



Rabbinic word

Rabbi Mosheh von Kobrin (1784–1858) was originally from Lithuania, but became the founder of Kobrin Hasidism in the small town near Brest in Belarus. Its heyday came to an end with the massacres perpetrated by Nazi troops on the city’s Jewish residents in 1941–43. Rabbi Moscheh of Kobrin was known for his piety, but remained open to his people. Many stories have been handed down about him that testify to his simple, direct manner. Once he is said to have called out, looking up:



“Angel, angel, there is no special art in being an angel in heaven. You don’t need to eat and drink, raise children and make a living. Why don’t you come down to earth and occupy yourselves with food and drink, with taking care of children and livelihood, then we will see if you remain angels!”

But Moscheh von Kobryn not only wanted to bring heaven to earth, but also to show people how they could stretch to feel heaven under their feet. Once he referred to the story of the burning bush, in which God revealed himself to Moses and told him to take off his shoes because the ground on which he was standing was sacred. God also directs this request to every single human being: “Take off your shoes” (Exodus 3:5). Using a play on words, the Kobrin Rebbe deduced: “Take off your habits (Hebrew: Hergel) that encircles your foot (Hebrew: Regel) and you will realize that the place you are standing on right now is sacred ground. For there is no place one can stand in which one cannot find God’s holiness, everywhere and at all times.”

So what gives us access to holiness is not the aspiration for heaven, but our very groundedness. We just have to open our eyes, pay attention and not get stuck in our habits. The special sacred moments occur in everyday life when we sit at the bedside of a sick person, comfort someone grieving, give practical help to refugees, share in the suffering of others, have patience in dealing with a difficult person. In every such encounter there is a touch of holiness.

We humans are not at all as perfect as angels, but rely on each other with all our mistakes and weaknesses. This is the place where we are to show humanity — and when we do, our feet are on holy ground.

We wish you a summer and that you stand grounded in heaven.

—Rabbi Offenberg

June Review Shavuot



Here’s a look back at Shavuot, which took place at the end of May and after the editorial deadline for the last community newsletter. The festival service was very well attended, and all in attendance were called to the Bimah for the Aliyot of the Torah reading of the events at Mount Sinai. After the service, Lioubov had prepared a celebratory Kiddush for us. The following morning, the synagogue turned into the scene of many star chefs!. There was a hustle and bustle in the kitchen, finishing touches were made, and then twelve milky dishes were submitted to the annual competition. Various kinds of cheesecakes, puff pastry pockets filled with cheese and hearty dishes. While the jury, consisting of Berta F., Valera B. and Sveta H., went about their task tasting all the dishes, the rest of those present gathered in a circle to study the Book of Ruth with Rabbi Offenberg. There was a lively conversation, all of our immigrant community members being very familiar with Ruth’s situation of being a stranger in another country.

The judges had a difficult time but awarded Eva Gerr first prize for her excellent cheesecake, while Paulina took second place for her unique creation of eggplant, vegetables and cream cheese. We relished and enjoyed the entries happily. Paulina and Valeri F. sat down at the piano and many joined in, nobody wanting to go home. What could be better?





Remembering Polina Pelts



In Jewish tradition it is said that if the date of birth and death fall on the same date, it is a sign of a Tzaddik (righteous person). At least that is what is attributed to our teacher Mosheh, King David and also to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. In the case of Polina Pelts, without whom our congregation would not exist, or at least not in this way, these dates differed by only one day (8/9 June). So we commemorated her on the eve of that day. Many shared stories and memories of Polina, and film footage brought her back to life again. Many thanks to all those who, out of love for Polina, helped and organized this afternoon. Congregational president Rachel Dohme, commemorated her with warm words:

“My memories of Polina go back many, many years. I had heard about the arrival of Jews from the former Soviet Union at a meeting of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation. The next day I took my three children and drove to the housing center nearby. The first person I met there was Polina. She lived in a room with six members of her family! We liked each other immediately. The idea of founding a Jewish group was born. After a time, the new refugees moved to apartments in Hamelin and settled in. Our very first meeting took place in Polina’s living room. We learned together how to recite the Shema Yisrael. It was a very moving moment that I will never forget. Then Polina and I organized events, celebrations and initiated projects. It was Polina who gathered our future members by bringing them together in temporary rooms around the city, with the energetic help of Deacon Hans-Georg Spangenberg to celebrate Shabbat and Jewish holidays.

“Without Polina there would be no Jewish community in Hamelin today. She could speak to the new immigrants’ hearts and souls, and they answered in coming together and building their own Jewish lives and in rebuilding Jewish life in Hamelin. At first she was skeptical about building a synagogue, but soon she was convinced that it was God’s will. This unique woman is inscribed in all of our hearts. We thank her mother, Betya, who had planted the seed of Judaism in Polina’s soul, leading her and many others to open their hearts and minds to the religion stolen from them by the repressive government of the former Soviet Union. With her grace and wisdom she opened the door and one by one, each in their own way, entered. We will always cherish her memory and call her a ‘blessed one of our people’.”

Jewish life in July–August

Concert with Cantor Assaf Levitin on July 2nd

We welcome Cantor Assaf Levitin to our congregation on Sunday, July 2, at 4:00 p.m., thanks to the cultural program of the Central Council of Jews of Germany. He is Cantor of the Hamburg Reform Synagogue and is also known nationally for “The Three Cantors” and the “Kolot Ensemble.” Last year he released his new album *Mizmor leAssaf*. On July 2nd, the Cantor will ask and answer, “What’s new? New music for the synagogue, made in Germany” and give a concert in which he will present his original Shabbat compositions, including “Lecha Dodi,” “Lechu Neranena,” “Ma Tovu” and many more. The music was designed for singing together, and the audience is also invited to sing along during the concert. Cantor Levitin will be accompanied by Naaman Wagner (piano).

Get well soon

May the One who blessed our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and our mothers Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, bless all those who are ill or infirm and may they be healed. May they find patience and strength of heart, and may they be granted full recovery in body and spirit. May all those who nurture and care for them also be strengthened with perseverance and hope.

Donations — Zedakah

We would like to thank everyone who supports our community life and the upkeep of the synagogue with generous donations. We would like to thank John and Birgit Schintlholzer-Barrows for the room microphone that they donated to our synagogue. This improves the sound quality of the Zoom transmissions of the services enormously — a great help for those who cannot come to the synagogue for health or other reasons.

We would also like to thank this month: 7th grade Schiller Gymnasium students, the Lutheran School, Mrs. Christiane Klein with confirmation classes, Mr. Schönhütte and the Holschen Club, Mr. Albrecht and the Schiller Gymnasium class reunion group, and the Dohme family.

May all donors be blessed for their generosity.

Yahrzeit in July and August

Nataliya Zaychenko	July 1, 2003 / 1 Tammuz 5763
Inge Dickmann	July 16, 2008 / 13 Tammuz 5768
Sergei Yevdokymov	July 21, 7. 2008 / 18 Tammuz 5768
Volodymyr Zaslavsky	July 29, 2012 / 10 Av 5772
Ethel Lazer	Aug 16, 2009 / 26 Av 5769
Musiy Khazanov	August 7, 2020 / 17 Av 5780
Emilia Sheenkova	August 18, 2020 / 28 Av 5780
Aron Kaplan	July 21, 2022 / 22. Tammuz 5782
Julia Shurupova	August 1, 2022 / 4 Av 5782



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

Please note: The next newsletter will be published in September.

Shalom,
Your synagogue board

Program for July–August 2023 • Tammuz–Av 5783

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

Sunday, July 2	4:00 p.m.	Summer Concert with Cantor Assaf Levitin, accompanied by Naaman Wagner with thanks to the Central Council of Jews of Germany
Wednesday, July 5	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Pinchas, Zoom
Friday, July 7	5:30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, July 8	10:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m.	Shacharit Shabbat, followed by Kiddush and Shiur Children's Kehillah
Wednesday, July 12	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the Mattot-Mass'ej weekly Torah reading, Zoom
Wednesday, July 19	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the Devarim weekly Torah reading, Zoom with Rabbi Tamarah Benima
Wednesday, August 2	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Ekev, Zoom
Friday, August 4	5:30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, August 5	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit Shabbat, followed by Kiddush and Shiur
Wednesday, August 9	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Re'eh, Zoom
Wednesday, August 16	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Shoftim, Zoom
Friday, August 18	5:30 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, August 19	10:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m.	Shacharit Shabbat, followed by Kiddush and Shiur Children's Kehillah
Wednesday, August 23	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Ki Teze, Zoom
Wednesday, August 30	6:00 p.m.	Shiur on the weekly Torah reading Ki Tawo, Zoom

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Jewish Community of Hamelin

Member of the JLEV (Jewish Liberal-Egalitarian Organization), the World Union of Progressive Judaism, and the Central Council of Jews of Germany

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