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 to reserve a convenient time slot, or to volunteer at the drive, visit shearithisrael.org/uws-blood-drive. Walk-ins are also welcome.

LAST CHANCE!
Shearith Israel & The Jewish Center
Ski & Snowboard Trip
THIS Monday, December 25
Join us on the slopes of Hunter Mountain! Shearith Israel and The Jewish Center are joining forces again this year for a fun day of skiing and snowboarding. This trip is all-inclusive (equipment, transportation, even lessons for beginners), though it is BYOL (Bring Your Own Lunch). There is preferred pricing for members of Shearith Israel and The Jewish Center, but non-members are welcome as well, so invite your friends!

For last-minute registration, contact Rabbi Zirkind at dzirkind@jewishcenter.org.

Our next public tour is Wednesday, January 10
Parnas Office Hours
Louis Solomon would be delighted to meet with you. Please schedule a visit at parnas@shearithisrael.org.

DEBAR TORAH: A DISAPPOINTING REUNION
BY ASHER FINKELSTEIN

The magical moment had finally arrived. After more than two unbearable decades of separation, Yaakov and Yosef were reunited. All this anticipation seems to be for naught, however, once one carefully examines the pasuk which describes this reunion. The pasuk says, “And he fell on his neck and he cried on his neck more.” Something is terribly amiss. Although one of the two is clearly having the expected reaction to this encounter, either Yaakov or Yosef (the pasuk is ambiguous) is not crying. What went wrong? Rashi cites a midrash which explains that Yaakov did not cry because he was busy reciting the Shema. This answer is only possible for more bafflement and confusion. Couldn’t Yaakov have found some other time to say Shema if now was the ideal moment for reciting Shema why was Yosef not doing so as well?

The Gemara in Avodah Zarah states that Yaakov and Yosef recited the Shema together. Rashi states that this must have been the moment. However, Rashi fails to mention that the Shema is only recited in order to channel his love for his father towards God. Since the Shema is recited in order to channel his love for his father towards God, then his father’s neck should be friendly to its act of channeling his love for his father towards God.

While this approach does not preclude the possibility that although only one of them was crying, it was still a loving and happy reunion, many commentators take a less pleasant approach. The Ha’amek Davar explains Rashi to mean that Yosef came towards his father wearing royal clothes, hoping Yaakov would mistake him for Pharaoh and bow down to him, thereby fulfilling his old dream. This indeed happened, and once Yaakov realized it was Yosef he had bowed down to, he was furious, since he thought Yosef shouldn’t be the one to ensure that his dream of his father bowing towards him was fulfilled. However, Yaakov did not want to ruin their reunion so he defused the situation by reciting the Shema until he cooled down.

The Ramban believes that actually it was only Yaakov crying and not Yosef, for, “Whose tear is more easily found, that of the old father who finds his son alive after giving up hope and grieving, or the son who is a young man and rules?”

Reuvin Shimon Rafael Hirsch offers a different explanation in the opposite direction. In his view, Yosef cried but Yaakov did not. After four so many years of incessant sorrow and grief, Yaakov could not cry anymore. He was hardened by endless grief, and had already had more than enough time to cry over Yosef. When it came to Yaakov, however, he had never really been afforded the chance to grieve over his misfortune and his separation from his family, since his life had moved so quickly down the road that he was ruling Egypt. Now that he was finally reunited with his beloved father, he suddenly felt the impact of all of those years of separation and what they meant, so he cried uncontrollably.

The imperfection of the reunion between Yaakov and Yosef is in many ways symbolic of Yaakov’s entire life and the history of the entire Jewish people throughout the years of exile. Although there have been many triumphs, redemption is never complete, and there is always another reason to be melancholy. The tragedy of this situation is manifested ever so clearly at the reunion between Yaakov and Yosef. Even a moment so perfect and so anticipated cannot go well as it should. Yosef can’t cry or Yaakov can’t cry. The long exile in Egypt has just begun, and perhaps both Yaakov and Yosef both know it. True happiness and joy will not be achieved until we finally find our way home in the final redemption.
Layaliza Soloveichik & the rabbis’ wives of the UWS cordially invite the women of the community to “The Annual Westside Mikvah Fundraiser” THIS 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 Rebbezsin 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, and register, visit westsidemikvahfundraiser.com.

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 your 2018-2019 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.

Schedule and Office Closure Alerts
- Due to the legal holiday, Morning Services on Monday, December 25 will be at 8 am.
- Our office is closed on Monday, December 25 for the legal holiday.
- Rabbi Soloveichik’s Tuesday Morning Women’s Class has ended its Fall semester, and will NOT meet next week.
- Rabbi Soloveichik’s Tuesday Evening Talmud Class will NOT meet next week.
- Due to the Fast of Tebeth, Evening Services (Minnah and Arvit) will be held at 4 pm on Thursday, December 28.
- Due to the fast, Hazan Rabbi Ira Rohde’s Hebrew Class will NOT take place on Thursday, December 28.

SAVE THE DATE
Young Couples and Families Pre-Tu B’Shevat Luncheon Shabbat, January 27 | Following Morning Services
Hug a tree and celebrate the new year with Rabbi and Layaliza Soloveichik & Co. Join us for a family luncheon of Torah and fruity goodness. Registration and sponsorship details coming soon.

SPRING SEMESTER BEGINS WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3
Shearith Israel Toddler Program “the best-kept secret on the Upper West Side”
Less than two weeks remain to enroll for the Spring! Provide your toddler with the opportunity to be part of our wonderfully fun and educational Toddler Program, held in the brand new Fidanque Youth Room, and led by the marvelous Liz Rios.
To learn more and apply, pick up a brochure in our lobby, and go to shearithisrael.org/toddlerprogram.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS
We mourn the passing of Levana Cohen, wife of Zvi Meir Cohen and mother of Claire Cohen.

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 grateful for the positive response we received. 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 Elias Room most weeks.
- On the occasions when Elias 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.

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 (lirohde-csi@yahoo.com).