



Rabbinic word

On September 3rd/4th, we will celebrate Rosh Chodesh Elul, and from now on we turn our attention to the High Holidays next month. Elul is the time of preparation for “The Days of Awe,” which is why the shofar is sounded every day from the beginning of the month, a wake-up call for body and soul. The piercing sound is meant to pierce our limbs and tear us out of our carelessness.



But what if we are already shaken to the core? Isn't blowing the shofar then a tedious routine or even an imposition? It is now eleven months since October 7th, and the kidnapped men and women, children and elders are still sitting in the hell of Hamas' tunnels; it is said that 38 of the 105 hostages can only be brought back dead. For eleven months, 70,000 people in northern Israel have been unable to live in their homes because Hezbollah rockets and drones threaten their everyday lives.

The period in which Kaddish is said for the deceased lasts eleven months, after which it is only said at Yahrzeit. In a few days, the relatives of more than 1,200 massacred civilians will stop saying Kaddish. The Jewish mourning rituals with their gradual phases of shivah and shloshim (7 and 30 days after the funeral, respectively), followed by the daily Kaddish, are actually intended to gradually pave the way for the mourners to return to a life without their loved ones.

But what kind of everyday life can they return to, since this war continues, threatening the existence of the State of Israel and all its inhabitants? What directly affects the Israelis does not leave us in Germany untouched either. It is not the call of the shofar, but the daily news broadcasts that keep us in terror. It is not only the reports of the war but also because of the way it is reported.

And there is something in addition: The Jewish community in Germany is also emotionally very affected by the war against Ukraine. The names of the bombed places are familiar, and there is great concern for relatives and friends living there. This year, the shofar seems to be fulfilling its function as a warning signal in times of war rather than a call to inner reflection. Yet another practice also accompanies us through the month of Elul up until the Simchat Torah holidays end.

Psalm 27 is recited every day. As if the words were written specifically for our time, it says: “The Lord is my light and my salvation; of whom shall I fear? The Lord is the refuge of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers come near me to eat my flesh, my enemies shall stumble and my enemies shall fall. If a camp is gathered against me, my heart will not fear;

*“If war comes against me, I will be confident. (...)
Show me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path, despite my enemies.
Do not give me over to my enemies, for false witnesses have risen against me,
and those who breathe for violence.
But I will trust to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of life.
Hope in the Lord, be strong; let your heart be strong, and hope in the Lord.”*

May the daily encouragement of this Psalm give us all comfort and confidence, as a source of resilience and strength against the daily news.

—Your Rabbi Offenberg





Review of the months of July and August

We did not take a summer break from our community activities this year. Services took place every two weeks as usual. Many thanks to Peter Wendt, who led the Kabbalat Shabbat service when Rabbi Offenberg was in Israel for an educational seminar. During the sunny months, a small vineyard with lush grapes ripened behind the synagogue. We would especially like to thank Matvej Dvortsis for building the trellis and caring for and fertilizing the vines.



Two of the children and young people from our community took part in Netzer Germany's summer Machaneh, which took place in Baden-Württemberg. There they met old and new friends and returned enthusiastically. Learning and practicing Jewish traditions is integrated into fun and games, and the holiday camps therefore make an invaluable contribution to the development of Jewish identity. Since the summer holidays in Lower Saxony took place so early this year, our religious education programs started up again when school commenced in August. Bar and Bat Mitzvah preparations are particularly intensive at the moment, because we can now celebrate two big festivals within a few weeks.

The senior citizens' breakfast, which took place on August 16th and was lovingly prepared by Sveta Rubinskaja, Valerij and Dora Bogatchyk, was aimed at a different age group. Forty community members came to enjoy some conviviality over delicious food. A big thank you goes to everyone who prepared the food and organized the carpools. Our new caretaker Petro, whom we warmly welcome to our midst, was also part of the hard-working team.

Timur became Bar Mitzvah

On Shabbat “Ekev,” August 23–24, we had the great joy of celebrating the first Bar Mitzvah in many years. After years of thorough preparation, Timur Treskunow read from the Torah scroll in the traditional recitation style, which adds special musical symbols (teamim) to the text. He then gave a drasha (sermon) on the weekly portion, in which he emphasized how important it is not to become arrogant and to always be aware of one's biographical roots. A large circle of family members and friends honored Timur by attending. The grandparents traveled from Kherson, Ukraine. The ceremony of the “chain of generations” was also very moving: after the Hagbah, lifting the Torah scroll for all to see, it was passed from great-grandmother Mascha to grandparents, great-aunt, parents and older sister Eva to Timur — a visible sign that we owe our formation and development to all the generations before us. And this chain of Jewish traditions leads back to Mount Sinai, where the people of Israel received the Torah, which has shaped Jewish life and culture ever since and throughout all time. Mazel Tov, Timur, for deciding to take on this tradition and let it shape your life. And your Rabbi Ulrike Offenberg especially praises you for your persistence and diligence in preparing to become Bar Mitzvah! Timur received a Siddur and a Hebrew-German Tanakh (Bible) as a gift from the community, as the basis for his Jewish bookcase.

Jewish life in September

Jewish reactions to anti-Semitism

On Thursday, September 5th, 2024, at 7 p.m., Rabbi Offenberg will talk about her research project, which she has been pursuing for two and a half years at the University of Jewish Studies in Heidelberg. Together with a colleague, she asked fellow Jews in Germany how anti-Semitic statements affect their everyday lives. In which areas of life do they encounter subtle or not so subtle rejection and prejudice? How do they deal with it: Do they hide their Jewishness? How do they defend themselves? In a second round after October 7, 2023, the interviewees were again asked about their experiences. The information they received is depressing. What does this mean for Jewish life in this country?

As part of the project, several short films and the website www.juedischleben.de were created. The research results will be presented, as well as the films in which Jewish people of different origins, religious or secular backgrounds give information about their thoughts from their everyday lives. This lecture evening is held in cooperation with the Society for Christian-Jewish Cooperation. Admission is free.

New exercise group

With the support of “Aktion Mensch” we can offer seated gymnastics exercise group every Thursday at 11 a.m. beginning in September. It is led by Sveta, who is an experienced fitness trainer.

This form of exercise is suitable for everyone, even for people with walking difficulties, and it helps to improve the body’s mobility. We hope to be able to organize a dance group soon.

Bat Mitzvah of Florencia and Anamaría

We are looking forward to the next celebration of Jewish coming of age: on Shabbat “Ki Tavo”, September 20–21, Anamaría and Florencia will be Bat Mitzvah (actually, more correct in the plural: Bnot Mitzvah). They will also read from the Torah and give an interpretation of their weekly portion. Their mother Claudia did not celebrate Bat Mitzvah in her youth, but she will now make up for it in a joint celebration with her daughters. This will also be a moving moment for her and everyone present. All members of the community are cordially invited to be there on Shabbat morning. Afterwards there will be a festive Kiddush.

High Holidays

The month of Elul this year coincides with the month of September. We blow the shofar every day as it reminds us that the High Holidays are just around the corner. This year they fall in October, which we will mention in the next newsletter, but we ask that you note the dates now.

On Wednesday, October 2nd, we will visit the cemeteries on Scharnhorststrasse (11:00 a.m.) and Am Wehl (12:00 p.m.) together to remember our deceased relatives. Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year 5785, will be celebrated on the evening of the same day (Wednesday, October 2nd, 5:30 p.m.), as well as with Shacharit on Thursday, October 3rd, 10:00 a.m. Yom Kippur begins on Friday, October 11th, at 6:00 p.m. with Kol Nidrei. The following day we will continue with Shacharit at 10:00 a.m. and conclude the Day of Atonement with Yizkor and the closing prayer Ne’ilah beginning at 5:30 p.m. We ask every member of the congregation to attend the morning services so that a minyan, the minimum number of ten people, is guaranteed at all times.

Yahrzeit in September

Samson Avrus	September 3, 1999 / 22 Elul 5759
Yevgen Yevdokimov	September 9, 2020 / 20 Elul 5780

May the memory of him be a blessing to us. Kaddish is said during the services. Yahrzeit candles are available in the office.



Shalom,
Your Community Board

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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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