



# The Jewish Community of Hamelin Newsletter

October 2017 • Tishrei–Heshvan 5778

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## Dear members, friends and supporters,

Once again, we wish all members and friends Shana Tova, a healthy and peaceful 5778!

Our Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services were meaningful and touching. Many people contributed and for that we are grateful. We are especially thankful to Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg who led our High Holidays services.

As is Jewish custom, we met before Rosh Hashanah to visit the graves of our deceased in both of the city's Jewish cemeteries. Together with Rabbi Offenberg we sought out the peaceful resting places of our deceased members. Each person elicited a story, their biography and characteristics recalled. With each and every individual their Jewish way of life was illuminated, one that ended in a country different from where it had begun. Rabbi Offenberg then sang "El Male Rachamim," "God is merciful," and we recited the Kaddish prayer in one voice. How comforting it is to have a community that shares good as well as painful times together. We are here for each other.

On Wednesday evening, Erev Rosh Hashanah, September 20th, we celebrated the New Year in a large round. Together with Jewish people from all over the world, we welcomed the Jewish year 5778 with prayer and song. Almost every chair in our sanctuary was occupied by young and old, conducted by Rabbi Offenberg in Hebrew, Russian and German. Guests from Koblenz and Warsaw, Berlin and Butler, USA joined us. Tom and Cherie Harrison came from our congregation president's home American congregation, "Bnei Abraham," to bring greetings and four beautiful prints painted by a member of their community that depicted our ancestral mothers Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Lea.

After the moving liturgy that touched every heart, we wished each other "LeShanah Tovah Tikatevu," a good New Year. The buffet delighted everyone with delicious home-made treats, which per our tradition was provided by our members. After the communal singing of the Kiddush with wine and round challah, guests and members enjoyed gefilte fish, fresh salads, steaming potatoes and sweet cakes baked according to time-honored recipes. Of course, there were sliced apples and golden honey for everyone to dip for a sweet New Year together. On the following day, during the Tashlich-ceremony after services, we symbolically threw our sins into the stream Hamel, which joins into the Weser River to reach the North Sea. How wonderful that there is a place in Hamelin where Jewish people can celebrate the New Year together.

Ten days after Rosh Hashanah we gathered for the most important holiday in Judaism, Yom Kippur, the day of fasting, repentance and the forgiveness of sins. Faina Pelts sang "Kol Nidre" full of emotion and warmth. With her voice, Faina touched and moved every heart. During the afternoon service, we held the prayers for Yizkor, in which we recall the names of the deceased and commemorate them with the help of a small stone, which we place in a bowl. This ritual is an emotionally touching moment that allows us to feel, if only for a moment and if only in thought, that our loved ones are present with us, close to our hearts and minds. The Ne'ilah-prayers concluded the High Holidays services, symbolically shutting the heavenly gates until next year. May we all be inscribed in the book of life to enjoy a good and healthy year.

We thank Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg for the services, Faina Pelts for the music and the translation of the sermons, Vladimir Pesok for blowing the shofar and Liubov Pesin for the preparation of all the wonderfully festive food. Thanks to all who were involved in the preparation and holding of the High Holidays.

This month we had two wonderful events as part of the project "Aktion Mensch" in addition to the High Holidays. A play by Jewish writer Sergej Dovlatov and a concert of Feliks Feldman (poetry), Svetlana Sokolskaja (violin) and Faina Pelts (piano), which complemented the Jewish New Year, gave joy to all attending and will remain in our memories for a long time. We thank the project "Aktion Mensch" for the friendly support.

## Excursion to Hamelin

For many years, our community has enjoyed a close relationship with the organization "Begegnung (Encounters)—Christians and Jews of Lower Saxony." Prof. Dr. Ursula Rudnick and other members of the organization visit us regularly, our rabbis and other community members participate in their organization's events, and two years ago our congregational president Rachel Dohme won their "Blickwechsel (Paradigm Shift) Prize," awarded for the many years of her engagement in Jewish-Christian dialogue. This year the organization donated funds to equip our synagogue with new High Holiday Torah covers. In delivering this donation on September 15th, members of the organization took the opportunity to make an educational trip to Hamelin. Our friend, Deacon Hans-Georg Spangenberg, Catholic board member of the Society for Christian-Jewish Society and "Blickwechsel" award winner in 2016, led our guests through Hamelin and provided knowledgeable insights into the history of the town. Then the group of about 30 people visited the synagogue, where Rachel Dohme held a historical and educational tour on our temple and Jewish life in Hamelin. Subsequently, Rabbi Dr.



Jüdische Gemeinde Hameln



Ulrike Offenberg introduced the group to the Shofar in a Shiur, and explained using numerous Bible and rabbinical literature sources the special significance of blowing the Shofar during the month of Elul and the High Holidays.

At the beginning of our Kabbalat Shabbat service, the donated Torah covers were symbolized by a stand-in model, lovingly crafted by a member of the club, and a large display showed photos of the cover designs, which American artist Cheryl Lynch is currently working on. We thanked the donors for this expression of Christian solidarity and appreciation for Jewish tradition and worship. In her Drashah, Prof. Dr. Ursula Rudnick spoke of the heavy past of Christian contempt for Jews and of the endeavor to start anew, through encounter, learning and critical self-reflection, when practicing theology and Christian philosophy. After services everyone enjoyed a rich buffet stunningly prepared by Liubov. While feasting, there were numerous discussions between guests and community members, which most beautifully illustrated the goal of the club “Encounters—Christians and Jews of Lower Saxony” and our congregation.



### Jewish October

The High Holidays are quickly followed by various Jewish festivities in October. We will be celebrating Sukkot, the Jewish harvest festival, on October 4th on the grounds of our synagogue. Friends and guests are cordially invited. Traditionally, Sukkot is one of the three pilgrimage festivals during the season of thanksgiving. The foliage huts remind us that life itself is a provisional pilgrimage. They help us appreciate the security of solid housing, and symbolize our dependence on God’s protection. We will celebrate this appreciation in our little Sukka with fruits, Challot, songs and togetherness. We hope for good weather and look forward to the many lovely people joining us.

On October 11th we can look forward to Simchat Thora with Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg. Come and join us in our beautiful celebration, where everyone holds the Torah just as the Torah holds us. To see the entire Torah unraveled, to hear and feel it, touching every heart and soul. We rejoice so vividly that all that is left to do is dance and celebrate. After enjoying a delicious buffet, Boris Markhashev, our dance instructor, and the group “Chag Sameach” will be demonstrating Israeli dances, inviting everyone to join in.

On October 11–12, Rabbi Offenberg will host a mini-machane for our children, in which all will be playing, singing and learning together. If your children and grandchildren, aged 6–14 years, are interested in participating, please register in our community office. All children are welcome to spend the last days of the autumn holidays with us!

### Rabbinical Word

Just five days after Yom Kippur the harvest festival begins—and our mood changes from the solemn reflection on the High Holidays, the visible expression of urgent prayer, Yizkor, and fasting, to the joyous cheerfulness of a Sukkah decorated in colorful garlands and fruits. While this seems to be a complete change of pace, the autumn festivities are closely connected: each of these festivals is a court day. The ten days of repentance from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur are well known to all, but it is little known that our entry into the Book of Life does not happen until the last day of Sukkot, Hoschanah Rabbah. This is why the dominant color of the synagogue covers remains white until this day, and we eat round challot with honey until then. Shemini Azeret and Simchat Torah, though adjacent to Sukkot, are nevertheless independent holidays. Because these days pass into one another, it is customary in Ashkenazi tradition to have Shemini Azeret meals in the Sukka, without saying the Berachah about sitting in the Sukkah, and instead eating braided, salty challot. In addition, this day appreciates the worldly focus on water—Israel’s rainy season begins, and the amount of rainfall until spring will decide whether a drought or a rich harvest is imminent. It is often distant from Europeans to pray for rain, as we have plenty of water. How easily we forget our dependence on nature and on God’s blessing! May our reflection on the real priorities in life, honored during Yom Kippur, guide us to act responsibly toward ourselves, our fellow human beings and nature.

Chag Sameach — Good Yontiff!



### Project “Aktion Mensch”

As part of the “Aktion Mensch” project, we are planning two events in October. An excursion to Goslar and Wernigerode is planned for Tuesday, October 10th. Further information will be provided. On Sunday, October 29, at 3 p.m., we invite you to a Sunday brunch in which our member Boris Kagan will introduce “Jewish architects of Kharkov.”

### Theater performance — please make reservations!

On November 2nd, in cooperation with Theater Hamelin, our synagogue will host a dance performance with the French dancer Gilles Welinski. Since his engagement with the Wuppertal Dance Theater, Gilles Welinski has established himself as one of the most prestigious solo dancers. The synagogue will act as a special venue in his staging and performance. We are looking forward to the experience. We would like to thank the Theater Hamelin for providing 20 tickets for our community members.

Please note that because of rehearsals, the community will be closed on October 31st, November 1st and 2nd.

### Mazel Tov

Do you have Naches? Good news you want to share with the community? Please inform our community office and it will appear in the next community letter.

### Get well wishes

We wish all the people of our congregation who are going through difficult times a good recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them.

### Donations — Zedakah

We sincerely thank the members and friends who support our community life and the synagogue construction with generous donations.

We would like to mention: “Encounters—Christians and Jews in Lower Saxony,” the 11th grade of the Elisabeth Seibert school, the Paul Gerhard community, the Vaiman family, Ioulia Berchovski, Ken Zendel (USA), Tom and Cherie Harrison (USA), Rachel Dohme, Ursula Niedert and Ute Gibas.

May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



### Tree of Life — Etz Chajim

While the autumn trees change and lose their leaves, our “Tree of Life” in the synagogue continues to thrive! New leaves can be added regardless of the season. They can honor special occasions, such as births, bar or bat mitzvah, wedding, appreciation, or in memory of a loved one—and make a meaningful donation to the synagogue at the same time. Leaf forms can be found in the office. Many Thanks!

New to see are:

“On the 80th birthday of our mother and grandmother Polina Pelts” by the Pelts/Golberg family

“Mrs. Pelts Polina. On her 80th birthday” by Elisabeth Pfeiffer

“In memory of my aunt Larisa Shapiro” by Elena Kondraschova

“Thanks to my community, 20 years of JGH” by Rachel Dohme

“Mazel Tov Taavi Lua Schleier” from the Dohme family

“On the birth of our grandson Hannes 18.05.2017” by Alla Jankowski

“In memory of our mother-in-law and Grandmother Natalya” by the Zajchenko family



### Thank you — Todah Rabbah

We would like to thank all who helped make our festivals and cultural events so beautiful, whether by planning, organizing or implementing various tasks. The many regular groups run voluntarily by members for members are a great enrichment for our community life. We thank them all and appreciate their commitment very much.

### Yahrzeit in October

Oleksii Bogdanov — 10-10-2014 / 16. Tischri 5774

May the memory of him be a blessing for us. Kaddish will be said with the family members during our services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office. We ask you even during their lifetime to think of power of attorney for burials. Forms are available in the office.

Shalom!

—The Congregation Board



## Program for October 2017 • Tishrei–Heshvan 5778

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

Wednesday, October 4	4:00 p.m.	Sukkah decoration
	5:30 p.m.	Sukkot celebration
Tuesday, October 10		Outing to Goslar and Wenigerode. Registration and information: Polina Pelts, an Aktion Mensch project
Wednesday, October 11	5:30 p.m.	Simchat Torah services–Come dance with the Torahs!
Thursday, October 12	10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Mini-Machene for children with Rabbi Ulrike
Friday, October 13	10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.	Mini-Machene for children with Rabbi Ulrike
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
Saturday, October 14	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services and Torah study
Friday, October 27	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services
	8:00 p.m.	Mishna Study group, “Berachot”
Saturday, October 28	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehilla
Sunday, October 29	3:00 p.m.	Senior’s Café: Boris Kagan “Jewish Architects,” an Aktion Mensch project
<b>Activities outside the community</b>		
Sunday, October 22	5:00 p.m.	House of World Religions in Rinteln, Johanneskirchzentrum Panel Discussion: “Religious Reform”

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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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