

UPCOMING HOLIDAYS AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

Tu B'Shebat Shiur

Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Tuesday, January 30
7:00 pm



Rabbi Soloveichik will deliver a shiur dedicated to the themes of Tu B'Shebat. Tasty Tu B'Shebat treats will be served.

For sponsorship opportunities for this public lecture, visit shearithisrael.org/tu-bshebat-shiur.

Sponsor Our Annual Purim Breakfast
Thursday, March 1 | 8:30 am

Every year we treat our congregation to a festive Purim Breakfast, following the reading of the *megillah* on Purim morning. Help ensure that we have plenty of hamentashen to go around by going here to sponsor: shearithisrael.org/purim-breakfast

SAVE THE DATE

Herringfest: The Purim Edition

Featuring herring from the world-famous Russ & Daughters
Wednesday, February 28 | Following *Megillah* Reading
It's our annual Purim Dinner—with a twist! This year, after the success of last year's Herringfest, we're holding the sequel—with even more herring!—on Purim night, after *megillah* reading. Other smoked fish with delicious bagels and spreads will round out this delectable dinner.

Registration and sponsorships coming soon.

Our next public tour is **Wednesday, February 14**

Parnas Office Hours
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

DEBAR TORAH: HARDENING PHARAOH'S HEART

— BY Z. EDINGER —

I shall harden Pharaoh's heart, that I may multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. - Exodus 7:3

One of the more puzzling aspects of the Exodus story is the repeated hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Several times Pharaoh appears to agree to release the Israelites, but God hardens his heart and additional plagues are unleashed against Egypt. Many commentators are troubled by theological issues of divine punishment and free will implicated by this.

To reach a more complete understanding of what is meant by the hardening of Pharaoh's heart we must examine the biblical narrative in an Egyptian context and see how Egyptians understood the role of the *heart* in the judgement of man.

Among the maxims in the *Instructions of Ptah-Hotep* (c. 2300 BCE) we find:

That which is desired by god is obedience; disobedience is abhorred by god. It is the heart that makes its master obey or disobey. The life, prosperity, and health of a man is his heart.

Here, the heart is described as that part of man which determines his moral quality. A person's heart therefore is the perfect vessel by which to judge a man's righteousness.

The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* describes what is known as the *Weighing of the Heart Ceremony*. After death, a person was led to judgment and their heart placed on one side of a scale and on the other side was placed a feather of *Maat* (truth).



"Ani's Judgment" from the Papyrus of Ani, British Museum, EA10470.3

The deceased then had to recite a list of 42 negative confessions ("I have not sinned by theft" etc.). If a person's heart was true it would balance with the feather of *Maat*. The deceased would be judged righteous and led by the god Osiris into eternal life. If, however, the heart was heavier than the feather—the person's confession would be deemed false and they would be judged sinful, their heart would be eaten by the *devourer*, and they would never achieve the afterlife.

Over time, Egyptians developed the use of a magical amulet to protect themselves from the threat posed by the testimony of the heart. A polished heart scarab was inscribed with a special incantation. The spell read (in part) "*Do not contradict me with the Judges, do not act against me with the gods...do not make my name stink to the gods who made mankind.*" The stone scarab was then wrapped together with physical heart and placed inside the mummy's chest. In this way the heart was bound (hardened) and unable to testify against its master. Thousands of these scarabs have been found.

This then is the Egyptian context of our biblical narrative. When God hardens Pharaoh's heart and makes Pharaoh's heart heavy (Ex. 9:34)—He is judging Pharaoh to be a sinner. Pharaoh was considered to be a deity—a manifestation of Egyptian gods Ra and Osiris, and consequently seen as righteous and perfect. But God hardens Pharaoh's heart, revealing Pharaoh to be human and imperfect.

This act, together with the ten plagues, can be seen as a polemic upending the Egyptian pantheon (with Pharaoh as the head of that pantheon) and demonstrating that the Israelite God is the true ruler of the universe:

"And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst." Ex 7:5

"Then I will stiffen Pharaoh's heart and he will pursue them, that I may gain glory through Pharaoh—ואכבדה בפרעה—and all his host; and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." Ex. 14:4



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Spanish & Portuguese Synagogue

Shabbat Vaera
January 12-13, 2018

Hertz Pentateuch: p. 232; Haftarah: p. 244
Kaplan Living Torah: p. 280; Haftarah: p. 1096

CANDLE LIGHTING | 4:32 pm

MINHAH & ARBIT | 4:30 pm | Main Sanctuary

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | "The Shabbat Snowman in Jerusalem" | 2017-2018 season sponsored by the Julis family.

ZEMIROT | 8:15 am | Main Sanctuary

SHAHARIT (NISHMAT) | 9:00 am | Main Sanctuary

TOT SHABBAT WITH LIZ AND SHANADE | Ages 0-4 | 10:00 am
| Fidanque Youth Room

YOUTH GROUPS WITH RACHEL | Ages 5-12 | 10:00 am
| Elias Room

JUNIOR CONGREGATION WITH A TORAH READING | Ages 5-12 | 10:30 | Little Synagogue

LECTURE | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | "Talk Like An Egyptian: Using Egyptology to Understand Exodus"

KIDDUSH | Levy Auditorium | Sponsored by Suzanne Stern & Sjimon den Hollander in honor of Orach Meisels becoming a Bat Mitzvah.

SHABBAT AFTERNOON SHIUR | Rabbi Meir Soloveichik | 3:30 pm | "Korban Pesah: A New Approach" | Levy Auditorium

MINHAH & ARBIT | 4:25 pm

HABDALAH | 5:18 pm

Weekday Service Times

Mornings:

Sunday & Monday: 8:00 am

Tuesday-Friday: 7:15 am

Evenings:

Sunday-Thursday (Arbit only): 6:30 pm

Rosh Hodesh Shebat will be this Tuesday evening, January 16.

Central Park West at 70th Street, New York City • www.shearithisrael.org

Schedule Alerts

- ◆ In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day this Monday, January 15, Morning Services will be held at 8:00 am, Toddler Program will **not** meet, and our office will be **closed**.
- ◆ PTTTS will **not** be in session over Yeshiva Week, from Sunday, January 14-Sunday, January 21. School resumes on Thursday, January 25.
- ◆ Rabbi Soloveichik's Women's Class resumes Tuesday, January 16.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR SHEARITH ISRAEL MEMBERS 50% Discount on Rabbi Soloveichik's New Online Course:

Jewish Ideas and the American Founders Provided by The Tikvah Fund

If you've ever wanted to learn from Rabbi Soloveichik in the comfort of your own home, this is the course for you.

In eight new lectures, Rabbi Soloveichik will take you through early American Jewish history and explain the connections between Jewish ideals and the founding of America. You can:

- watch or listen to these lectures at your own pace
- watch or listen as often as you like
- gift them to others

Normal cost for this online course is \$40, but using an exclusive 50% coupon code for Shearith Israel members brings the price down to **only \$20**.

Simply go to tikvahfund.org/course/jewish-ideas-american-founders, create an account, and enroll in the course with the coupon code

"ShearithIsrael"

to start learning today.



Young Couples and Families Pre-Tu B'Shebat Luncheon Shabbat, January 27 | Following Morning Services

Mark the new year for trees and celebrate the Jewish link to the fruits of the Holy Land with Rabbi and Layaliza Soloveichik & Co. Join us and invite your friends for a family luncheon of Torah and fruity goodness.

Members: \$35/adult, \$15/child under 12

Non-Members: \$40/adult, \$18/child under 12

Sponsorship Opportunities:

\$180 (includes 2 adults and their children)

\$250 (includes 2 adults and their children)

For registration and sponsorship details, visit shearithisrael.org/tu-bshebat-lunch.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mazal tob to **Juliette Katherine Berg** and her husband, Hunter Watts, on the birth of twin girls, Josephine Frances and Margaret Maude. Congratulations to the grandparents, **Esme & Roger Berg**.

Mazal tob to **Laura Daar** on her marriage to Eliezer Frye. Congratulations to Laura's parents, trustee **Karen & Jack Daar**.

Mazal tob to **Alexandra & Chalom Silber** on the birth of a baby boy.

Hazakot U'Barukhot to our teen leaders, **Elizabeth, Julia, Lia, and Olalla**, who led Junior Congregation in Mrs. Lisa Rohde's absence these past weeks.

We mourn the loss of our member, **Hetty Te Korte**. Condolences to her daughter, Odette Springer.

Condolences to **Dr. Joel Blass**, on the passing of his mother, Rita Blass.

Condolences to **Rabbi Albert Gabbai**, our former Hazzan, on the passing of his brother, Moni Gabbai.

Condolences to **Dr. Lu Steinberg (Schulder)** on the passing of her mother, Lillian Steinberg.

For funeral and *shiba* information, visit shearithisrael.org/announcements. To sponsor a *shiba* meal for these or other mourners, visit shearithisrael.org/support-caring-connection.



SAVE THE DATE "Pulpit Swap" Shabbat Shabbat, March 10, 2018



This year, both Shearith Israel and The Jewish Center, our peer synagogue on the Upper West Side, are looking forward to milestone anniversaries. The Jewish Center is about to celebrate its Centennial anniversary and Shearith Israel is preparing to celebrate our 365th, our "Year of Years."

In the spirit of friendship and mutual respect, we have decided to share our riches with each other. Rabbis Levine and Soloveichik will "swap" synagogues on this Shabbat, enjoying the warmth of their peer *kehillot* and each treating the other to a special lecture after morning services.

To join our list of sponsors for the *kiddush* following the lecture, visit shearithisrael.org/pulpit-swap.

Junior Congregation with a Torah Reading Shabbat, January 27 | 10:30 am

If you missed your opportunity to read the Torah in Junior Congregation this week, parts of Torah reading and services for January 27 are still available for participants (ages 5-12) to lead; many of them are quite brief and excellent for beginners. Please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde to arrange a part for your child (lirohde-csi@yahoo.com).

**Be Part of Our Women's *Megillat Esther*
Purim Morning, Thursday, March 1 | 8:00 am**
Celebrate 28 years of women reading the *Megillah* on Purim morning at Shearith Israel. For more information on how to get involved, please contact Mrs. Lisa Rohde at lirohde-csi@yahoo.com.

JNF's Tu B'Shebat Festival: *Shuk Shack* "Experience Israel in NYC"

Wednesday, January 31, 2018 | 7:00 pm
IAC HQ, 555 West 18 Street, New York, NY
Shearith Israel is proud to co-sponsor this enormous communal festival. To RSVP and learn more about the festival, including the VIP Cocktail Reception, and JNFuture afterparty, visit jnf.org/shukshack.