

# CONGREGATION SHEARITH ISRAEL THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE SYNAGOGUE



## BERIT MILAH PLANNING GUIDE

Effective October 2023

## A Letter from Our Executive Team

We are pleased that you are considering Shearith Israel - a uniquely beautiful and historic synagogue - for your upcoming event. 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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## Planning a Berit Milah at Shearith Israel

Our stunning, historic synagogue is a memorable place in which to hold your son's *berit*. Should you know that you are having a boy, we encourage you to contact us ahead of the birth to discuss your plans. We understand, of course, that you may not be able to finalize the date and time of your event until the baby is born. Once you are ready to schedule the *berit*, we ask that you submit a signed Room Rental Reservation Form along with your full room rental rate. Please note that your account must be in good standing before we can confirm your space reservation.

### The Ritual Ceremony

*Berit Milah* ceremonies are exclusively for members of Shearith Israel. Our clergy or ritual staff will conduct the ceremony in accordance with our beautiful Spanish and Portuguese ritual tradition. Ceremonies that begin more than 20 minutes after the conclusion of services will be charged the usual ceremony space rental rates (below). If your *berit* is scheduled to coincide with our regular morning services, though, we will waive the Sanctuary rental rate.

### Ceremony Space Rental Rates

Ceremony Spaces	Full Member	Associate Member
Main Sanctuary	\$2,000	\$3,000
Little Synagogue	\$600	\$850
Outdoor Pavilion	\$1,400	\$1,600

Please discuss all details of the *berit*, including your choice of *mohel*, with our Ritual Director before finalizing your arrangements. Only approved Orthodox *mohalim* may perform the *Berit Milah* ceremony at Shearith Israel and we do not, under any circumstances, permit *Metzitzah B'Peh* with direct oral contact.

Your *mohel* or your family should provide all of the necessary accoutrements for the ceremony including diapers, pillows, ointments, gauze pads, etc. The synagogue will provide the wine and cup for the ceremony unless the family wishes to bring their own.

### The Reception (Celebratory Meal)

Shearith Israel offers a variety of reception spaces well-suited for *berit* celebrations large and small. Please see our Overview of Event Spaces on the next page for descriptions and seating capacity. All room rental rates include the cost of a **basic** room setup, a door attendant to greet and direct arriving guests, kashrut 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 4-hour event. If you will be holding a catered event with waitstaff (caterers' or CSI's), there is an additional charge for kitchen use (often used for storing catering supplies, food prep, heating [but NOT cooking], and staging). Furthermore, if your caterer/planner requires more than 2 hours in advance of the event for setup, additional fees may apply, subject to availability. Please note: if you or your caterer's waitstaff need substantial support from CSI staff before, during, or after your event due to your caterer's waitstaff arriving late or being understaffed, or if they do not adequately handle cleanup, additional fees will be charged. Additional hours beyond the 4 included 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 hold your *berit* ceremony in conjunction with our regular services, and host a reception immediately afterwards and invite all the attendees, the room rental charge will be treated as a donation.

If you choose to hold your reception 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, Rev. Zachary Edinger or Rabbi Meir Soloveichik.

### Reception Room Rental Rates

Reception Spaces	Full Member	Associate Member
Levy Auditorium*	\$1400	\$1,600
Outdoor Pavilion	\$1400	\$1,600
Elias Room	\$875	\$1,000
Portico	\$875	\$1,000
Portico Add-On**	\$350	\$375
Kitchen use	\$200	\$250

\* 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.

## 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 of any kind is not permitted in this room.**

### Outdoor Pavilion

Created in late 2020 in response to the need for outdoor gathering space, this beautiful spacious lawn includes a large and attractive tent top (excluding the Winter months), lighting, an open stage (can be used for a bar, dessert buffet, presentations, etc.), and access to electrical outlets. This space, best suited for the milder times of year, is conducive to either an elegant affair or a more relaxed vibe.

The availability of an outdoor space in the heart of the city and next door—but not inside—our Synagogue building presents unique opportunities and responsibilities. We are committed to being respectful neighbors and, as such, we need to be mindful of noise. **Please note that when amplification is permitted (not on Shabbat or Jewish holidays), amplification must cease by 10 PM and should never approach or exceed permitted decibel levels.** Please advise your event/party planner, musicians, DJs, etc. to maintain moderate sound levels, and that if you exceed the acceptable levels, you will be asked to turn it down. **Non-compliance may result in fines.**

### 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 the Portico and/or Levy Auditorium 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 125+ year-old sanctuary, which features soaring stained-glass windows designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, provides a grand setting for important lifecycle 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", i.e., 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	250	190-210	160-180
Outdoor Pavilion	250	190-210	180-200
Elias Room	60	60-70	50-60
Portico	60	40	30
Main Sanctuary	380 men; 320 women	N/A	N/A
Little Synagogue	60 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 (basic)—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), \$4,000.
- Waitstaff (subject to availability)\*— provided at \$185 per person for up to 4 hours; additional hours at \$50 per hour per person.
- Attended Coat Check (subject to availability)\*— provided at \$40/hour per attendant (4-hour minimum).
- Bathroom Attendant (subject to availability)\*— provided at \$40/hour per attendant (4-hour minimum).
- Additional Security Personnel—provided at \$70/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 \$280 will be added to your invoice in advance of the event.

\* We cannot guarantee the availability of our waitstaff or attendants. If we are unable to accommodate your staffing requests you will need to procure staffing from your caterer or a staffing company. Staffing is subject to insurance requirements (e.g., workers' compensation, liability, liquor liability, etc.).

## Our Room Rental Policies

Congregation Shearith Israel offers room rentals for everything from ritual and lifecycle 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 down payment of 25% of your room rental rate. A security deposit of 10% will also be collected at that time, refundable after the event, provided no damage or loss and all charges for incidentals (if applicable) have been deducted.
- 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 lifecycle events such as weddings, *beritot*, and Bnei Mitzvah 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 setup, 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 waitstaff) will incur a kitchen use fee as stated above. This fee does not apply to basic events involving food platters which are dropped off and do not have catering staff.
- If your caterer's waitstaff isn't sufficient, you are responsible for any additional staffing costs if CSI's staff provide substantial support.
- 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 setup 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](#).

## Berit Etiquette at Congregation Shearith Israel

Dear Friend,

We hope you find these Shearith Israel *berit* do's and don'ts helpful, and encourage you to share them with your prospective guests, as you see fit.

### Some Do's & Don'ts at a Shearith Israel *Berit*

- Please leave wet coats, umbrellas, bags or boots in the Coat Room downstairs.
- Please do not take photographs during *Shabrit*.
- Please silence your cell phones.
- During *Shabrit*, all men and boys (regardless of age) are kindly requested to wear a *Tallit*.
- In addition to *tallitot* and *tefillin* are available for those who need. Please speak to the *shamash* if you would like to borrow *tefillin* from the synagogue.
- 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.
- Please do join in the singing and chanting during the service. The more voices that join in, the greater our joy!