



**Dear members of our UpJ communities, Dear friends of the movement,**

We had a extremely successful annual conference in July, with a wide-ranging programme, although it was definitely the last

time we will be holding the conference at the Johannesstift in Spandau. It was followed by a summer break, but now we are back to normal and our families and communities are getting ready for the High Holidays. They are the theme of this newsletter.

We will be continuing our work with particular intensity in the coming year, since, as you may have gathered from media reports, at the end of June the cabinet of the state of North Rhine-Westfalia awarded the Union the legal status of a corporation under public law as the organisation which represents all the progressive communities in Germany. We are very happy at this decision, which comes after many years of negotiations, and we are proud that our work and our efforts to overcome the many hurdles on the way have been recognised.

We are driven by the desire to reestablish liberal Judaism in the country in which it was originally conceived and to link up to the tradition which came from Germany and which has found recognition throughout the world, growing to become the largest movement within religious Judaism. That applies to the Union as well as to the individual communities, at whatever stage of their development they may be.

We are currently waiting for the completion of the process of recognition of our corporate rights, and we will be informing you regularly in this newsletter and elsewhere about the developments which will become open to us.



One significant development was an event which took place only a few days ago. On August 31st, this year's graduates of the Abraham Geiger College were ordained as rabbis or cantors at a ceremony in Bielefeld. We congratulate them most heartily, and we are grateful to the college for the wonderful gesture of holding the ceremony in North Rhine-Westphalia. Our three communities in the state, Cologne, Oberhausen and Unna, were able to welcome their new rabbi directly after the ordination: Natasha Verszbovska, who did her practical placement

in NRW, will take up the office of state rabbi in September – a great step in the development of our state association of Jewish communities in NRW.

With this positive news, may I wish you all the very best for the coming festivals on behalf of the UpJ's entire executive committee and staff. I hope that all the difficulties of daily life will not prevent you and your families from finding time for rest, reflection and rejoicing.

Sonja Güntner

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- November 6th – 8th: Seminar for Lay Cantor (Shliche Tsibur) in Bad Sobernheim



### UpJ Annual Conference, Berlin, July 31-5th, 2015

Sonja Guentner, president of the Union Progressiver Juden in Deutschland, saved her surprise for the end of her greeting speech at the opening of the 21st annual conference in Berliner Centrum Judaicum: "The state government of North Rhine Westphalia decided during its cabinet meeting on June 23, 2015 officially to grant us **KdoeR**." Everybody cheered loudly and applauded this wonderful news.

Becoming a KdoeR is the next step to organizational consolidation in Germany. We are now accepted officially as a religious institution that is here to stay. Our negotiations with the Central Council of Jews in Germany are bound to change its character now. Sonja Guentner has informed the Central Council of Jews in Germany about our efforts to become a KdoeR but hasn't received any reaction.

The UpJ Germany has slowly developed the **Jewish infrastructure**: Family Machanot for the very young, Netzer for children and teenagers, Jung und Juedisch for students and young adults, Abraham Geiger College for rabbinic and cantorial education and seminars for members of our 25 congregations.

The UpJ Germany has been holding its **annual conference** since 1995. Jews from all over Germany (and some from other countries as well) meet once a year and enjoy each other's company, learn in workshops and pray. This year's conference offered 20 workshops to 265 participants. Our motto this year was the celebration of 50 years diplomatic relationships between Israel and Germany. The Israeli ambassador in Germany, Mr. Yakov Hadas-Handelsman, the chairman of the Israel-Germany Society, Mr. Reinhold Robbe, the president of Arzenu, Rabbi Lawrence Englander and the president of the EUPJ, Ms. Miriam Kramer spoke to the participants and guests.

The workshops dealt mostly with Israel: Israel after the elections, Israel and the Diaspora, Zionism and the Settlements, Israeli Literature translated into German.

Along the annual conference we also had a **children's conference** which 21 children enjoyed. Konstantin Seidler, the youth leader of the UpJ Germany and six Madrichim filled the title of the children's conference "Holidays in Israel" with activities: Quiz, drawings, stories and games led the children in a fantasy journey from the Golan down to the Mediterranean Sea to Haifa, via the Galilee to Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. In their Fantasy the children got to know the Negev, bathed in the Dead Sea and swam in Eilat. They had their own services: On Friday they blessed Challot, which they had baked that morning. The Madrichim led the Kabbalat Shabbat service. The children drew pictures on klafim for the Balak portion. These were added to the Torah scroll that the children started producing last year. Debbie Tal Ruetzger prepares the klafim each year with the Hebrew text. Rabbi Tom Kucera from Munich led the Shacharit Shabbat.

Heinz-Peter Katlewski

Photos: © Alejandro Arditi



Cantor Aviv Weinberg accompanied the opening event with her music.





News



Sonja Guentner, president of the UpJ, opened the event “50 years of diplomatic relationships between Israel and Germany” at Centrum Judaicum.



Miriam Kramer, chairwoman of the EUPJ greets the participants in German and in Russian.



Rabbi Lawrence England, president of arzenu olami explains how arzenu works and points out arzen's importance.



The Israeli ambassador, Yakov Hadas-Handelsmann, delivers greetings and thanks the UpJ for its engagement.

Reinhold Robbe, president of the DIG describes the importance of the Israeli-German relationships during the last 50 years.





### New publications

Together with the Jewish Liberal Congregation Or Chadash, Zurich, the UPJ Germany has just published three booklets for students to

accompany the three school books Rosh Pina.

The work booklets (8.00 € per booklet) can be obtained at the head office of the UPJ in Diesterwegstraße 7, 33604 Bielefeld

[www.juedische-verlagsanstalt.de](http://www.juedische-verlagsanstalt.de)



### Holocaust or Shoa?

Holocaust is the Greek translation of the Hebrew OLA, which is a term for a sacrifice, in which a sacrificial animal was completely burned.

Examples from the Tanach:

Leviticus 1,9 „... as a burnt offering, a fire offering, [with] a pleasing fragrance to the Lord“

Psalm 51, 21 „Then You will desire sacrifices of righteousness, a burnt offering and a whole offering;...“

Leviticus 7.37 „This is the law for the burnt offering,...“

Since the 12th century holocaustum referred to the death of many people by fire or burns. Beginning in 1895, English authors called the massacre of the Armenians holocaust. This was the first use of the expression to refer to mass murders of an ethnic group, which were legally defined as „Genocide“ after 1945. Since 1942, beginning in the United Kingdom, the mass murders of Jews by Nazi Germany were also called holocaust.

In Germany, the word holocaust has been used since the broadcast of the American TV series of that name in 1979.

Shoah has three meanings in the Tanach :

Terrible storm, as in Proverbs 1, 27 „when your fear comes like a storm (Shoah).“

Disaster and destruction, such as in Psalm 35, 8 „ Let destruction come upon him unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself; with destruction (Shoah) let him fall therein. „

Hostile desert, like in job 38.27 „to saturated desolation (Shoah) and horror.“

The Tanach Concordance provides the following synonyms or related terms for Shoah: churban - destruction and debris, owdan - obliteration or doom, heress - destruction, kiljon - destruction, schama - ghastrly wasteland or devastation.

The word Holocaust as a term for the mass murder of our people by the Nazis was used in Erez Israel in the early 1940s. That is why this expression is also used in Israel's Declaration of Independence from 1948.

Shoah is used in Western Europe mainly because of the nine-hour documentary film „Shoah“ by Claude Lanzmann in 1985.

Why we should use the term Shoah instead of Holocaust?

The word Holocaust, a sacrifice which is fully burned, implies a religious act. It means to offer a human sacrifice by fire, as if it were a proof of piety. OLA is always described in the Tanach as a pleasant fragrance.

The unfathomable murders of the Nazis weren't that. It was a disaster, a terrible storm, destruction with the aim of the utter obliteration of our people, that would leave a ghastrly desert in our souls. It was a Shoah.

Deborah Tal-Rüttger

Sources: [www.antisemitismus.net/shoah/holocaust](http://www.antisemitismus.net/shoah/holocaust).

[www.deutscheakademie.de](http://www.deutscheakademie.de) | [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust)



**Some Unknown Facts about Sukkot**

**Sukkot and Kohelet**

Kohelet heißt auf Deutsch Prediger (Salomos) oder in Griechisch Ecclesiastes.

Kohelet, Greek and English Ecclesiastes.

In Massechet Sofrim, capital 14, Halachot 3-4 we find the first evidence about which script rolls are read when and how. (Massechet Sofrim was written in the 8th century, probably in Eretz Israel.) The 17th Halacha mentions that we read the Song of Songs on Pesach. Yalkut Shim'oni (probably written in the 13th century) tells us that one reads Ruth on Shavu'ot. Tractate Megilla in the Talmud teaches us that one reads Esther on Purim. Tractate Ta'anit 30a describes the reading of Echa (Lamentations) on Tish'a beAv.

The reading of Kohelet on Sukkot is mentioned in Machzor Vitry (written after 1000), in Sefer haManhig by Avraham ben Nathan (1155-1215) and in Sefer Maharil by Rabbi Ya'akov haLevi Molin (1375-1427). Sefer Maharil (Hilchot Sukka 53) gives us precise details about the reading: „Kohelet is read on Shabbat of Sukkot and one says the blessings of ‚al mikra megilla‘ and ‚shehecheyanu‘. If there is no Shabbat on Sukkot one reads Kohelet on Shmini Atzeret that falls on a Shabbat.“

Even though the habit of reading Kohelet on Sukkot is not a widespread practice, Ashkenasic Jews read it on a Shabbat during Sukkot before the Torah reading. The reader blesses with „al mikra megilla“ and „shehecheyanu“. The Chassidim read Kohelet without blessing, each person for himself. The Sefardic Jews have not adopted this custom at all.

**Why do we read Kohelet during Sukkot?**

First explanation:

Machzor Vitry, and later, in the 14th Century, Rabbi Ja'akov haCohen of Lunitz, both explain that in Kohelet 11.2 the seven days of Sukkot and the eighth day, Shmini Atzeret, are indicated: "Distribute portions to seven or even to eight."

Both authorities tell us that Kohelet admonishes the people to keep their Nedarim, their vows, and they also mention that King Solomon assembled the people on Sukkot, as is written in I Kings 8,2: "All the men of Israel gathered before King Solomon at the Feast, in the month of Ethanim – that is, the seventh month."

According to tradition, it was King Solomon who wrote Kohelet, a book in which he demanded the people to assemble and study the Torah and keep its laws.

I must admit that this explanation is a bit difficult to follow and for us today not very comprehensible.

Second explanation:

M. Ser Kawod wrote in „Da'at haMikra“, Jerusalem 1982 about Kohelet: The three pilgrim festivals stand for the cycle of life. In the spring, time of youth, one reads the Song of Songs on Pessach. This is an ode to love and spring time. In the summer, the height of ripened life, when the fruit is ripe and the wheat is collected, one reads Ruth. The book of Ruth is about the wheat harvest and the midlife, when one starts a family. In the fall, in old age, during the last harvest, one reads Kohelet. In Kohelet, old age, the period near the end of life and the wisdom of the old, is described.

Third explanation:

Michael Lawton mentions that the scepticism about the achievements of real life expressed in Kohelet is somehow a reflection of the uncertainty embodied in the sukkah. Everything is vanity, including our brick buildings. Together with the hoshanot (derived from the words hoshana—"bring us salvation, please"), which are the special prayers recited each day of Sukkot while holding the lulav and etrog, it's the other side of Sukkot from Vehayita ach sameach (be very happy on the holiday)."

Deborah Tal-Rüttger

**Where is Ruth?**

It is especially relevant to our Progressive communities, where there are many people who found their way or are finding their way to Judaism in their adult lives, that the Ruth Megillah is read out on Shavuot. As we were preparing to do this the question of "where is Ruth?" came up – we were obviously not referring to any real person, but to the text. We wanted to be able to read this text in Hebrew but also in German with an accompanying transliteration of the Hebrew. One can find the Hebrew and German in most Tanakhim, but the transliteration? Because we could not find any in book shops we decided to do something about this ourselves. Our idea has now come bear fruit and the first book - the Ruth megillah. Illustrated by the internationally renowned and Berlin-based Moroccan-Jewish artist Madeleine Schallock, our Ruth megillah will now become the first in a new series of transliterated texts.

The series title „ha'sefer im ha'pina – The Book with the Edge“ is born of the need to accommodate the printing code on the cover and so we have incorporated this into the book's title.

We are pleased to be able to offer this book to all interested parties and communities. The book can be delivered in two different versions. Private persons can order a hardback version and communities will receive the paperback. The latter can only be ordered by congregations as it is marked accordingly and has a somewhat simpler presentation than the hardback version. The delivery time is only three weeks.

The second book in the new series – "Jiskor" - is almost finished and should be ready to order by Yom Kippur.

We would be very grateful for any further ideas and suggestions ably of you have for any future additions to the series.

Benno Simoni,  
Bet Haskala, Berlin





## Ivrit lechol echad – Hebrew for All

Let us repeat the blessings we say before and after Rosh haShana and Yom kippur.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| On a holiday we wish each other:<br>Happy Holiday - Chag Sameach (not said on RH and YK)   | חג שמח  |
| A Good Year! –<br>Shana tova!  | שנה טובה  |
| On New Year: May you be inscribed (in the Book of Life) for a good year. –<br><b>leschana tova tikatev (for a man);</b><br><b>leschana tova tikatevi (for a woman);</b><br><b>leschana tova tikatevu (plural)</b>          | לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתֵּב<br>לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבִי<br>לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּכְתְּבוּ |
| Between Rosh haShana und Yom Kippur:<br><b>May you be sealed for a good year. –</b><br><b>leshana tova techatem (for a man);</b><br><b>leshana tova techatemi (for a woman);</b><br><b>leshana tova techatemu (plural)</b> | לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּחְתֵּם<br>לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּחְתְּמִי<br>לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה תִּחְתְּמוּ |
| On Yom Kippur:<br><b>A final and good seal (in the Book of Life)!</b><br><b>Gmar chatima tova!</b>   | גְּמַר חַתִּימָה טוֹבָה   |

In this sense: Shana tova lechulanu – A Good Year to Us All!

Deborah Tal-Rüttger





**lvrit for the Curious עברית לסקרנים**

We have in our tradition several fast days: On **Tisch'a beAv**, the 9th of the month of Av, we fast because the first and the second Temples were destroyed on that day. Tisch'a beAv is a strict fast day, like Yom Kippur.

The smaller fast days are: **Shiv'a Asar beTammuz**, the 17th of the month of Tammuz, because on that day in the Year 587 the Roman troops managed to cut a breach in the walls of Jerusalem. Three weeks later, on 9th Av, the Temple and Jerusalem fell.

**Asara beTevet**, the 10th of the month of Tevet, in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon in the year 587 BCE.

**Tsom Gedalya**, on the 3rd of the month of Tishri, is named after the governor Gedalya ben Achikam whom the Babylonians (with the help of a Jew, Ishmael) assassinated and which led to the fall of the First Temple.

In addition to these fast days, Jews fast a day before Purim (Tsom Esther) and all first-born men fast a day before Pessach.

In the progressive movement we fast only on Yom Kippur. We study the other fast days as part of our Jewish history.

**To fast ליצום**

The word **latsum** means „to fast“. The noun is **Tsom צום**, „fast“. Hebrew is a language that roots in the verb. So it is quite interesting to examine and find out which words there are that derive from the same verb root (schoresch). Do such words have also a common meaning?

We know from the Kabbala the term **Tsimstum צמצום** which means literally: reduction, diminishing, penury. The Kabbala tells us that God reduced himself physically to make room for the world. The verb for that is **lehitstamtsem להצטמצם**, to shrink, to become smaller, to take up less space. The adjective is **metsumtsam מצומצם**, limited, reduced. When we fast, we limit ourselves, we step back and thus take up less place.

**Tsamá צמה** (with „he“) means: braid, plait. From plenty of hair, flowing around the head, a braid is plaited, thus reducing the form of the hair to something that takes up less room.

Strict rules determine the fast on Yom Kippur. One refrains also from drinking which means that one is thirsty. Thirst in Hebrew is **Tsamá צמא** (with Alef). Yearning for God is often pictured as thirst in our tradition: **tsam'a elecha nafshi. צמאה אליך נפשי**. When we are thirsty during the fast, it is a physical thirst but also a spiritual one, yearning for God.

As we see, simple Hebrew words in the dictionary carry a deeper divine inspiration for us.

Deborah Tal-Rüttger





From the Congregations

**Bielefeld Synagogue and Bielefeld Hospital hold a specialist conference on Jewish attitudes to death and dying**

On the weekend after Shavu'ot, between 28th and 31st May, our community, the Bielefeld Hospital, the General Conference of Rabbis in Germany and the Central German Jewish Welfare Organisation issued an invitation to a seminar on Jewish attitudes to issues at the end of life. Over 60 people took part, among them nine rabbis, social workers, doctors, care workers, medical ethicists, voluntary helpers from Bikkur Cholim groups and board members from throughout Germany

Among the non-Jewish participants were the former German vice-chancellor Franz Münterfering, Joachim Ochel of the National Council of the German Lutheran-Reformed Church, and a number of medical specialists in palliative care from the Universities of Bonn and Potsdam.

Participants discussed the issues intensively and openly, and often until late into the night – which didn't stop them from being up early in the morning in time for the lectures and workshops. They were moved

by the well attended Shabbat services in our synagogue. Participants, lecturers and workshop leaders all agreed that they very much enjoyed their stay with us, and thanked us heartily for our hospitality, which, they said, provided a good basis for the intensive work of the conference.

Dr. Stephan Probst



Vortrag Ltd. Oberarzt Dr. Stephan Probst



Im Bild u.a. Rabbiner Dr. Salomon Almekias-Siegl, Leitender Oberarzt Dr. Stephan Probst, Rabbinerin Alina Treiger, Rabbiner Dr. Tomas Kucera, Rabbiner Dr. Daniel Katz, Rabbiner Jonah Sievers. In der linken Ecke im Hintergrund Ex-Bundesminister und Vizeminister Franz Münterfering



Im Wohnzimmer der Palliativstation des Bielefelder Klinikums Teilnehmersgespräch (darunter Rabbinerin Alina Treiger)

**News from Hameln**

Sofer Neil Yerman brought our new Torah to our congregation when he visited us July. An Open Studio was offered, allowing members and townspeople the opportunity to see a Sofer at work. Our Torah is exceptionally beautifully written and lightweight. It is on loan from the Dohme family and we are very happy that Rabbi Irit Shillor will inaugurate it on Simchat Torah.

After 13 years of negotiations, the city of Hameln has changed the city's cemetery regulations in order to grant our congregation's request for eternal resting rights. We thank all involved - our partners in City Hall, Rachel Dohme, Rabbi Irit Shillor, and special thanks to Katarina Seidler – for this historic achievement.

Rachel Dohme will be honored with the Blickwechsel Prize, which will be presented by Dr. Ursula Rudnik on September 6th. The Blickwechsel („Change of view“)Prize is presented every two years by the Lower Saxony Association for Jewish-Christian Encounter for longstanding or innovative engagements in the Jewish-Christian dialogue in Lower Saxony. Former prize winners are:

- 2013 Bärbel Zimmer
- 2011 Elke von Meding
- 2009 Hans-Joachim Schreiber
- 2007 Dr. Gábor Lengyel, Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Hanover



## From the Congregations

The award ceremony will take place during the Association's summer festival in Hanover.

Rachel Dohme

### Felix Nussbaum (1904 – 1944)

#### A Jewish painter from northern Germany

##### „When I am gone, don't let my pictures die“

In May, our community's cultural club focussed its attention on the painter Felix Nussbaum.

We had a most interesting afternoon, thanks to excellent preparatory work, with handouts in Russian and German, as well as research into Nussbaum's biography by Lena Kowalzyk and Bella Sapozhnikowa, and pictures and information gathered from the Internet (well-chosen as always) by Jossif Ludianski.

Felix Nussbaum was born in Osnabrück in 1904 into a family of tradespeople in Emden. He went to the School for Applied Arts in Hamburg and the predecessor of the University of the Arts in Berlin, and became a freelance artist when he left the university in 1928. His picture „Self-portrait with Mask“ dates from this year.

In 1932, Nussbaum was accompanied by his partner Felka Platek on a study trip to Rome. They were never to see Germany again. They moved from place to place on the Mediterranean as they searched for a new homeland. They went to Paris and then to Ostend, but had to move on every six months because the Belgian laws didn't allow foreigners to stay longer at one address. Nussbaum and Platek found themselves asking in desperation: „Who am I and where should I go?“

On May 16th 1940, Nussbaum was arrested in Brussels and taken to Cyprien camp in the south of France. He managed to escape in June and returned to Brussels. With the distance of a man who has been saved, he turned into a political artist. He'd not been defeated, but „if you forget that you're a Jew, they'll remind you of the fact.“ His brother Justus and his parents were murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

In Autumn 1942, the two went underground. Nussbaum painted „The Triumph of Death“ – a picture in which art has been defeated and skeletons keen over the wreckage of Western culture.

The Nazis were already in retreat when Nussbaum and Platek were caught by a bounty-hunter. They were taken to Auschwitz with the very last transport from the transit camp at Mechelen. It is only his pictures which have survived, some of which can be seen in the Felix Nussbaum Museum in Osnabrück.

Alisa Fuhlbrügge

### New liberal Chief Rabbi of Hamburg

The Liberal Jewish community in Hamburg (LJGH) has appointed Rabbi Dr. Moshe Navon as the liberal Chief Rabbi of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. The inauguration took place in the Jerusalem Church in Hamburg-Eimsbüttel on June 6, 2015, during the interreligious event „Guests with Abraham“. Rabbi Dr. Navon has been the Rabbi of LJGH since 2015 and belongs to the General Rabbinical Conference in Germany, as well as the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR). In the future, he will represent Liberal Judaism in Hamburg as an independent and established Jewish denomination.

The LJGH was founded in 1994 to provide Hamburg with another facet of Judaism, in addition to the Orthodox Jewish Community of Hamburg. Hamburg can point to nearly 200 years of Jewish Reform tradition. This began in 1817 with the founding of the Israelite Temple Congregation, which was the world's first public Reform congregation. The Reform Jewish denomination was the mainstream of Judaism in Germany until 1938, when it was interrupted abruptly by the actions of the Nazis. However, it bloomed elsewhere, especially in the United States, where the majority of Jews feel connected to progressive Judaism. International interest in the LJGH has increased, as the congregation prepares to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Reform Judaism in 2017.

Bettina Wagner

## UpJ Youth Department

### Report

After two years, the 5775/2015 summer machane saw us back in the countryside around Salzburg. The camp was fully booked early on, so we spent two wonderful weeks with 80 chanichim and 19 madrichim in the Simonyhof youth hostel, where we had plenty of excitement, and plenty of opportunity to laugh and to learn together.

The focus of our social, sporting, political and religious activities was the Jewish calendar and the festivals, which were featured in the peulot and chugim, in the evening programmes, the trips and the services.

The religious aspect was supported by our committed chanichim, „flowers“ (trainee madrichim) and madrichim, as well as by student rabbi Matti Kirschenbaum from Berlin. Their joint efforts ensured that the two shabbatot will remain long in our memories.

In addition, there were plenty of sporting activities and trips, including an unforgettable visit to the city of Salzburg. In addition to a tour of the city, we also had an excellent time at the House of Nature. The older participants also took part in a three-day visit to a hut in the mountains, which was for them a special highlight.

We want to say a special thank you once more to all the „flowers“ and madrichim, who made a such a particular contribution to the success of the machane. Without your support it would not have been possible to have got such a project off the ground.

At the end of the machane, at least 10 chanichim said they would like to start their training as madrichim this autumn. We are really looking forward to working with this new generation of „flowers.“

Konstantin Seidler



UpJ Youth Department



Termin | Dank | Impressum

Dates:

• November 6th – 8th: Seminar for Lay Cantor (Shliche Tsibur) in Bad Sobernheim

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We thank the communities who have sent us articles and photos for our Newsletter.