

CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SYNAGOGUE



CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL
Year of Years Celebration

BAR and BAT MITZVAH
PLANNING GUIDE

A Letter from Our Executive Director

We are pleased that you are considering Shearith Israel- a uniquely beautiful and historic synagogue- for your child's upcoming bar or bat mitzvah. We created this event planning guide to introduce you to our event rooms, offerings, rate structure, and policies. We hope you will find it helpful.

Please take a moment to review this information, including our Room Rental Policies. Once you are ready to ask questions or schedule your event, please contact our Office Manager directly (contact information below) or use our [online room rental inquiry form](#).

We look forward to helping you make your event a success.

Best regards,



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Executive Director

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Planning Your Bar or Bat Mitzvah at Shearith Israel

The Ceremony

Our stunning, historic synagogue is a special place to celebrate your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Traditionally, a young man will read from the Torah on Shabbat morning, but can also read on Monday, Thursday, or Rosh Hodesh. Bat Mitzvah girls can mark this occasion in many ways, such as reading from the Torah in a special women's-only service or delivering a Debar Torah for the entire congregation following Shabbat morning services in the main sanctuary. Training in Torah chanting can be arranged with our *hazzan* (a flat fee of \$1,500 covers all lessons). As ample time for training and preparation is often necessary, and to fully familiarize yourself with our minimum training and Judaic education requirements, we recommend parents reach out to ritual director Zachary Edinger at least one year in advance. Please note that life cycle events are only offered for members of our congregation.

If your child's Bar or Bat Mitzvah is held during one of our services, we will waive the ceremony rates. For privately-scheduled celebrations, please note the following ceremony rates:

Bar or Bat Mitzvah Ceremony Rates

Ceremony Spaces	Full Member	Associate Member
Main Sanctuary	\$2,000	\$3,000
Little Synagogue	\$600	\$850

If your event falls in the summer months, our choir may be on break. You can arrange for them to perform during the service at a cost of \$3,500 for our standard choir, which consists of one choir leader and 7 choristers (and an organist, when applicable).

The Reception (Celebratory Meal)

Most families choose to hold their celebratory meal in the synagogue. Shearith Israel offers a variety of reception spaces perfect for celebrations large or small. Please see our Overview of Event Spaces on the next page. All room rental rates include the cost of a basic room set-up, a door attendant to greet and direct arriving guests, kosher oversight (which does not replace a caterer's *mashgiah*), use of our standard chairs and tables, and the use of your chosen event space for a four-hour event. If you will be holding a catered event with wait-staff (caterers' or CSI's), there is an additional charge for kitchen use (often used for storing catering supplies, food prep [not cooking], and staging). Additional hours are billed at 15% of the room rental rate/hour. Furthermore, a security fee will be charged for events with 100 or more guests (details to follow). See below for rental rates and space descriptions.

If you choose to celebrate at an outside venue, we still require that you adhere to our kashrut standards. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to discuss with our Ritual Director, Zachary Edinger or Rabbi Meir Soloveichik.

Reception Rental Rates

Event Space	Full Member	Associate Member	Private Citizen or Organization	Non Profit
Levy Auditorium*	\$1,250	\$1,850	\$1,850	\$1,250
Elias Room	\$875	\$1,250	\$1,250	\$875
Portico	\$875	\$1,250	\$1,250	\$875
Portico Add-On**	\$350	\$375	\$375	\$350
Kitchen use	\$200	\$250	\$250	\$200

* A \$1,000 surcharge applies to rentals of the Levy Auditorium following morning services on shabbat or holidays in order for us to provide a congregational kiddush in an alternate space. Alternatively, you may sponsor the congregational kiddush luncheon as a tax deductible gift.

Sponsored Kiddush Option

If your celebration falls on Shabbat or a holiday, you may wish to sponsor a kiddush luncheon for our congregation, either in lieu of or in addition to a private reception. To enjoy the tax benefits associated with a sponsored kiddush, you must provide the same menu to both our congregants and your private guests. If you meet these requirements, **we will waive the room rental fee and all charges from your caterer and additional vendors (florist, event rental) will be tax-exempt.** In that case, your vendors will invoice our office, and once we have received your contribution to CSI in the same amount, we will pay them in full. It is important that you discuss these arrangements with our Office Manager before proceeding.

Our Event Spaces

Levy Auditorium

Our largest and most popular function room, Levy Auditorium is a carpeted, comfortable room that lends itself well to most types of events. An adjacent kitchen provides the perfect catering staging area, and a bar or buffet can be set up in the adjoining foyer to accommodate larger parties. **Given its location beneath the sanctuary, dancing is not permitted in this room.**

Elias Room

Our elegant wood-paneled library, distinguished by its portraits, antique wall sconces, chandeliers, and cozy fireplace, is a great space for more intimate gatherings. Located next to our Little Synagogue, the Elias Room is a natural reception area for smaller ritual events. It can also be used in combination with Levy when more space is needed.

Portico

Our lovely outdoor portico runs along the magnificent front of our historic synagogue and is distinguished by its Greek-Revival architectural style. Offering broad views of Central Park from between its soaring Corinthian columns and arched doorways, this is the perfect spot for cocktail parties or events in the warmer months. ****You may add the Portico to any other room rental for the add-on rate.**

Main Sanctuary

Our stunning 120+year-old sanctuary, which features soaring stained-glass windows designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, provides a grand setting for important life cycle events and dignified, large-scale public gatherings.

Little Synagogue

Our serene colonial chapel is a replica of the congregation's original Mill Street synagogue, which was erected in 1730. Ritual objects used by our forebears over the past three centuries are on display and in use. The Little Synagogue is the perfect space for weddings, baby-namings, or other ritual celebrations with a smaller, more intimate crowd. The space can be reconfigured to accommodate more women (see seating capacity chart below).

Kitchen Use

Our kitchen is not a "cooking kitchen", ie, no actual oven or stovetop cooking is available or permitted. We do allow caterers to bring in hot-boxes/warmers to keep pre-cooked food warm over Shabbat or for a non-Shabbat event. Your caterer must have their equipment approved by us for electric load and other potential constraints. They should not assume that CSI's warming ovens will be available or sufficient for your needs.

Seating Capacity at a Glance

Event Space	Lecture or Cocktail Party	Seated with Tables	Seated with Tables and Buffet Stations
Levy Auditorium	240	210-230	160-180
Elias Room	60	50-60	40-50
Portico	60	40	30
Main Sanctuary	380 men; 320 women	N/A	N/A
Little Synagogue	78 men; 12 women	N/A	N/A

Options and Extras

We can provide the following extras and options, subject to availability, color choices, and quantity limits. All selections must be discussed with our staff before your event:

- Standard tables and chairs—available at no additional charge. Chair covers available at \$1.50 each. As is; subject to availability.
- Washing station—available at no additional charge (subject to linen charge, when applicable).
- Audio/visual equipment—available at no additional charge.
- Place Settings (meat only)—dishes, flatware and glasses may be rented at \$2 per place setting.
- Linens—tablecloths may be rented at \$10 each and napkins at .50¢ each. Several colors available, please inquire. As is; subject to availability.
- Choir (in Main Sanctuary)—choirmaster and 7 singers (and organist, when applicable), \$3,500.
- Waitstaff—provided at \$175 per person for up to 4 hours; additional hours at \$45 per hour per person.
- Attended Coat Check—provided at \$35/hour per attendant (4 hour minimum).
- Bathroom Attendant—provided at \$35/hour per attendant (4 hour minimum).
- Additional Security Personnel—provided at \$65/hour per professional security guard (4 hour minimum). Events with 100 or more guests will be required to cover the cost of security for the duration of the event, with a 4-hour minimum. The minimum charge of \$260 will be added to your invoice in advance of the event.

Our Room Rental Policies

Congregation Shearith Israel offers room rentals for everything from ritual and life cycle events to private meetings and parties. We look forward to helping you make your event a success, and ask that you take a moment to read and understand our room rental policies:

- To schedule your event, you must discuss your plans with our Office Manager, submit our Room Rental Reservation Form, and pay a deposit of 25% of your room rental rate. The remaining balance will be due 30 days prior to your event.
- We are a traditional Jewish institution and expect that all events held here will be conducted in a dignified manner and in accordance with our traditions and customs. While we invite organizations, non-profits, and individuals to rent our event spaces, only members of our congregation are permitted to host life cycle events such as weddings, *beritot*, and Bar and Bat Mitzvahs at Shearith Israel. (If you are not already a member but would like to be, we welcome you to apply for membership.)
- Our room rental rates include the cost of set up, a door attendant, catering supervision by our Mashgiah, use of our standard chairs and tables, and use of your chosen room(s) for a 4-hour event (setup and teardown can occur outside of the 4-hour window). Additional event hours are billed at 15% of the room rental rate/hour.
- Catered events (i.e., events that involve onsite food prep and/or waiststaff) will incur a kitchen use fee as stated above. This fee does not apply for basic event involving food platters which are dropped off.
- We do not rent our sanctuary spaces for private events on Shabbat or holidays.
- Members who wish to schedule an event must ensure that their accounts are in good standing. All arrears, such as membership dues, offerings, sponsorships, or other past due items, must be settled before event requests can be confirmed.
- Your caterer must be pre-approved by our Mashgiah in advance of your event and wine must be kosher AND *mevushal*.
- You are responsible to ensure that we receive a certificate of insurance (COI) from each caterer and vendor you use (florist, musicians, etc.) at least 7 days prior to your event.
- **Open flames, such as candles, are not permitted, and we cannot accommodate ritual Sabbath or holiday candle lighting at this time. Use of sternos for catering must be discussed and approved in advance.**
- You must discuss your floor plan and room set-up plan with our Office Manager.
- If you need to cancel your event, please note our cancellation policies within the following time frames:
 - More than 30 days ahead: Your deposit will be returned in full.
 - Between 30-7 days ahead: Your payments will be returned less \$100.
 - Less than 7 days ahead: Your payments will be returned less your deposit.

To discuss your plans and schedule your event, contact our Office Manager at 212-873-0300 x230. You can also inquire immediately about available dates using our [online room rental inquiry form](#). Alternatively, you can visit shearithisrael.org/eventplanning to download all our event planning guides or inquire directly about room rentals.

Etiquette for Services at Congregation Shearith Israel

Dear Friend,

We hope you find these guidelines to etiquette at Shearith Israel helpful, especially on those occasions when you invite guests, including, and perhaps especially, youngsters to join our distinctive services. Some of these guidelines are typical at most synagogues while others are standard at orthodox synagogues. Shearith Israel is a particularly traditional congregation, which takes pride in its dignified service.

If you are inviting guests to our services – and we very much encourage you to do so – especially when inviting groups of youngsters to a Bar or Bat Mitzvah, we suggest you share these guidelines with them or their parents in advance. Some people send a personalized version by email shortly before their event.

Dos:

- Head covering: Kippah for men and boys (some of our men enjoy wearing a dapper hat), a head covering for married women (kippot and doilies are available at our front door);
- Modest attire: Suits/business attire for men (hats optional), appropriate length dresses or skirts with sleeved tops for women;
- Tallitot are available for men at the entrance to the sanctuary. Feel free to quietly ask our helpful shamash for assistance;
- Take notice when the congregation stands or sits during service.

Don'ts:

- Large bags: Avoid bringing large bags or backpacks with you. Our security personnel will inspect them and as they may not be brought into the sanctuary, you will need to leave them in our unattended coatroom;
- Men's section: Do not walk in the open center area of the sanctuary. If you need to step out during services, please walk around the back of the pews and not in front of them;
- Cell phones: We ask that you leave cell phones and all electronic devices at home. But if you do have one with you, please be discreet. Make sure to have it turned off (or at least on silent) and leave it in your purse or pocket for the duration of services;
- Absolutely no checking of emails or any other smartphone programs in the sanctuary or elsewhere in the building on Sabbath or holidays;
- Absolutely no photographs/selfies may be taken any time in any location in the sanctuary or elsewhere in the building on Sabbath or holidays;
- Talking: Please keep any talking to a minimum or step outside the sanctuary;
- No chewing gum, smoking, eating, or drinking during services.

We look forward to welcoming you to Shearith Israel and hope you enjoy the experience and come often.