In this week’s parashah read of Joseph’s meteoric rise from incarcerated slave to vizier of Egypt. It is the story of a Hebrew slave’s successful entry into the upper echelons of Egyptian society. Joseph’s transformation is not only material (new clothing, jewelry, and power), but he is also transformed culturally. In chapter 41, verse 45, Pharaoh gives Joseph an Egyptian name and archaeological evidence suggests that it was common practice for the Pharaohs of the period to give Egyptian names to their relationship with royalty. Pharaoh called Joseph the name Zaphenath-paneh and gave him Aseath daughter of Petiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt.

Petiphera (and the related name Petiphit) is a well attested form of name in Egyptian—Pa-di-Peha—meaning ‘Gift of XX’ (where XX is the name of a deity). The name Pa-di-Peha has been found on an ancient Stela dating to the 21st Egyptian dynasty (Stela Cairo JE 65/44, c. 1000 B.C.E.). Therefore we can say with some confidence that Petiphera is the Egyptian name, Padi-Pit, meaning ‘gift of Re’ (the sun god).

The name Aseath is usually understood by most scholars as coming from the Egyptian Atenet-Net, meaning ‘She belongs to (the god) Net’ (Nehepmakh). This type of name is well known, there are 139 examples of the pattern ‘She (or He) belongs to XX’ i.e. (Nes-Amun; Nes-Horaa; Heru). This particular formula however, ‘She belongs to Netit’, has not been found. Why Petiphera, the High Priest of the sun god Ra, would name a daughter ‘she belongs to Netit’, a goddess unrelated to the religious cult of On, is questionable and other etymologies are possible.

Joseph’s name, Zaphenath-paneh, has been the subject of much speculation. The Targumim translate the name to mean ‘the revealer of hidden things,’ understanding Zaphenath as being related to the Hebrew ṭĕš̂ (hiddim). Most modern scholars, however, understand the name to be a kind of abbreviation or a well-known Egyptian form Dje-Xa-Xe-Aheten, meaning: ‘the god XX says, he will live.’ Many examples of this name exist but always including the name of a particular deity, i.e., ‘the god (Amun, Isis, Horus, etc) says he will live.’ Our form, Za phe nath-Pa nakh, would accordingly be, Dje-Pa-Nekh-Athen, meaning: ‘the god says he will live’ using the Egyptian generic word for god (Nefiti) but not specifying any particular deity.

Because this type of name has never been found without the inclusion of a particular deity (and other questions) some scholars have proposed alternative etymologies for Zaphenath-paneh. However, it is entirely fitting that Joseph, a Hebrew, would receive a name that specifically attributed his successes to God, given a name that specifically invoked a deity avoiding the invocation of an Egyptian pantheon.

Joseph tells Pharaoh in verse 14: “God has shown me all these things, not I, but God will answer to Pharaoh’s wellbeing.” Pharaoh, in kind, says in verse 38: “Joseph, as God has shown me all these things, and has made me a position to be powerful in Egypt.” Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that Joseph’s Egyptian name should be Za phe nath-Pa nakh—only the meaning should not be rendered: “the god says he will live” but rather God says he shall live. Here the Egyptian generic word for god (Neti) is used in place of the Hebrew Elahim.

Joseph, despite being completely acclimated to the Egyptian world, and surrounded everywhere by the Egyptian pantheon, kept faithful to the one God of Israel—because of this he is given a name free of any Egyptian pagan overtones. The Joseph story teaches us that it is possible to successfully assimilate to one’s surrounding culture without having to give up one’s religion—the key is to recognize that it is God who is responsible for our success. “Not by might, nor by power, but only by My spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

CARING CONNECTION & THE LEAGUE PRESENT: Upper West Side Blood Drive The Esther Goldfarb Memorial Blood Drive January 7, 2018 | 10:00 am-4:00 pm The Jewish Center, 131 W 86 St

Kick off the new year by giving the gift of life—a blood donor. To maximize our impact, this year we are partnering with numerous congregations on the Upper West Side, so far including:

Darkhei Noam, The Jewish Center, Lincoln Square Synagogue, Congregation Shaare Zedek, and Young Israel of the Upper West Side.

To register or volunteer at the drive, visit shearthisrael.org/uws-blood-drive.
Layaliza Soloveichik & the rabbi’s wives of the UWS cordially invite the women of the community to
“The Annual Westside Mikvah Fundraiser”
Wednesday, December 27 | 7:30 pm
535 West End Avenue, Apartment 14
Come celebrate and support the Upper West Side mikveh, with special guest speaker Rebbezin Peshi Neuberger. Because the West Side mikveh faithfully serves the community day in and day out, it is easy to forget about its financial needs. Even if you cannot attend, please consider donating to maintain this essential community institution.
To donate, sponsor, or register, visit westsidemikvahfundraiser.com.

HANUKKAH AT SHEARITH ISRAEL

The Final Installment
The Most Misunderstood Holiday: The True Meaning of Hanukkah
Rabbi Meir Soloveichik
Part 3 of 3: This Shabbat (Shabbat Hanukkah)
December 16 | 3:30 pm
In this concluding class of his three-part Hanukkah series, Rabbi Soloveichik will utilize both halakha and history to show how we have lost much of what this holiday is truly all about and why it is so important to rediscover it now.

Shabbat Hanukkah—Special Choral Performance
This Shabbat, December 16 | During Morning Services
Join us for services this Shabbat, when our choir, led by Leon Hyman, will perform Min HaMetsar during the Hallel (about 9:30 AM). This wonderful and elaborate piece was composed by the famous French composer, Jacques Fromenthal Halévy. This piece, along with the theme of Maoz Tzur and En Kelohenu set to Handel’s See, the Conquering Hero Comes, makes Shabbat Hanukkah at Shearith Israel a particularly special day in the musical calendar of our synagogue.

Hanukkah Fest!
For all Shearith Israel Youth and PTTS Families
This Sunday, December 17 | 10:00 am
Join PTTS and CSI youth for fun and informative Hanukkah festivities, including art projects, holiday songs and homemade waffles. No registration required!
Potato pancakes may be delicious, but here at Shearith Israel we honor the tradition of Amsterdam by eating vaflele (waffles) because God made a “miracle and wonder” (Hebrew: “nes va-fe’le”) during these days. And after all, everyone loves a good waffle!

Enjoying Our New Fidanque Youth Room
Thank you to all the Young Families and their supporters who have made this room happen. We’re immensely gratified by the positive response we received after unveiling the room last Shabbat. To ensure the room is used as intended and to preserve it for long term enjoyment, please take note of the following guidelines:
• This room was designed primarily with our youngest children in mind. Tot Shabbat will be held there each week;
• Our older children (5-12) will continue to enjoy the beautiful Elia Room most weeks;
• On the occasions when Elia is unavailable, Youth Groups will also be held in the Fidanque Youth Room, with a partition.
We will be evaluating these arrangements over time and making adjustments as needed.

A few general reminders:
Tot Shabbat is a combination of supervised play and structured Shabbat activities. The schedule is (approximately) as follows:
⇒ 10:00 am - 10:30 am: Free play and snacks
[No drop-off before 10:00, please—Liz needs to prepare the room.]
⇒ 10:30 am - 11:15 am: Older children may attend Junior Congregation; younger ones remain with Liz.
⇒ 11:15 am: Circle Time with Shabbat songs and stories with Shanade
⇒ 11:45 am: Cleanup and wrap-up
⇒ After services or speech: Pickup
⇒ Parents should pick up children before kiddush. Children may not play unsupervised in the new Fidanque Youth Room (or in the hallways). Liz will lock the Fidanque Youth Room when Tot Shabbat ends.

Special Dues Offer and End of Year Gifts
• Now is the time to support Shearith Israel and our special funds (e.g. rabbi’s discretionary fund, Sisterhood, Hebra, etc.) with an end of year gift. Visit shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/omnibus2017 to submit your gift.
• If you have any outstanding balances, now is also a good time to take care of those.
• Finally, don’t miss out on our special offer to pre-pay you 2017-2018 membership dues at current rates. Please refer to your inbox for emails from us with details. If you have questions about your account, you may also contact our bookkeeper, Ruth Yasky at 212-873-0300, x 228.
Visit shearithisrael.shulcloud.com/form/earlybird-membership_2018-2019 to pre-pay online.

Junior Congregation with a Torah Reading
Shabbat, January 13 | 10:30 am
Come lead Junior Congregation! Parts of Torah reading and services for January 13 are 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 (lrohde-csi@yahoo.com or 646-339-7845).