



Dear members, friends and supporters,

When candles light up in the dark winter skies, the scent and sound of sputtering oil treats is in the air and the whole family comes together, then Hanukkah is coming! Chanukah always brings joy to young and old, as we tell the story of the Maccabees, sing Chanukah songs, eat food prepared in oil, spin the dreidel and give presents to the children. Join us in looking back on the past month's activities.

The Hamelin Synagogue, built and dedicated in 1879 by Edwin Oppler, was attacked and burnt down on November 9, 1938. The event, "Pogromnacht" took place 81 years ago in Hamelin and throughout Germany. There are only a handful of original synagogues to be found in Germany today. After the Hamelin synagogue was destroyed in 1938, the city sent the Jewish community a bill to be paid for city workers to clean up the rubble! In the year 2000 our congregation was able to buy the land back from the city fathers, and in 2011 we dedicated the new Reform Synagogue of Hamelin. Our synagogue is the first newly constructed Reform synagogue in post-war Germany. In the face of rising anti-Semitism worldwide, commemorating this "Night of Broken Glass" has sadly never lost its urgency.

Since this year's 81st anniversary fell on Shabbat, where no memorial services can be observed, this year's commemoration of the November Pogrom 1938 was postponed until the evening hours. We opened our doors and invited all in attendance to join us in the sanctuary for the Havdalah ceremony, taking leave of Shabbat for another week and ushering in the new week. Rabbi Offenberg explained the symbolism of this ritual and, joined by Rabbi Jona Simon, sang the Havdalah blessings for wine, sweet spices and light of the Havdalah candle.

For most of our guests it was the first time to attend a Havdalah ceremony. We all filed outside upon conclusion, and at the invitation of the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation and the City of Hamelin, joined two hundred people at the memorial sculpture in front of our synagogue. During the commemoration we remembered the Jewish children, women and men of our city who were exiled or murdered. After the laying of flowers, stones and wreaths for our community, carried by Aron Kaplan and Dieter Vogelhuber, Rabbi Jona Simon sang the commemorative prayer "El Male Rachamim," and we recited the Kaddish prayer in unison. We hope that the appearance of three stars in the November evening sky were a sign of more peaceful times.

Read a report by Wolfhard F. Truchseß from the *Deister-und-Weser-Zeitung*.

Sign against growing anti-Semitism

HAMELN, November 9—A fateful day in Germany. Earlier in the day, joyous celebrations were held in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, celebrating the fall of the Berlin Wall 30 years ago. In Hamelin and in front of synagogues in Germany and worldwide, the day embodied something else. November 9th is and will always be the day when the destruction of the synagogues and the deportation and murder of Jews is remembered.

Niklas Delp, Daria Leuthier and Christiane Brendel from the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation focused their speeches at the memorial in the Bührenstraße on the increasing acts of anti-Semitism in German society. They urged all those present, that in the face of rising numbers of anti-Semitic attacks and threats to counter these tendencies, to take the initiative and stand up and reach out to each other.

Local teens Greta Leuthier, Jasper Jungnitz and Lena Siegmann read the names of the 120 Jewish Hamelin citizens deported and murdered. Their names are held in permanent memory in the bronze plaques outside our synagogue.

Later that evening, pianist Cora Irsen gave a concert of etudes by Frédéric Chopin in the "House of the Church." She dedicated her program to Holocaust survivor Alice Herz-Sommer, whose poems were read.

Mid-month and in dual cooperation with "Aktion Mensch" and the cultural program of the Central Council of Jews of Germany, we enjoyed an afternoon theater performance by Marina Gerro and Larisa Lerner and written by the Moscow-born director Alexander Gerasimov. The play was entitled "Shalom, dear guests." Read our member Nadia Pesok's impressions:

"This month's Sunday café was very special as we rarely have an opportunity to go to the theater. The format of the piece was also unusual—fascinating video images were combined with the actors' play and seamlessly integrated into the action on stage. And we, the audience, could identify with the characters in the play because the theme was very familiar to us—family scattered all over the world and the threat of loneliness and the struggle to overcome it. No less interesting was the conversation with the actors afterwards at the coffee table. They talked about how the performance came about, how the team works and what plans they have for the future. We look forward to many more such performances and thank everyone involved in making it possible."



Mitzvah Day was held on Sunday, November 17 this year. The motto was “Hand and Heart” and many members of the congregation came to bake cookies in the shape of hands, stars of David and hearts together. Not one but four bowls of dough, tasting of lemon, nuts, vanilla and chocolate were quickly mixed together. It wasn’t long until we were all singing, making the mood as sweet and light as the cookies. After the cookies cooled, the little bags with heart-shaped sweets were filled, handwritten cards enclosed and all put into decorated paper bags, our creations were ready for delivery. The happy recipients were those whose fragile health keeps them homebound. Vladimir Pesok, Feana Engler, Eva Shkolnykova and Svitlana Banchukova brought the Hand and Heart packages to their doors. We thank the Central Council and all those who took the time to do a good deed, a Mitzvah, for others.

On Sunday, November 24 our choir “Shalom” gave a concert for our monthly Sunday Café group. The Israeli and Jewish musical program was met with enthusiastic applause. We thank our BFD helpers, Svitlana Hladchenko and Svitlana Banchukova for the delicious food they prepared for the afternoon.

We invite you to our next program on Thursday, December 5 when a traveling Ukrainian dance troupe will perform traditional dances in traditional costumes. Refreshments will be served. Aktion Mensch helps us organize these social events.



The congregation will welcome 2020 with a family-style party on January 9th. There will be an entertainment program and plentifully set tables. We promise you will go home satisfied in every way. Many members are involved in the preparation, which makes us very happy.

Please register until December 22 in the office. We ask for a participation fee of 5 Euros per person. Please note the synagogue is closed from the 23rd of December to the 2nd of January for Chanukah Break.

Jewish life in December

Every year in December, when winter skies darken our afternoons, we celebrate our Festival of Lights, Chanukah. On eight evenings, the Chanukah candles are lit and placed in the window. The festival commemorates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the year 165 BCE. We retell the story of how the tiny vessel of sacred oil for the Temple lamp was only enough for one day but miraculously the flame burned brightly for eight days. This oil miracle also characterizes our Chanukah culinary specialties; our traditional holiday foods are mainly cooked in oil. We enjoy latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly donuts). The children expectantly wait for sweets, Chanukah gifts or Chanukah Gelt (coins).



Join us in the synagogue as we will light the first Chanukah candle on Sunday, December 22nd together. After lighting the lights, our choir “Shalom” will give us a little concert, we will sing Chanukah songs together, eat sufganiyot and latkes and if you are in the gambling mood you can try your luck at the dreidel game! See you there.

Rabbinical Word

After the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the expulsion of the Hebrews, the rabbis discussed how Jewish life could continue and how the festivals could be celebrated without the Temple. In their wisdom, they created corresponding Talmud tractates for each holiday. The most important of them all was, of course, “Shabbat.” The pilgrimage festivals were addressed in the tractates “Pessachim,” “Bikkurim” (for Shavuot) and “Sukkah.” Discussions on the High Holidays are included in “Rosh Hashanah” and “Joma.” Even the Purim festival, not to be included in the Torah, became the starting point for the tractate “Megillah.”

Why then is Chanukah, our eight-day Festival of Lights, excluded? Chanukah, beloved by Jews of all ages, did not receive its own tractate. Was not the victory of the Maccabees over the politically and militarily powerful Greeks a glorious event? Was the repossession of the Temple in Jerusalem and the re-dedication of the altar not a testimony to Israel’s faith in God? It was surely an act of cultural self-assertion against the temptations of assimilation to Hellenism.

In a comment, almost hidden away in the Talmudic tract “Shabbat,” the rabbis instead recount the miracle of the little oil vessel, but it is not mentioned in the books of the Maccabees.

Why did the rabbis focus on this interpretation of Chanukah? They were traumatized by the nearly successful annihilation of Israel by the Romans and wanted to reject any thought that religious zeal could be enforced in a military way. A renewed uprising against the Romans would have resulted in a final catastrophe. Therefore, they did not abolish the Hanukkah festival but emphasized its peaceful aspects. The Shabbat reading on Chanukah gives us instead the words of the prophet Zachariah, who says, “Not by force and not by power, but by my Spirit” (Zacharias 4: 6).

In the Talmud, the discussion of the great schools of Shammai and Hillel is also read and studied, directing generations as to the lighting of the Chanukia. Shammai taught that on the first evening we light all eight candles and then on the following days light one less candle. In this way, our great holiday joy is visible right from the beginning. The school of Hillel taught and practiced it the other way around—one candle on the first evening, two on the second, and so on until on the last day of the festival all the candles are lit and burning bright. This became the rule in general and as we do it today.

The deeper meaning is that we should multiply the light to illuminate our dark world. It is therefore desirable that not only every household lights the Chanukah candles, but if possible, every member of the family.

Here in Hameln, we are combining the traditions of Hillel and Schammai this year. We celebrate our congregational festival on the first evening and thus begin the joyous holiday together. At the same time we let the light grow during the following week by continuing to light the candles every night at home. We do not need expensive, special Chanukia—small tea lights set up side by side serve very well.

When we not only observe our holidays in the synagogue but also celebrate them at home, we can say that Chanukah is indeed the festival of cultural self-assertion.

Shalom and Chag Urim Sameach — Happy Festival of Lights wishes to you all!

—Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

Mazel Tov

We congratulate our member Arkady Zyranov on his 90th birthday and thank Liubow for the wonderful birthday Kiddush she prepared and we all enjoyed.

The Liberale Synagogue Hameln Foundation welcomed two new members at the 2019 Annual Membership Meeting. Faina Pelts was appointed to the Board of Trustees and Corinna Wölter to the Advisory Board. We look forward to their support and new ideas.

Rachel Dohme served as a delegate of our state board of Jewish congregations at the annual membership meeting of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. The general meeting took place in Frankfurt on November 24th.

Donations — Tzedakah

We sincerely wish to thank the members and friends who support our community life with generous donations. We would like to pay special tribute to: Pastor Wibke Lonkwitz, Dr. Anja Schmidt, the Anne Frank Exhibition Guides and her two 11th grade religion classes. as well as Mrs. Gibas and Mrs. Niedert. We thank Ruth and Joshua Herz, New York, USA for their generous donation. May all donors be blessed for their generosity.



Get well wishes — Refuah Schlama

We wish everyone who is currently experiencing health issues or other difficulties a speedy and complete recovery. Our thoughts and hearts are with them.

Condolences

Our longtime member Mr. Vladimir Borishanskij died from complications of a serious illness. He was buried on Wednesday, November 20 in our cemetery. Our deepest sympathy goes to his wife, Tatjana Borishanskaya, daughter Evelina and granddaughter Viktoria.

The unveiling ceremony for the tombstone of Professor Dr. Genrikh Yeyger and his beloved wife, Nechama Yeyger, was held with members and friends on November 20th. Rabbi Offenberg officiated and conducted both services.

Yahrzeit in December / Kislev–Tevet

Roza Chiriza	1. 12. 2000 / 4. Kislev 5761
Frida Dachkevich	3. 12. 2001 / 18. Kislev 5762
Grigori Drabkine	7. 12. 2005 / 6. Kislev 5766
Igor Fuksa	5. 12. 2006 / 15. Kislev 5767
Genrikh Leimunski	29. 12. 2006 / 8. Tevet 5767
Ira Leimunskis	3. 12. 2011 / 7. Kislev 5772
Milja Golberg	18. 12. 2012 / 5. Tevet 5773
Mikhail Timonin1	4. 12. 2015 / 2. Tevet 5776
Jakovs Judelsons	5. 12. 2015 / 3. Tevet 5776
Mykhailo Gerr	12.12.2018 / 4. Kislev 5779
Professor Genrikh Yeger	23.12.2018 / 15. Tevet 5779
Nechama Yeger	25.12. 2018 / 17. Tevet 5779



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

Shalom,
Your synagogue board

We wish all our members a Happy Chanukkah and a healthy 2020!

Program for December 2019 • Kislev–Tevet 5780

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

The synagogue will be closed between December 23, 2019. and January 2, 2020

Wednesday, December 4	7:00 p.m.	Lecture: Hannah Arendt-Philosopher and Jewish Activist , in cooperation with the Society of Christians and Jews with Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg
Thursday, December 5	1:00 p.m.	Afternoon Soirée, Ukrainian Dance Troupe followed by refreshments through the friendly support of “Aktion Mensch”
Friday, December 13	3:00 p.m. 4:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m. 8:00 p.m.	Monthly board meeting Giyur class Friday night services followed by Oneg Shabbat Mishnah study, Tractate Pirke Avot
Saturday, December 14	10:00 a.m. 12:00 p.m. 1:30 p.m.	Shacharit services, followed by Kiddush Shiur / Torah Study: Parashah Vayishlach Kinder Kehillah
Sunday, December 22	4:00 p.m. 5:30 p.m.	Chanukkah Family Afternoon, Arts and Crafts, Chanukkah songs, Dreidel and games—everything about olive oil with Rabbi Offenberg Congregation’s Chanukka Party with Rabbi Dr. Ulrike Offenberg Public Candle lighting, Sing along with our choir Shalom, Sufganiyyot, Latkes and more, Dreidel spinning contest
Thursday, January 9, 2020	3:00 p.m.	“After New Year’s New Year’s Party!” through the friendly support of “Aktion Mensch.” Register before December 20 th ! Tickets: 5 Euros

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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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