



## Rabbinic word

Every day, the Shacharit morning prayer begins with the blessing: “Blessed are you, Eternal, King of the world, who forms the light and creates the darkness, who makes peace and creates everything.” This goes back to a verse in the Prophet Isaiah 45:7, where it says: “He who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates evil.” Perhaps those who cast this verse in the prayer version of the Siddur found it difficult to bear the thought that God also created evil? They preferred to change the formulation to the more general, but at the same time diminishing, “everything.” Or did they want people to take responsibility for the evil they brought into the world so that they wouldn’t excuse themselves by saying it was God’s will? Both considerations are probably correct: in the morning, when we start the day, we need the confidence that good will dominate, and that’s why we push back thoughts of horror a little. And at the same time we learn from the Torah’s creation stories that light and darkness are given in order to be able to make distinctions. Since people ate from the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” they can no longer excuse themselves from the fact that they themselves are not the responsible actors for what they do in the world.



The praise of light in the morning prayer is about the laws of nature: It becomes light because in the morning the sun “rises” and in the evening it “sets” (i.e., the earth rotates and we live for several hours facing toward or away from the sun.) We rejoice in the daylight when morning breaks. It cheers up our soul even more when we also see the sun’s rays. But we have no influence over the cosmic forces: the earth rotates whether we want it to or not.

The festival of Hanukkah, which we celebrate this month, speaks of a different light namely, one that only we humans can light in the midst of darkness. There is no regular lighting due to cosmic processes; we ourselves have to ensure that there is light. For eight days we light the small Hanukkah candles, starting with one on the first evening, increasing the light from day to day: two lights, three lights, until the entire Hanukkia shines on the eighth day. The candles only burn for a short time and after eight days the festival is over, so these lights are just a symbol, an indication of our ongoing task. But however limited the brightness of Hanukkah may be, it encourages us to counteract the darkness that comes from the wicked and evil with light. May this hope and strength continue beyond the eight days of this festival.

Chag Urim Sameach — Wishing you a happy festival of lights —Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg

## A Mischeberach prayer for the upcoming weeks

Eternal God, Source of Life,

Who our fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and our mothers Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah, blessed, bless those fighting for peace and the existence of Israel.

Give the soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces strength and courage, presence of mind and a sense of proportion in their difficult task, in their struggle against the terrorist army hiding behind civilians and enable them to destroy Hamas’ infrastructure.

Protect the members of the Israel Defense Forces from danger, allow them to return safe in body and whole in soul to continue to live their lives in peace and to be able to work for the good of the State of Israel.

Protect the abductees still held in Gaza.

Give them strength to endure their suffering until the light returns, allowing them their rightful liberation and joyous homecoming.

Heal their souls and bodies damaged by captivity, violence and war, so that they and we may lift ourselves up in the light of hope.

Plant in the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, in the West Bank and elsewhere the realization that Hamas is not their representative.

Sow the seeds of peace in all hearts,

Help us to find new ways for non-violent coexistence.

God full of mercy, have mercy on those affected by war and evacuation, give comfort to those who mourn, healing to those who are traumatized.

Let a new light shine upon Zion and let us all see that light in these dark days.

Then let us say: Amen.



## **Review of the month of November**

### **Commemoration of the November pogrom**

On November 9th, a large number of citizens from Hamelin and the surrounding area came together to commemorate the November pogrom of 1938. The Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation prepared this event. The pain of the massacre carried out by Hamas on October 7th made it clear that there can be no historical commemoration without also addressing the resurgent and current virulent anti-Semitism. Niklas Delp, President of the Society, reiterated the demand “Never again is now!”

High school students from the Viktoria-Luise-Gymnasium read the names of the murdered Jewish residents of Hamelin. They also performed a vignette that identifies the dangers to a society and its democratic constitution if it fails to protect the rights and dignity of minorities. Pastor Heike Köhler read a psalm, and Rabbi Jona Simon recited El Male Rachamim and Kaddish. Hamelin institutions and individuals placed wreaths, flowers and stones at the memorial. Particularly noteworthy here was a bouquet from the students, who arranged their flowers in such a way that they created a wreath.

### **Mitzvah Day**

On this year’s Mitzvah Day, members of our community met to bring joy to others. They devoted time and dedication to baking cookies for those who were sick or homebound. Various delicious pastries were beautifully packaged and personally delivered to their recipients. Thank you very much for your commitment: Olga, Feana, Masha, Nadya, Sveta, Dora, Valerij, Irina, Larisa and Matvej!

### **Our police force**

On November 10th, a group of the Hamelin police visited our synagogue. Rabbi Offenbergl gave a presentation describing our congregation’s past and present history. Questions concerning the shaken sense of security of many community members were discussed in detail. The officers took note of all references of anti-Semitic incidents attentively and with awareness of the problem; the police in Hamelin see themselves as having a responsibility to protect Jewish life. This time it was a conversation with senior officials; soon all police officers will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the synagogue and community life. We are very grateful for the protection of our facilities and the commitment of visibility of our local force.

On November 16th, Professor Dr. Gerhard Wegner, the Lower Saxony representative against anti-Semitism and the promotion of Jewish life, visited the synagogue and had a conversation with the second community chairman, Peter Wendt.

### **Acknowledgments**

Many institutions and religious communities and individuals shared with us their shock and concern about Hamas’ brutal attack on October 7th in Israel and expressed their solidarity with us and the people of Israel. At this point we would like to thank, among others, the Evangelical Free Church Community (Baptists) and its federal German umbrella organization, the Evangelical Reformed Community, the members of the Bundestag, Helge Limburg and Mareike Lotte Wulf, from the Lower Saxony State Parliament, Britta Kellermann, and the regional Bishop Adelheid Ruck-Schroeder. We are grateful to you and many others for these signs of solidarity and sympathy. We would also like to thank everyone who donated to Magen David Adom and thus provided very practical help for the healing of the survivors.

### **Interview with “Dewezet”**

Two articles appeared in the local Hamelin newspaper about anti-Semitism and the situation after October 7th in Germany, which were based on an interview with Rabbi Offenbergl. In it she also emphasized that the Hamelin community members were “existentially shocked” as the news from Israel added to the traumatic impact of Russia’s war against Ukraine. This is very personal as many community members have family members in both countries. Many of our members emigrated from Ukraine. They have been joined recently by war refugees over the last year and a half.

## Outlook for the month of December

### Hanukkah

Especially in dark times we have to let there be light. The Hanukkah lights dispel the darkness and give us hope. And just being together can cheer us up too!

That's why we want to light Hanukkiot together twice this year, namely on the second and third evening of the festival. On Friday, December 8th, because of the early darkness, we will light the second Hanukkah light in the synagogue at 3:30 p.m. Afterwards we want to sit together, talk and enjoy sweet and warm Sufganijot. As with previous holidays, we will gather around the piano and sing Hanukkah songs. Everyone is invited to join in. So bring sheet music or lyrics, sing or recite. The Kabbalat Shabbat service will begin at 5 p.m., after which we will make Kiddush and sit down to dinner.

On Saturday, December 9th, the big Hanukkah celebration will take place in the synagogue. At 5 p.m. we'll observe Havdalah, light the third Hanukkah candle and sing the hymn "Maos Zur." Afterwards we will enjoy a concert by the "Ginzburg Dynasty," a group of five klezmer musicians from Berlin.

### New Year's party

On Sunday, January 14, 2024, we will welcome the New Year 2024. Music, food and drinks will create a happy atmosphere. Please make plans to join in the fun. Register through the synagogue office. Tickets are €10 per person.



### Donations — Tzedakah

We thank you for the donations received over the past few weeks for our community life and the synagogue. Our gratitude goes in particular to: Ruth and Josh Herz, Zoe Wright, Judy and Roy Meredith, all USA, to Nicole Schwigon and to the Dohme family. Judy and Roy Meredith, USA, ordered a new leaf to the Tree of Life with the following dedication: "In honor of the Dohme family."

May all donors be blessed for their generosity.

### A Personal Thank You

My children and I would like to thank all of you for the great compassion, loving support and deep respect shown to us on the occasion of the death of my beloved husband, our father, grandfather and father-in-law. He was deeply loved and appreciated by so many people. Without his help, the construction of our synagogue would never have been possible. May his memory be a blessing.

—Rachel Dohme and family

### Yahrzeit in December

Rosa Kirica	December 1, 2000 / 4. Kislev 5761
Frida Dachkevich	December 3, 2001 / 18. Kislev 5762
Grigori Drabkin	December 7, 2005 / 6. Kislev 5766
Igor Fuksa	December 6, 2006 / 15. Kislev 5767
Genrich Leimunskis	December 29, 2006 / 8. Tevet 5767
Irina Leimunskis	December 3, 2011 / 7. Kislev 5772
Milja Golberg	December 18, 2012 / 5. Tevet 5773
Mikhail Timonin	December 14, 2015 / 2. Tevet 5776
Jakov Judelsons	December 15, 2015 / 3. Tevet 5776
Mikhailo Gerr	December 12, 2018 / 4. Kislev 5779
Prof. Dr. Genrikh Yeyger	December 23, 2018 / 15 Tevet 5779
Nechama Yeyger	December 25, 2018 / 17 Tevet 5779
Ninel Taranushvili	December 30, 2022 / 7 Tevet 5783

May their memory be a blessing.

**Shalom and Hanukkah Sameach,  
Your community board**



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## Program for December 2023 • Kislev–Tevet 5784

Office hours: Thursdays and Fridays 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.  
The office is closed from December 23, 2023 to January 2, 2024.

Tuesday, December 5	4:00 p.m.	Bar Mitzvah class, via Zoom
Wednesday, December 6,	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Bat Mitzvah class, via Zoom Limmud Rabbah: Hanukkah in the Talmud, via Zoom
Thursday, December 7	6:00 p.m.	Digital Bible dialogue about the book of Judges Pastor Dr. Ina Petermann and Rabbi Offenberg speak, Judges, 13 via Zoom
Friday, December 8	3:30 p.m. 5:00 p.m.	Lighting of the first Hanukkah light. Music and Sufganiyot Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, December 9	10:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m. 5:00 p.m.	Shacharit Shabbat Hanukkah, followed by Kiddush Youth Kehillah Havdalah, lighting of the second Hanukkah light, Concert with the Ginzburg Dynasty
Tuesday, December 19	4:00 p.m.	Bar Mitzvah class, via Zoom
Wednesday, December 20	4:00 p.m. 6:00 p.m.	Bat Mitzvah class, via Zoom Limmud Rabbah with Rabbi Tamarah Benima, Amsterdam, via Zoom
Friday, December 22	5:00 p.m.	Kabbalat Shabbat, followed by Kiddush
Saturday, December 23	10:00 a.m.	Shacharit Shabbat “Vayigash,” Kiddush and Shiur

Regular courses via Zoom:  
Tuesdays, 4 p.m.: Bar Mitzvah class  
Wednesdays, 4 p.m.: Bat Mitzvah class  
Wednesdays, 6 p.m.: Limmud Rabbah



### 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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