



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

The month of September was filled with community activities of a very different kind. The highlights were, of course, the High Holiday services with Rabbi Offenberg.

Before Rosh Hashanah, we visited our two cemeteries as a community. We went from grave to grave and heard memories and stories of our relatives and friends buried there. There were moving memories and moments that made clear how many of the biographies of Jewish destiny of Stalinist and Nazi persecution were drawn. After surviving and emigrating, they have now found a permanent resting place in Hamelin. To commemorate, we laid stones at each grave, Rabbi Offenberg sang the “El Male Rachamim” and we recited Kaddish together.

Community members from Hamelin and guests from Bad Pyrmont gathered Erev Rosh Hashanah in our synagogue. Rabbi Offenberg welcomed the congregation:

“Today, according to the Jewish calendar, the first day of Tishri 5779, a New Year begins. Soon the new moon will appear in the sky and set a sign of renewal. With hopes and wishes, we begin the New Year, and everything lies ahead and open. We are festively dressed and happy to pray together. Afterwards at the Kiddush table we will dip the round challah and apples in honey and make the wish that the New Year will be sweet. Pomegranates are also on the table, and their many juicy seeds symbolize the hope that our good deeds will be as numerous as these seeds in the coming year. The holidays of Tishri are like the links of a chain: A new one begins before the old one is finished. The first month of the New Year is a spiritual dance backwards and forwards, beginnings and endings. Although we have begun a new year with Rosh Hashanah, the prayers for Yom Kippur are filled with the confessions of our transgressions during the last year. On Rosh Hashanah we look ahead and the New Year seems like a blank page before us. As we review the past year, we make an effort to learn from it and to be able to initiate real beginnings. We know from our experience that it is not so easy to open a new page and celebrate new beginnings. Good intentions for change and new beginnings are important, but they will not work unless we’ve reconciled our failings.”

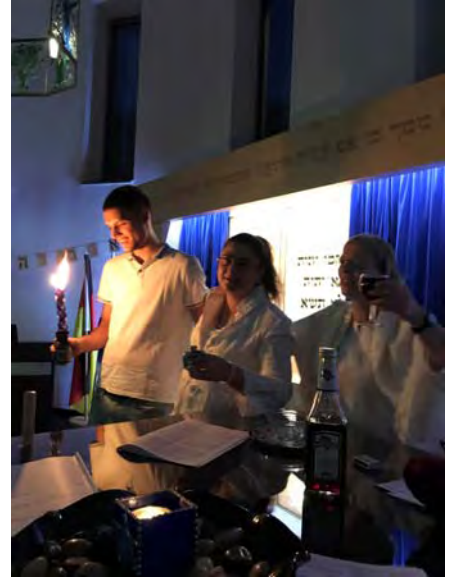
After the Rosh Hashanah morning services, we walked to the Hamel stream and held our Taschlich ceremony. There we heard once again the startling tone of the shofar, expertly blown by Rabbi Offenberg. As a symbol of our transgressions, we threw bread crumbs into the river from where they floated away. Reflecting on things that we want to change and let go of, Rabbi Offenberg said: “Until Yom Kippur, we hope to try to figure out how to shape our lives so that our deeds, our relationships and our motives create a balance of positive aspects in our lives. We hope we have the strength to face our dark side too, in order to be forgiven and to dare new beginnings.”

Rabbi Offenberg returned for Yom Kippur. Before she sang Kol Nidre, she said, “Kol Nidre is about the power of words. Words create worlds and words can destroy worlds. It’s about vows and promises of all kinds. We offer oaths and make promises and despite good intentions we cannot keep them. Something always gets in the way. We create a web of expectations and disappointments that weigh heavily on us and keep us trapped in a sense of failure. That’s why we say Kol Nidre now. It cannot free us from the unfulfilled promises to our fellow human beings — we have to do that ourselves. There is no detour than to go directly to the injured and ask their forgiveness.”

Yom Kippur is the most important holiday in Judaism. It concludes the Ten Days of Repentance. According to the Jewish tradition, on the Day of Atonement, God seals the fate of the people for the coming year. The 25-hour fast underlines the significance of this day. Dressed in white, we gathered in the synagogue to pray together and confess our transgressions. Rabbi Offenberg said in her Draschah: “In the Temple, reconciliation with God was effected only by the high priest, the people were mere spectators. Today we no longer have a Temple, and we no longer need to atone with sacrifices or a scapegoat. In fact the roles are reversed — we stand and go through the process of repentance and forgiveness. No high priest will bring about reconciliation for us — we have to face difficult questions ourselves, admit our mistakes and ask forgiveness from people we have offended.”

During the Jiskor service on Yom Kippur afternoon, we remembered all our loved ones who are no longer with us. We recalled their names, putting down a small stone next to the Yahrzeit candle, and felt a bond with them once again. This moment is of great openness in our community. We can cry, be silent or search for words. Each and every one finds a very personal expression. The congregation is present and lets us feel that we are not alone in our pain.







As Yom Kippur draws to a close, we prayed “Ne’ilah,” the final worship service of the day. Our rabbi underscored, “Ne’ilah means closing the gates, and that means the gates of heaven. For each of us, this gate looks different, but it still remains open. There is still time to pour out our hearts, make one final confession and hope that we will be sealed for a good year. Our prayers become stronger and more intense until the evening approaches and settles over us, and the shofar sounds its final blasts. The gates will close but hopefully something has opened up for us during these holidays.”

We concluded the service with “Shema Yisrael” and a final blast of the shofar and joined hands during the Hawdalah ceremony. Relaxed and spiritually renewed, we ended our fast with light food, water and tea. Filled with the special prayers of the High Holidays, we happily went home. These were moving and meaningful hours we spent together. There was room for a wide range of emotions, from soaring silence, meditative moments of inner contemplation, heart-stirring, pleading prayer, to cheerful and joyful singing. All our fears and hopes found their place in it.

Five days after Yom Kippur our holidays continued, this time with the explicit request directly from the Torah, to be happy! We celebrated Sukkot, the “Feast of Tabernacles” (Lev. 23:34). In the afternoon, the children met and got busy making decorations for the Sukkah. They assembled the Lulav and learned how to hold it with the Etrog and shake it in all directions. In the sanctuary we welcomed guests from Bad Pyrmont and Hannover as Rabbi Offenberg reiterated the meaning of this festival. Everyone present had an opportunity to shake the Lulav. The children joined the rabbi on the Bimah and sang a Hebrew Sukkot song. The rain clouds burst, making it impossible to decorate or sit in the Sukkah. Delicious fruits and other delicacies were enjoyed as the rain fell. The Sukkah remained adorned for seven days and was visited by members and communities throughout the week.

Enjoy the collage of photos from our holidays and we will report about Simchat Tora festivities next month.

### **Delegation from Hamelin visits Jerusalem**

Our board member Olga Gerr was part of a small delegation from Hameln-Pyrmont, which made a one-week trip to Israel. Here is the report from the local newspaper *Dewezeit* about this trip:

"It was a moving moment for Hamelin-Pyrmont's county commissioner Tjark Bartels, together with the deputy district administrator Torsten Schulte, deputy district councilor Ruth Leuning and Olga Gerr, board member of the Hamelin Jewish Reform Congregation, laid a wreath at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. The one-week trip from representatives of the district of Hameln-Pyrmont to Israel took place at the invitation of the Jordan Valley region. The aim of the visit was to build a partnership that will benefit young people in particular through youth exchanges. In a next step, a delegation from the Jordan Valley region will visit Hamelin. "

We look forward to building this partnership and will actively participate in it. It is important to us to promote relations between Germany and Israel.

### **Culture**

An “Aktion Mensch” afternoon was organized in early September. A special cinema concert, dedicated to the works of composer Boris Prozorovskiy, was the theme of the afternoon. Prozorovsky’s pieces were performed by Veta Banchukova, accompanied by Valery Fridman. The concert was accompanied by literary texts performed by Nadja and Vladimir Pesok. Preceding the concert, a biographical film about composer B. Prozorovsky was shown. After the concert everyone thanked the artists and the organizers for the wonderful afternoon.

### **Religious educators visiting our community**

On September 4, a group of 25 Christian teachers visited our synagogue, including a Muslim religious educator, Prof. Dr. Ursula Rudnick. Kirsten Rabe from the Institute for Religious Education Loccum had invited the seminar to participate in a session addressing “Jews in Lower Saxony.” Rabbi Offenberg designed a day seminar for the guests. First, she introduced the Jewish community of Hamelin and talked about the challenges posed by the demographic development and the organizational structure of Jewish communities in Germany. Then she led a joint text study of the Torah weekly reading “Nitzavim.” The afternoon offered a panel discussion on Judaism in religious education. Unfortunately, there are too few Jewish communities in Germany to make a visit to a synagogue part of the regular teaching program, even though the round was convinced of the need for direct contact and visualization. We are proud to say that our synagogue does offer more than 50 school classes and church groups annually the opportunity to learn about Judaism first-hand through synagogue tours, led by Rachel Dohme.

### **Rabbinic word**

Gazing at the Sukkah, adorned with colorful garlands and fruit, we could almost forget that behind our Feast of Tabernacles is the bitter experience of homelessness. The exodus from Egypt probably dates back more than 3,000 years, but the experience of flight and expulsion has become part of Jewish history up until the present day. We are a migrant community ourselves; hardly any of our members was born here. This makes it easier to empathize with the tragedies of refugee destinies. No one leaves his homeland lightly, moving to a distant land with a foreign language and culture.

Sukkot reminds us that “migration is not the mother of all problems,” as the German Interior Minister claimed, but the circumstances that trigger refugee flows — wars, the persecution of entire ethnic or religious groups, the suppression of dissenters, hunger, drought and reckless exploitation of natural resources. We cannot solve all global problems, but we must not let ourselves be drawn into a policy that first perceives refugees as a threat and not as people in great need. It is not the establishment of a wall or impenetrable borders that helps to solve the refugee problem, but open eyes and an open heart — and a consistent integration policy that does not pit different groups against each other. When such gradations are made in German society and so subtly define who belongs and who do not, one need not be surprised if the uncertainty in dealing with foreign cultures and the fear of losing status and privileges also in this country shape the political debate. Currently, the AfD tries to present itself as a party welcoming Jews and Judaism but does not shy away from using “token Jews” as their figurehead for massive anti-Muslim policies. We must not be so naïve as to be fooled as to who these right-wing parties are and what they represent. They trivialize the Nazi era and march alongside neo-Nazis. They make no secret of their racist policies which have no respect for human dignity and in the not-too-distant future if we are not careful could once again rear up.

—Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

### **Jewish life in October**

September was packed with the High Holy Days, the Feast of Tabernacles and Simchat Torah. October promises to be a little quieter.

### **Interfaith Women's Meeting**

We invite the women of our community to attend the interfaith women’s meeting on October 24th at 10:00 a.m. in the Thiewall Mosque. We look forward to these encounters, which have contributed to a warm and welcoming culture in our city, bringing people of different religions closer together.

### **Informational Meeting**

On Wednesday, October 10th, Faina Pelts will be giving a lecture about funeral expenses.

### **Mazel Tov**

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

### **Get well wishes**

We wish our members who are ill at home or in the hospital a complete recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them. Those wishing a home visit should contact the office.

### **Donations — Zedakah**

We sincerely thank our members and friends who share our community life and synagogue maintenance with generous donations.

We would like to mention: Mrs. Winkler-Pidum with the group from the Academy Überlingen, Mrs. Zischkale-Henßen from the educational center in Ith, Mr. Boris Uchytel, Mrs. Ioulia Berhovski, the Rubanov family, Mrs. Lynn Magid Lazar, USA, the liberal Jewish community Bad Pymont and Mrs. Ursula Niedert. We especially thank Mrs. Rachel Dohme for her generous donation. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



### **Tree of Life — Etz Chaim**

Now in autumn, every tree changes, the leaves fall off. Not so with our “Tree of Life” in the synagogue. Regardless of the season new leaves are added. It is possible to commemorate the commission of a new leaf in honor of special occasions, e.g., Birth, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, wedding, thanks, Yahrzeit, memories or honors and in this way also donate to synagogue maintenance fund. Forms are available in the office. Thank you!

### **Thanks — Todah Rabbah**

We thank our Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg for leading services on the High Holidays. It was wonderful having her with us all month long.

We also wish to mention Liubov Pesina, who is responsible for the culinary side of the holidays. We appreciate her beautiful Kiddushim. Thanks also to all the others who participated in the services, the cultural events and the regular courses. Special mention must be made of Olga and Evgenij Trieskunov, who are very committed to our children’s group and family work.

## Yahrzeit in October

Oleksii Bogdanov — 10.10.2014 / 16. Tishri 5774

May the memory of him be a blessing to us. Kaddish is spoken during the services with the family members. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office. We ask you to think of a funerary mandate during your lifetime. Forms are available in the office.



**Shalom!**

Your board and rabbinate

## [Newsletter Archives](#)

### Program for October 2018 • Tishri-Cheshvan 5779

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

Tuesday, October 2	10:00 a.m.	Monthly Board Meeting
	4:00 p.m.	Foundation Meeting
Wednesday, October 10	11:00 a.m.	Informational meeting with social worker Faina Pelts
<b>Rabbi Offenberg</b>		
Friday, October 12	2:00 p.m.	Bar/Bat Mitzvah class
	4:00 p.m.	Giyur class
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services followed by Oneg Shabbat
	8:00 p.m.	Mishnah study
Saturday, October 13	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services, Kiddush and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah I
	2:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah II
Tuesday, October 23	11:00 a.m.	Breakfast Bunch, “Healthy eating habits for seniors” Made possible by a grant from Aktion Mensch
Thursday, October 25	7:00 p.m.	In cooperation with the Society for Christians and Jews Lecture: “The history of Jewish congregations in the DDR” Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg
Friday, October 26	2:00 p.m.	Bar/Bat Mitzvah class
	4:00 p.m.	Giyur class
	5:30 p.m.	Friday night services followed by Oneg Shabbat
	8:00 p.m.	Mishnah study
Saturday, October 27	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit services, Kiddush and Torah study
	1:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah I
	2:30 p.m.	Kinder Kehillah II
<b>Outside the Congregation</b>		
Wednesday, October 24	10:00 a.m.	Interfaith Women’s Group, Hameln Mosque, Am Thiewall
Wednesday, October 31	2:30 p.m.	Dialog with Pastor Christof Vetter and Rachel Dohme, “Martin Luther and the Jews,” Lutheran Church in Aerzen

### **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)