identity are questions and issues we struggle with even today. While the Megillat Esther is one of the best-known books in the Bible for Jews, for centuries it played almost no role in Christian theology. Hans-Georg Spangenberg discussed additions to the Septuagint, the Greek Bible, and showed illustrations of church paintings depicting the Esther story. For many listeners, the discussion of Purim resulted in a very lively exchange about the many, previously unknown aspects of the holiday.

These meetings and forums for dialogue with non-Jewish guests are a hallmark of our community. Groups from elementary to high school, church and interreligious groups, local politicians and educators—more than 10,000 guests—have taken part in such lectures since our establishment as a Jewish community in 1997. We believe that education is the best and most positive method to break down barriers and build bridges. Each visitor who comes to our synagogue, who meets us and by doing so learns something new, leaves different than they came, resulting in mutual benefit for everyone.

Finally, daylight waned and our members came to celebrate Purim. There was a bevy of princesses, a zebra and a spider, bunnies, gnomes, soldiers and cowboys. Almost everyone was in costume, ready to try out noisemakers of various styles, admiring the mountains of homemade Hamentaschen, which had been baked according to Polina's family recipe. The sweet smell of three cornered poppyseed cakes hung in the air and beckoned some of our younger members to sneak an early nosh. Many thanks to the women's group who did the all the baking.

Rabbi Offenberg, dressed as a pretty hen, stood on the Bimah. She began by reading from our 200-year-old handwritten scroll, the Megillat Esther, in a strong and clear voice. Several members—young and young at heart—read following chapters in German or Russian, interrupted from time to time by noisemakers, which drowned out the name of evil Haman. Everyone listened intently as to not miss a chance to add to the cacophony. Copies in Hebrew, German and Russian were available, enabling everyone to follow the story and understand it. After the reading, Rabbi Ulrike led us in the singing of Purimlieder, which she accompanied on her guitar.

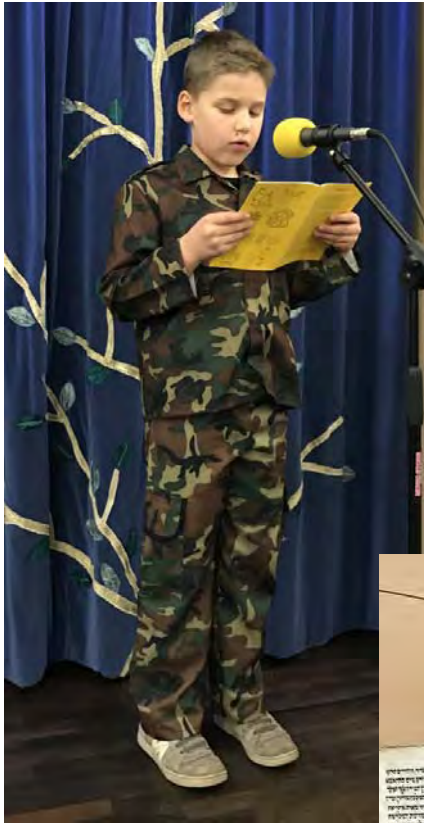
Happy with having fulfilled the Purim Mitzvah of reading and hearing the Megillat Esther, there was a rush for Liubov's beautiful and festive tables. We lingered together, drank sweet wine and juice, nibbled Hamantaschen and other sweet cakes and spent many happy hours together.

Before leaving, Schlachmones, holiday food packages, were distributed to members who would deliver them to the homebound, thus letting them enjoy the taste of Purim.

Thanks to all for this special day! We hope our readers will enjoy the photo collage.

Annual General Meeting

On March 4th our Annual General Meeting took place. The chairperson, Rachel Dohme, gave an annual report of the activities of the community. Treasurer Olga Gerr presented the finances. Many thanks to Svetlana Banshukova for translating. Elections followed. Two of our longtime board members, Faina Pelts and Peter Wendt, decided not to run again. Unfortunately, we must accept their decision and thank them both for the countless hours of volunteer work, for their loyalty and for their dedication to the community. They have always worked for the good of the congregation and helped us solidify our religious and cultural work. Although both are now retired from the board, they continue to stand by us in word and deed. A warm Todah Rabah to Faina and Peter!



Our synagogue board elected three members (instead of five), as permitted by our statutes: Rachel Dohme, president, and Polina Pelts and Olga Gerr, vice president and treasurer, respectively. The new board would have welcomed the two vacant posts filled, but unfortunately no one volunteered. Although disappointing, the discussion that followed and the vote on increasing membership fees was impressive. It was almost unanimously decided to raise the membership fees after more than 20 years. One member expressed his opinion with these words: “The congregation is always there for us and supports us in every way! Other communities do less and charge much higher dues. I support this change and ask everyone to vote with yes!”

Beginning in 2019 single members will pay 30 € and families 60 €. A protocol of the meeting is available in the office.

International Women's Day

International Women's Day was observed on March 8th. This special day to honor women is especially pertinent as the “Me Too” campaign gains recognition. The many talented members of our congregation planned and presented a program in honor of the day. The men gave each woman a flower and toasted them with a glass of sparkling wine. Doroti had prepared a lovely sweet table, around which members whiled away the hours. What an important tradition.

Interfaith Women's Meeting

On March 14th we opened this year's Interfaith Women's group series “Let's Talk” over refreshments in our synagogue. Jewish, Christian and Muslim women met in our synagogue with just that in mind. The chairman of our congregation, Rachel Dohme, welcomed everyone present and summarized the purpose of the interfaith women's meeting with the words: “We want to build bridges through friendship.” No one needed encouragement and engaging conversations followed. We were especially pleased to welcome Patrizia Berhovski who told us about her life in Israel. Honored guest was the wife of the Imam, who was especially interested in learning more about Judaism. She commented that she had never been in a synagogue before. We are proud to be a part of this initiative, reaching out to people of different faiths and actively developing a positive and respectful relationship between the religious communities in Hamelin.

Jewish in April — Passover

Pesach begins this year on March 30th and ends on April 7th. Our community Seder will be held on March 30th. We will report on it next month.

During Passover, according to God's commandment (Ex 12:20), nothing leavened (Hebrew Chametz) may be consumed in the house. Therefore, we ask that during the Passover week, from March 30 to April 7, no leavened products should be brought into the synagogue!

While stocks last, we offer kosher Passover products for our members. Israeli matzah in one-kilo packages for three Euros and 0.75-liter bottles Manischewitz red wine for five Euros.

Passover is a family celebration in which we make a spiritual journey back in time. We feel as if we personally left Egypt. This historical and religious memory is to be passed on to our children and is intended to preserve our Jewish identity.



Rabbinic Word

The New Year of the Trees was only eight weeks ago—and again we celebrate the beginning of the year! The Jewish month of Nissan has begun, and the Torah (Ex 12:2) identifies and instructs us that this is the first month of the year: “This month be the head of all months, it being the first among the months of the year.” This can be confusing at first glance. We begin counting the months in the month of Nisan yet we observe our New Year, Rosh Hashanah, in the seventh month of Tishri. This is an indication that there are many different beginnings in our lives.

Why then has this month earned such the prominent position, the prelude to all other months? This month is the time of Beginnings. During this month we experienced the Exodus and delivery from bondage to freedom. With this exodus, we received the Torah on Sinai and became unified as a People. Our national and spiritual birth is mirrored in Nature's awakening.

With the Passover we celebrate our liberation, and with Matzah and the many symbolic dishes of the Seder's evening, we envision the Exodus from Egypt. In addition, we should not forget that setting our calendar is also an expression of this newfound freedom. This does not seem so obvious, because in our everyday lives we often find the division of our time into days, hours and certain deadlines as restrictive: We feel like slaves to our calendars, driven by appointments and tasks to be fulfilled in time. But the Torah commentator Sforno (Italy, 1475–1550) re-establishes the link between the calendar and the freedom gained in the Exodus when he emphasizes that in the month of Passover the monthly count should begin: “So that the months are at your disposal and not as it was in slavery when your days did not belong to you, because your time was not yours, it was only to toil for others, who enslaved you.” Therefore, it is now said, “This is the first of your months in the year, for in it began your departure into a life of freedom, where you can choose what you want to do.”

May we not forget in the time pressure of our everyday life and also in the stress of the many Passover preparations that we were freed and therefore should also not become slaves to our schedules.

I wish everyone a happy Passover. May it not become a feast of freedom for us alone, but for all the people of the world. וישמח כשר פסח חג.

—Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg



Jom HaSchoah

Israel set aside the 27th day of Nisan as a national day of mourning for the Six Million. Yom HaShoah remembers the victims of the Shoah and the ghetto resistance fighters. The Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem holds a commemorative ceremony every year on this day with government officials participating. The event will also feature non-Jewish heroes who saved Jews by sacrificing their lives.

On Thursday, the 12th of April, we will hold a memorial service at 5:00 p.m., remembering and honoring the memory of the innumerable victims of the Shoah.

The service is led by Rachel Dohme and Vladimir Pesok.

Yom Ha Atzma'ut

This spring on April 19, 2018, Israel will celebrate her seventieth anniversary. On May 14, 1948, David Ben Gurion read Israel's Declaration of Independence in the Tel Aviv City Museum. For the Jewish People this was a dream come true.



We extend an open invitation to all who wish to join with us for the celebration. Sveta Kundish (vocals and guitar) and Patrick Farrell (accordion) will be with us for the day. Cantor Sveta Kundish will tell us her story through her music, the journey of her family that began in Ukraine and ended at her home in Israel. We thank the Central Council of Jews in Germany for their support. Come all to celebrate this great festival together!



Donations — Zedakah

We sincerely thank the members and friends who have supported our congregational life and synagogue maintenance fund with their generous donations.

We would like to thank the Lutheran State Church and Dr. Ursula Rudnick, the Mima family, Mrs. Niedert, Pastor Mau and his men's club, Mrs. Dohme and Mrs. Gibas.

May all donors be blessed for their generosity.

Tree of Life — Etz Chaim

Spring has sprung! Help us put new leaves on our tree! Our Tree of Life offers the opportunity to do two mitzvot (good deeds) at once. Each leaf can be inscribed and dedicated for a special occasion, e.g., birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding, thanks, yahrzeit or to honor someone, and at the same time donate to the synagogue. Forms are in the office. Many thanks! New leaves:

“In memory of our father Judel Kaplan, December 1907–December 1967” and

“In Memory of Our Mother Riva Kuperstein February 1907–February 2002” donated by Aron Kaplan



Mazel Tov

We congratulate Thuringen's Prime Minister Bodo Ramelow on receiving the Israel Jacobson Prize, awarded by the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany. Bodo Ramelow receives the award in recognition of his great contributions to liberal Judaism and academic rabbinical education in Germany.

Thanks — Todah Rabbah

We thank all those who help us to make our festivals and many cultural events so beautiful. Thanks to everyone, be it for planning, implementation or organization. There are many regular groups in our congregation, volunteer-led by and for members and everyone benefits. We appreciate your commitment very much.

Our Deepest Sympathy

We wish to express our sympathy to the Kaplan family on the occasion of the death of brother and brother-in-law Leonid Kaplan, on March 7, 2018 / 20. Adar 5778.

We also offer condolences to our Catholic brothers and sisters on the death of Cardinal Karl Lehmann.

We express our grief over the loss of our longtime friend circle member, Mrs. Ursula Sartor, who died on March 8, 2018.

April Yahrzeit

Tetyana Khodos	April 4, 1998 / 8. Nisan 5758
Anna Pototcaia	April 11, 2000 / 6. Nisan 5760
Eugenia Borishanskai	April 26, 2004 / 5. Ijar 5764
Boris Frid	April 28, 2011 / 24. Nisan 5771
Juriy Lebedinskiy	April 2, 2012 / 10. Nisan 5772
Alex Voronov	April 10, 2012 / 18. Nisan 5772
Ryssja Kochergina	April 27, 2015 / 8. Iyar 5775



May the memory of our dead be a blessing to us. Please join the families in the recitation of Kaddish during services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.

Shalom,
—Your Synagogue board

[Newsletter Archives](#)

Program for April 2018 • Nisan–Ijar 5778

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

Tuesday, April 10	10:00 p.m.	Monthly board meeting
Thursday, April 12	5:00 p.m.	Yom Ha Shoah Memorial service with R. Dohme
Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg's weekend		
Friday, April 13	2:00 p.m.	B'nei Mitzvah class
	3:00 p.m.	Giyur class I
	4:00 p.m.	Giyur class II
	5:00 p.m.	Discussion: "Jewish practices of burial and mourning"
	5:00 p.m.	Friday night services
	8:00 p.m.	Mishna Study Group, Tractate Berachot
Saturday, April 14	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
Sunday, April 22	4:00 p.m.	Sveta Kundish in concert matinee in honor of Israel's 70 th birthday. We thank the Central Council of Jews of Germany for their support.
Friday April 27	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services with R. Dohme
Outside the congregation		
Tuesday, April 10	7:00 p.m.	In cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews, Annual Membership Meeting, Lutheran Reformed Church, Hugentotenstraasse

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

Bürenstrasse, Synagogenplatz 1, 31785 Hameln • Tel/Fax: 05151/925625

Web site: www.jghreform.org • Email: jgh@jghreform.org

Office: Neue Heerstraße 35, 31840 Hess. Oldendorf

Tel.: 05152/8374 • Fax: 05152/962915

Email: racheldohme@jghreform.org