



The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

April 2021 • Nissan–Ijar 5781

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Dear members, friends and supporters,

Passover is a particular challenge this year. Once again we cannot celebrate Seder evening in the synagogue; once again we have to celebrate this festival, which marks the founding history of the people of Israel, alone at home. How should one mark the national myth of the exodus from bondage to freedom in this isolation? After all, Passover does not just mean eating matzah for eight days — it is all about visualizing and passing on our history. In our Torah, Exodus 12–13, we reread the story of dramatic events and before the tenth plague, before the actual exodus takes place, Israel receives God’s commandment three times:



“And you shall explain it to your children on that day!”

This commandment is the basis of the Seder evening, on which we tell of the Exodus from Egypt, with the help of the Haggadah and the many symbolic dishes on the Seder plate.

The Seder evening is actually based on the children’s questions: What strange things are you doing tonight? That gives us reason to teach about the liberation from slavery, thanks to God’s help and the courage of the people to set out. The central imperative is to tell of these events as if each one of us had been set free. Although there the Haggadah text tells us this, we are all obligated to look at it as if every one of us had actually taken part. Not just a reenactment of history, but a visualization that describes in our own words what liberation and freedom are. In this way the children are included in family history and in Jewish history. It is only in this vivid narrative that the Exodus becomes understandable and palpable. It seems almost paradoxical that the core of our self-image as the people of Israel is not celebrated in the form of a national ceremony with flags, speeches and parades, but rather in the private space of a family, a table community.

Why this link between the national narrative of liberation from slavery and personal memory? As the recently deceased British Rabbi Jonathan Sacks put it: “Freedom is the work of a nation, nations need identity, identity needs memory, and memory is preserved in the stories we tell. Without a story there is no memory, and without memory we have no identity.”

Identity, our awareness of where we come from and what shapes us, is primarily conveyed to us in the family. And from this private space we make an effort to imbue this into society, because freedom does not exist as an individual good for us alone.

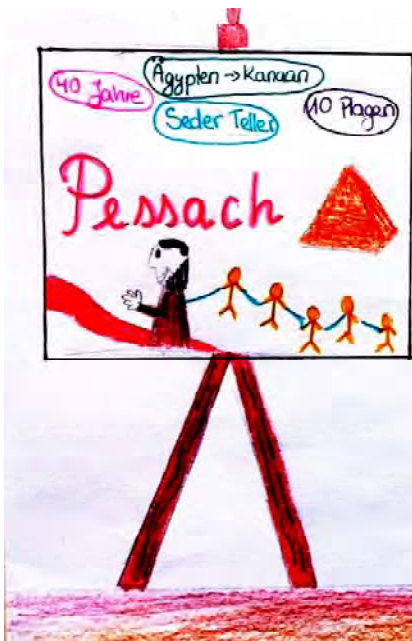
Many no longer have children at home to whom we could pass our story from generation to generation. Because some of us are not familiar with the ritual of the Seder evening, we have always celebrated in the congregation. We listened to the age-old story and traditions, making the effort to inscribe ourselves in this story with our own biography. This year we again cannot celebrate the Seder evening with our community family — and beyond the culinary delights; we miss this act of historical, personal and sociable self-reassurance sorely. In the past year we have had to find other forms for so much in our private and community contacts. For Passover this means moving our communal ritual back to the home, and the small packages with Passover food and explanations enclosed with this newsletter should make it possible for our members to celebrate a Seder evening at home. The act that occurred in Egypt over 3,000 years ago continues to challenge us to reflect on liberation, freedom and our own Jewish identity. The pandemic forces us to interrupt our usual forms of celebration, and we respond by looking for new ways of expression. I wish to share with you a poem by Bayla Schorr, an American who made Aliyah almost 40 years ago.

Bayla Schorr: “Come” (refers to the Torah section “Bo” which means come, Ex. 12–13)

I came to the Pharaoh
and told him,
Let me go from bondage to freedom.
He looked at me
and said to me barely audibly,
What do you want from me?
It's in your hand
to do that.

I wish everyone a happy and meaningful festival of Passover

—Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg



Passover Thoughts and Wishes

At Passover we commemorate the exodus of our ancestors from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to Israel, by wandering the desert for forty long years. Passover reminds us that freedom is never guaranteed and that we must work hard and consciously to maintain our freedom. For some of us, our Jewish identity is expressed in an interest in a spiritual life. We derive joy from our worship services and the opportunities they offer to deepen our understanding of the vast wealth of our religious heritage. Others find their identity through cultural references. Jewish music, art and culture are their windows to Judaism, and that too has always been a living aspect of Jewish existence all over the world. It was often a lifeline in times and places where no other form of being Jewish was allowed. And still others live their Jewish identity on a more social level and enjoy the company of other Jews. Nobody wants to live in a ghetto, but there is a certain satisfaction in being with people of similar backgrounds.

Our Jewish identity — whether religious, cultural or social, or a mixture of all of these is the recipe that gives our community in Hamelin the sweet and pleasant taste. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Whether we come together for a Kiddush after the service or for a concert of Ukrainian-Jewish music, for a discussion about a Russian-speaking author or a presentation of Chagall's works, we feel a bond and that something precious is happening here.

Every new situation challenges us to find compromises and solutions. At the moment we miss being together painfully. And yet it still seems advisable in April to stay at home, as the vaccinations of our members are only just beginning. A synagogue is not just a house of stone and mortar, but a home built with love, patience and confidence. We want to preserve and pass on what we have built. That is exactly the theme of Passover, and so we do not give up, even if we cannot celebrate the Seder evening together in our synagogue this year. So that no one has to miss out on the Passover festival, we have prepared a package with Israeli matzah, kosher wine, Pesach cake and instructions for the Seder evening as a gift for all members. Many thanks to Olga Gerr for organizing and putting together the packages. Our Bufdis and Mr. Moos will distribute the packages. Anyone who can pick up their parcel themselves is helpful to us.

Happy Pesach and good health!

—Rachel Dohme for the Synagogue Board

International Women's Day

In honor of International Women's Day, we offered a program online. In her greeting, Rabbi Offenbergl addressed the connection between International Women's Day and Jewish tradition, which teaches that we are all called upon to develop according to our abilities.

We heard a song composed for the day by Valery Fridman. Vladimir Pesok read a poem, and Peter Shurupov told about the history of this holiday. We also watched a video that Valery Bogachik put together from fragments of various concerts in our community.

Rachel Dohme congratulated the women of our congregation and expressed her hope that we will be able to celebrate this holiday next year at a festive table in our synagogue.



Jewish life in April

Yom HaSchoah

In an effort to anchor the memory of the Shoah firmly in the Jewish calendar, the Knesset decided in 1951 that the 27th Nissan would be set as the official day of remembrance. This year, Yom HaSchoah is celebrated on April 8th. In Israel the sirens wail for two minutes on this day, and all public life literally comes to a standstill. We will observe Jom HaSchoah on April 9th online.

Yom HaAtzma'ut

On April 15 we will celebrate Yom HaAtzma'ut, the founding day of the State of Israel, with all Jews in Israel and worldwide. Seventy-three years have passed since the proclamation of the Jewish state by the first Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion, on Ijar 5708 / May 14, 1948. The existence of the State of Israel plays a central role in Jewish consciousness. The hymn of the State of Israel tells us why. The millennia-long hope was not just a dream. Today we can live as a free people in the Land of Israel. Not all Jews live in Israel and not all Jews are religious; but each and every one of us belongs to the Jewish people.

“Hatikva” Our Hope

O while within a Jewish heart,
Beats true a Jewish soul,
And Jewish glances turning East,
To Zion fondly dart;
O then our Hope—it is not dead,
Our ancient Hope and true,
To be a nation free forevermore
Zion and Jerusalem at our core.





Lag Ba Omer

On Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day after Passover, we remember the Bar Kochba uprising, Rabbi Akiva and his disciples. Many make a campfire and have a picnic on this day. If state regulations allow and we consider this to be justifiable with regard to the health of our members, we will celebrate our traditional Lag BaOmer picnic on April 30th in the garden of the Evangelical Reformed Church on Hugenottenstrasse. If that is possible, we will contact you by phone.

Information

The “vaccination website” is available online for all those over 70 years of age. If you need help with registration, please make an appointment in our office. www.impfportal-niedersachsen.de

Refuah Shlamah — Get well soon

We wish all people in our community who are currently ill a speedy and complete recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them. Let us know if you need any help.

Zedakah — Donations

We would like to thank the members and friends who have supported our community life with generous donations. We would like to thank Dr. Ioulia Berhovski, Mrs. Edelgard Schlagmann, Mr. Mark Ovsievitsch, Mrs. Ute Gibas, Mrs. Niedert, Mrs. Rachel Dohme, Dr. Tatjana Meschede-Krasa and Mr. Austin and Mrs. Nani Beutel for the donations. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.

Yahrzeit in April

Tetyana Khodos	April 4, 1998 / 8th Nisan 5758
Anna Pototcaia	April 11, 2000 / 6th Nisan 5760
Eugenia Borishanskaia	April 26, 2004 / 5th Ijar 5764
Boris Frid	April 28, 2011 / 24th Nissan 5771
Juriy Lebedinskiy	April 2, 2012 / 10 Nissan 5772
Alex Voronov	April 10, 2012 / 18th Nissan 5772
Ryssja Kotschergina	April 27, 2015 / 8th Ijar 5775
Vilen Feldmann	24th 4, 2016 / 16th Nissan 5776
Arkadij Drejzer	April 4, 2018 / 19th Nisan 5778
Sinaida Gogulinska	April 19, 2018 / 4th Ijar 5778



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

Shalom,
Your board

Program for April 2021 • Nissan–Ijar 5781

Synagogue office hours: 9:00 am–5:00 pm

All dates and times subject to change

Wednesday, April 7	6:00 p.m.	Schiur for the weekly portion of the Torah “Schemini,” online
Friday, April 9	5.30 p.m.	Yom HaSchoah and Kabbalat Shabbat, online
Saturday, April 10	6:00 p.m.	Kinderkehillah, online
Wednesday, April 14	6:00 p.m.	Shiur for the weekly segment of the Torah “Tasria-Metzora,” online
Friday, April 16	2:55 p.m.	Radio show “Shabbat Shalom” with Rabbi Offenberg, NDR Info, FM 99.9 MHz
Friday, April 16	5.30 p.m.	Yom HaAtzma’ut and Kabbalat Shabbat, online
Wednesday, April 21	6:00 p.m.	Shiur for the weekly portion of the Torah “Acharej Mot-Kedoschim”
Friday, April 23,	5.30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat,online
Saturday, April 24	6:00 p.m.	Children's kehillah, online
Wednesday, April 28	6:00 p.m.	Shiur for the weekly portion of the Torah “Emor”
Friday, April 30		Lag BaOmer.

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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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