



## Dear members of the community, friends and supporters,

We are all still feel strengthened and empowered by the beautiful Passover Seder in our community, the festival of our freedom. Holiday joy was felt in the hearts of all in attendance. Our synagogue rooms had been carefully scoured and cleaned, made “kosher lePessach” by many energetic hands. Our members had been able to stock up on Passover supplies, the most popular items being matzah and sweet kosher wine, which as every year we sell at cost for our members. Everything sparkled for the Seder and Passover week.



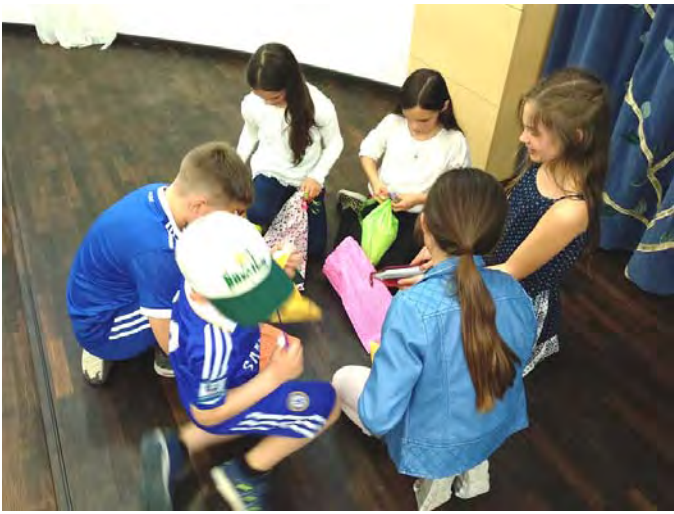
As the sun went down, Rabbi Offenberg welcomed members and guests to the family-style tables, beautiful flowers adorning the tables with Seder plates set among the lovely settings. Rabbi Offenberg had explained in previous sermons how our Passover celebration and holiday traditions had developed from biblical times. She utilized stories to explain how this ancient celebration speaks to us today. The struggle for freedom is ongoing in every generation. Leading the Seder and reading from the Haggadah, she elaborated many times, making the age-old traditions come alive for us. Over fifty members then came to the Seder, happily taking part, singing the songs together and listening attentively to the Four Questions, “Mah Nishtanah—Why is this night different from all other nights?” The communal meal was as always a culinary delight, with sweet and juicy gefilte fish, and matzah ball soup, which added a hämische atmosphere. Liubov, Sasha and her kitchen team had done a great job and were thanked with a big round of applause.

After the meal, the children got busy looking for the Afikoman, the piece of matzah that was especially well hidden. After a successful search, the children were all rewarded with small gifts and the Seder continued. After the final prayers, the last two of the four glasses of wine had been drunk and many of the most popular seder songs, “Ehad Mi Jodea” and “Chad Gadyah,” were sung with joy and laughter, the Seder ended. The younger stayed and helped clean up, as one does in a big Jewish family. It was an impressive evening with moving stories and good food—the memory of which strengthening us and our children’s Jewish identity, from generation to generation.

## County Commissioner, Tjark Bartels and Israeli delegation visit our synagogue

Last year a city partnership was initiated between our county of Hameln-Pyrmont and the Israeli county of Emek HaYarden. Last September a small group, led by our county commissioner, Mr. Tjark Bartels, traveled to Israel to set the parameters for this cooperation. Our board member, Mrs. Olga Gerr, represented our congregation in the county’s travel group. The district includes the areas north and south Galilee and the adjoining Jordan Valley, a predominantly rural area, characterized by Kibbutzim. The return visit of the a delegation from Emek HaYarden under the direction of the local district governor Idan Grinbaum, visited our synagogue on March 26th, learning about the life of our community, experiences with anti-Semitism and the special challenges of a migrant community. Rachel Dohme and Rabbi Offenberg gave a short but insightful talk, describing our congregational life and the specifics of liberal Judaism. Rabbi Offenberg offered a short Shiur, a Torah study with biblical and rabbinic sources addressing ethical and social coexistence. She had prepared it multilingually, allowing everyone present the opportunity to speak meaningfully about the ethical foundations of our societies. The partnership between our two counties is still at its beginning, but we feel we have established familiarity and look toward a shared future.





## Jewish May — Yom HaShoah

On the eve of Passover 1943, an uprising broke out in the Warsaw Ghetto. In a desperate struggle the women and men, led by Mordechai Anielewicz fought for weeks in a bitter but fatal struggle against the Nazi occupation forces. The enemy ultimately gained the upper hand and murdered most and sent the rest to their deaths in the extermination camps.

In memory of the courage and determination of the ghetto fighters, the Israeli Parliament decided in 1959, that the 27th Nissan would be observed as the “Memorial Day of the Shoah and the Resistance.” In Israel, at Yad Vashem, the central memorial in Jerusalem, an official ceremony will be held with survivors of the Shoah symbolically lighting six torches. The following morning at 10:00 a.m. sirens howl for two minutes countrywide. When the sirens are sounded the country comes to a complete stop wherever people are—in cars, in the street, at home, at work. Everyone shows their respect for the Six Million.

Jewish communities around the world also commemorate this memorial day. We invite our readers to join us on Thursday, May 2nd, at 12:00 pm for a memorial ceremony led by Faina Pelts and Volodymyr Pesok in our synagogue.



## May 9 — Victory Day's 74th anniversary

On Monday, the 9th of May, at 4:00 p.m. we will remember the end of the Second World War. We wish to honor the allied forces and all those who fought against fascism. On this “Day of Remembrance” we will present a moving program of poetry, period texts, music and honors for and about those who courageously fought. Together we will share a meal together and raise our glasses in honor of their memory.

## Kabbalah Shabbat and Israel's Independence Day

On Friday, May 10, Rabbi Offenberg will lead our Friday night services and celebrate Yom HaAtzma'ut, Israel's birthday with us. Additional readings and prayers will be dedicated to this special day. The subsequent Kiddush will highlight Israeli dishes and will be enhanced by even more songs dedicated to the Jewish State.

The Schiur on Shabbat morning at 12:00 will explore what traces of the founding of the state has left in our liturgy. Was the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 a political act or was the intent to attribute religious significance and the “beginning of our salvation”? Rabbi Offenberg will show what discussions around the introduction of prayers in favor of prosperity of the state of Israel were and will be.

## Lag BaOmer

Lag baOmer is the 33rd day of the Omer period, the 50 days between Passover and Shavuot. “Lag” is an artificial word made from the number 33 in Hebrew spelling. A legend has it that on the 33rd day of the Omer period in the 2nd century of our era, a great plague came to an end. It was a time in which many disciples of Rabbi Akiva were murdered. For this reason the Omerzeit was traditionally a mourning period. On the 33rd day, this sadness is interrupted. There are festivals and happy celebrations take place. Our congregation has an almost 25 year old tradition which we will observe again this year. Thanks to the generosity of the Lutheran Reformed Church, we are invited once again to celebrate our our traditional Lag baOmer picnic on Thursday, May 23, at 4:00 p.m. in the garden of the church. We ask everyone to please contribute a vegetarian, non-dairy dish. Kosher hot dogs and drinks will be provided by the congregation. A children's program be offered, and we hope for a sunny day to enhance everyone's fun.



## Rabbinic word

The fifty days between Passover and Shavuot is called the Counting of the Omer. This period with its specific observances is associated with the Bar-Kochba Revolt (132–135 C.E.). The Babylonian Talmud says, “Twenty-four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva died in that same period, namely between Passover and Shavuot because they did not respect each other.” This horrific plague allegedly ended on the 33rd day of the Counting of the Omer.

We can understand this to mean the twenty-four thousand students were more likely young men who fought as soldiers in the Bar Kochbas Revolt with Rabbi Akiva as their religious leader. But despite the uncertainty about the historical truth of this history, tradition has it marked as a period of mourning. This grief has to do with the lack of respect which these men showed their fellow human beings.

In the Pirkei Avot it states: “Rabbi El'azar ben Shammua taught: The honor of your disciple should be as dear to you as your own; the honor of your colleague should be as dear to you as your reverence for your teacher; your homage to your teacher should be as great as your homage to God.”

There are social hierarchies of various kinds, but there is no reason to make a distinction in the measure of respect that we bestow onto others. All too easily we are tempted to pay more attention to people with titles, money or rank, as if that

would make them better people. But respect goes beyond generations and hierarchies and is not tied to merit. Those who disparage others who look up to them, will themselves not be respected. Homage and respect for others and self-esteem form the basis of human coexistence.

In everyday dealings with each other we can examine whether we really see every single person as an image of God. Who disregards God's creatures can not claim to honor God Himself—the honor we give to the least respected person is worth as much as the glory of God. The Omer period instructs us to examine and reflect on our dealings and relationships with others.

—Your Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

### New members

We are pleased to welcome Mr Roman Surkov as a new member and his wife Elena. Welcome! We look forward to two new faces at our services and events.

### Donations — Zedakah

We sincerely thank the members and friends who support our community life and synagogue upkeep with generous donations. We thank Masha Hasina, Weser-Champignon Dohme GmbH, Mark Ovsievich, Nathan Kolli, Mrs. Niedert and Mrs. Rachel Dohme. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



### Tree of Life — Etz Chaim

Our tree offers the members, friends and sponsors the possibility to observe two mitzvot (good deeds) at once. One can commemorate special occasions, e.g., birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, weddings, words of thanks, Yahrzeit, memories or honors by ordering a leaf and making a donation. Forms are in the office. Many Thanks!

Newly ordered: "In memory of my father Arkadij Drejzer" by Masha Hasina

### Condolences

We express our condolences to the Jewish Central Charities in Germany (ZWST) on the death of its longtime director, Benjamin Bloch sel. A., 76, who died on April 6 after a long illness. He was buried in the New Jewish Cemetery in Frankfurt.

### May Yahrzeits

|                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Betya Kholmer       | 08. 05. 1997 / 1. Ijar 5757   |
| Evgenia Benderskaya | 24. 05. 2001 / 02. Siwan 5761 |
| Vladimir Rubanov    | 14. 05. 2002 / 03. Siwan 5762 |
| Sofia Kasplar       | 13. 05. 2008 / 08. Ijar 5768  |

May the memory of our dead be a blessing to us. The family members are invited to join us in saying Kaddish for their loved ones during Shabbat services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.



Shalom,  
Your Synagogue Board

### [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

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

Web site: [www.jghreform.org](http://www.jghreform.org) • Email: [jgh@jghreform.org](mailto:jgh@jghreform.org)

Office: Neue Heerstraße 35, 31840 Hess. Oldendorf

Tel.: 05152/8374 • Fax: 05152/962915

Email: [racheldohme@jghreform.org](mailto:racheldohme@jghreform.org)