

## Frequently Asked Questions About Hosting a Party at Congregation Beth Hatikvah

### **Q. What sort of parties work best at CBH?**

**A.** The CBH building is not just our spiritual home; it's a great place to party! Since moving to our building several years ago, *simchas* of all sizes and styles have been celebrated here. We have hosted everything from simple bagel brunches to weddings for 200+ guests. Whether you are planning an intimate Shabbat family dinner, a bar mitzvah luncheon, or a nighttime dance party, we invite you to "stay home" and celebrate at CBH.

### **Q. What spaces are available for parties at CBH?**

**A.** The main Sanctuary/Social Hall, Teen Lounge and Front Lobby have been successfully used for parties. By advance request, an unoccupied Religious School Classroom can also be made available for your storage/catering needs. Our commercial kitchen is an efficient and caterer-friendly space.

### **Q. What sorts of party "formats" have been successful for Bar/Bat Mitzvah and wedding celebrations?**

**A.** There are several formulas we know work well. In the Sanctuary/Social Hall, there are two moveable walls that allow you to configure the space differently, depending on your number of guests.

The configurations are:

**1. Use of Sanctuary alone for service** (front wall, nearest to Sanctuary, closed; accommodates up to 120 worshippers.)

- 1/3 of space used for worship; 2/3 for catering set-up
- Allows your caterer to set up dining tables, buffets or serving stations in the Large Social Hall without disturbing service
- When the service concludes, you and your guests can progress immediately into the ready-for-action Social Hall.

**2. Use of Sanctuary/Small Social Hall for service** (front wall open; back wall, nearest to Kitchen, closed; accommodates up to 220 worshippers.)

- 2/3 of space used for worship; 1/3 for catering set-up.
- Small Social Hall is available for catering staging area.
- Guests move into the Front Lobby or the Teen Lounge, depending on your needs, as soon as the service ends for an *oneg* or cocktail hour.
- The caterer now has the optimal time needed to smoothly transform the entire Sanctuary/Social Hall into the biggest possible party space.

This turnover typically takes about 20 to 30 minutes – the perfect amount of time to snap some family pictures or get guests mingling over refreshments.

**3. Use of the entire Sanctuary/Social Hall for service** (all walls open; accommodates 320 worshippers.)

- Space will hold maximum number of guests for the service
- Larger parties have been accommodated through some creative use of space, including outdoor space.

**Q. Can I host a party at CBH on a day when Religious School is in session?**

**A.** Absolutely! With sufficient advance communication, the Religious School's needs will be met, *and* you will have a beautiful celebration.

Whenever there is a Bar/Bat Mitzvah service, the Religious School staff efficiently and quietly dismisses students from the rear entrance.

For smaller parties taking place only in the front half of the building (Front Lobby/Sanctuary/Social Hall), you will not overlap with Religious School activities.

If your group needs more space, the Teen Lounge is an especially good option. During Bar/Bat Mitzvah services, the Religious School uses this area for its own religious service that usually runs until dismissal at 11:30 am. However, some b'nai mitzvah families have found it helpful if the Religious School's service can be moved to earlier in the morning. In this way, the students finish using the room earlier in the morning and your caterer can get started prepping the space for you (removing chairs from the Religious School service, setting up a bar or food tables, etc.) This arrangement has worked wonderfully many times. **Remember, this requires advance permission from the Religious School Director.**

**Q. I'm having an invitation-only celebration at CBH immediately following a Bar/Bat Mitzvah. However, I know the service is a community event and there will be congregants, who aren't invited to the party but I would like to include in some way. How can I handle this?**

**A.** CBH singers, ushers, and others who attend the service do not expect to be invited to your private party – regardless of where it is being held. However, every b'nai mitzvah family is expected to have at least a small *oneg* that is open to all members of our community. This may be as simple as challah/cheese/fruit and juice in the Front Lobby.

You can offer such an *oneg* for all who are present, and then follow it with an invitation-only meal. Similarly, if you are having a lengthier cocktail hour instead of an *oneg*, you can include everyone in the cocktail hour, and have invited guests only stay for the luncheon that follows. These arrangements allow community members who aren't specifically invited to your party to enjoy brief refreshments, wish you well, and be on their way.

Other families have opted to have guests move straight from the service to a full meal. In that case, you may consider whether you want to open the event to everyone who attends the service. This works well if your menu and layout are flexible enough to accommodate few extra guests. Bagel buffets and light Kiddush lunches with casual seating lend themselves to this sort of open invitation.

All of these plans can be handled simply and tastefully on the day of your event. Many families find the easiest way to do this is by having the Rabbi make a brief announcement at the close of the service outlining what will happen next: i.e. everyone is invited to join in the Kiddush lunch in the next room; or that the *oneg*/cocktail hour is open to all, and invited guests are asked to remain after that for the main meal.

### **Q. What is the policy for serving food?**

**A.** You and your caterer must consult the Kashrut policy on the CBH website for details on the synagogue's food policy. As a general guideline, dairy meals do not have to be certified kosher; meat meals may not be prepared in the CBH kitchen but can be served if they are prepared off-site by, and brought in by, a kosher caterer.

### **Q. Can you recommend a good caterer? Can I use any caterer I want?**

**A.** Meat meals need to be prepared by a kosher caterer. For dairy meals, as long as the caterer adheres to the congregation's Kashrut policy (see above), you may use anyone you like. Some who have already executed beautiful events at CBH, and are therefore familiar with our building and policies, include: Signature Creations, OME, Bubbe's Kosher Catering, David Z./Livingston Bagel, David Allen, and Deli King of Linden. More recommendations from your fellow CBH members can be found in the Party Resources list maintained by the B'nai Mitzvah Committee.

### **Q. Where can I find room dimensions and layouts?**

**A.** Please see the "Facilities Usage" section of the CBH website. CBH member, Marc Kaufman has a computer program that will help you try several arrangements. Contact him at [marc.kaufman@servo-lift.com](mailto:marc.kaufman@servo-lift.com). Several members of the congregation have worked with Marc and found him extremely helpful.

**Q. What furniture does CBH own? Who handles any set-up and moving if I am having a party there?**

**A.** Available free of charge are rectangular tables, a few round tables, grey arm chairs (8 can fit at each rectangular table, 10 can fit at a classic 72” round); white plastic armless chairs (10 can fit at each rectangular table, or 12 at a 72” round.)

Chairs for a religious service will be set up according to the facilities forms you submit when you are planning an event. At the conclusion of the service, you or your caterer can move chairs, if necessary for your party. You may also like to rent additional tables and chairs from outside vendors. (Please consult the Facilities section of the CBH website for items that CBH owns and details on when and how rentals can be delivered.)

**Q. Can I host a nighttime event at CBH?**

**A.** Yes! Plug in your iPod, bring your deejay, and let a Klezmer band lead a rousing *Hora!* The Teen Lounge and Sanctuary/Social Hall are great spots for dancing... day or night.

**Q. Does CBH have a real dance floor?**

**A.** Yes. Our brand-new, parquet dance floor is available for rental (see the “Facilities” section of the website for pricing and sizing.)

**Q. Does CBH have linens or paper goods I can use?**

**A.** Our paper goods may be used for small *onegs* only (e.g. short, modest refreshments in the Front Lobby.) There are some cloth tablecloths – mostly rectangular—available for your use at no charge. **They must be taken home and washed immediately following your event.**

**Q. How much will it cost to host my party at CBH?**

**A.** We have a variety of packages for your convenience; details can be found on the Facilities section of the CBH website. When planning your event, keep in mind that by “staying home” at CBH, you will save the aggravation and expenses sometimes associated with having to move your guests off-site (organizing carpools; requiring out-of-town guests to follow directions elsewhere; hiring transportation for unaccompanied teens, etc.)

**Q. I'd like to host a party at CBH but I need help figuring it all out. Who is there to help?**

**A.** The B'nai Mitzvah Committee is here for you! Our Party Resources list is chock-full of caterers, florists, deejays, Judaica sources and other vendors recommended by congregants. We can also put you in touch directly with CBH families who have *already* done what you are planning and can share their experiences. We know parties at CBH are fantastic, and we want to help you create a lovely event of your own!

For party resources or to be connected to other people who have hosted events at CBH, contact B'nai Mitzvah Committee Chair Debbie Kaflowitz at: [kaflowitz@aol.com](mailto:kaflowitz@aol.com).

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