



# mt. sinai jewish center

OF CONGREGATION MT. SINAI ANSHE EMETH & EMES WOZEDEK OF  
WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, INC. and CONGREGATION BETH HILLEL & BETH ISRAEL

## MSJC Event and Education Guidelines

*Created May 2014, Updated Sept. 2015*

### Introduction:

The following guidelines are meant to help those organizing events and talks at Mt Sinai Jewish Center plan appropriate Shul based events. It goes without saying, that like all guidelines, these are not comprehensive, and cannot take into account every eventuality that may arise or replace actual conversation with the rabbi. Rather these guidelines are intended to offer a sense of the type of programming that is appropriate in our Shul.

The primary role of the Shul is to teach Torah and to bring people closer to *mitzvah* observance and Hashem. Events play an important role in this endeavor and perform a vital service in the life of any Shul. However for our Shul, with its large concentration of recent college graduates and young professionals, events are even more essential to help forge a strong sense of community. As such, it is of tremendous importance that all events be in line with Shul standards in terms of halachic acceptability, tone, content and *tzniut* standards. This document clarifies some of these standards. Of course, these guidelines are intended to be a collaborative effort. One of the goals of these guidelines is to generate conversation between event planners and the rabbi to ensure the best possible events. The hope is to organize events where both the Shul's social needs and k'vod Shamayim are maximized.

### General Guidelines:

Shul events must not disparage any particular group of people, or individual, must not offend the sensibilities of large segments of the Shul population or run counter to the letter of the law as laid out in *Shulchan Aruch* and the spirit of *kedusha* that a Shul community must adhere to. Announcements and sponsorships must also conform to these sacred ideals.

### Events:

All events that serve food in the Shul must adhere to our Kashrut standards which are posted prominently in the Shul kitchens. These standards delineate our position of acceptable *hashgachot*, checking food for insects, Shabbat standards and other matters.

Shul standards do not allow for events whose focus is the consumption of alcohol. Alcoholic beverages may be offered at Shul events, providing they are offered in moderation and the beverage has acceptable *kashrut* certification. The CRC guide to alcoholic beverages can be referenced to determine

which drinks are permitted. The bartending system that has been in place at Shul Kiddush is a fine way of maintaining appropriate moderation.

Gambling presents a whole host of halachic and moral problems. Gambling should therefore not be a part of Shul events.

Special care needs to be taken with comedy events and movies, to ensure that nothing crude, racist, demeaning to any particular group of people or individual, or with sexual overtones is presented in Shul. These same guidelines apply to the Purim Spiel and Digital Shorts that are shown in Shul.

Events with music should not take place during the Three Weeks or the *Sefira* period until *Lag B'Omer*. During the *Sefira* period, *Yom Haatzmaut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* are exceptions when live music that will enhance the celebration of *Medinat Yisrael* is encouraged.

#### *Tzniut:*

All dancing at Shul events must be separated by gender with a *mechitza* in place. Athletic events must also be separated by gender. Events that cater only to women must also adhere to standards of *tzniut*. Event organizers should meet with the rabbi each year while planning the event to review these details.

As part of our commitment to *halacha* we abide by the traditional understanding of *Kol Isha*, that allows for group singing of men and women together but not for groups of women and individual women to sing on their own in mixed company. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that events which contain women singing are not held in close proximity to *tefilla* and events where men are present.

Posters and other publicity material that invoke popular culture must be carefully chosen to make sure that the people represented on said posters do not offend the sensibilities of large groups of Shul members, nor run counter to our standards of *tzniut*. The rabbi will review such content to ensure that sensitivities in this area are properly accounted for.

#### Religious Services:

Mt. Sinai Jewish Center is an Orthodox Shul that abides by the traditional understanding of the *Ikarei haEmuna* and comports fully with *Shmirat haMitzvot*. All services that are conducted in our building must adhere to Orthodox *halacha*, and liturgy. A proper *mechitza* separating men and women, must be in place during *tefilla*. Special care need to be taken with rentals (*beritot* and weddings etc.) in this regard. Women may deliver a speech and make announcements only after the conclusion of *tefilla*. Location of services should only be changed in consultation with the rabbi and *Gabbaut* committee.

#### Education:

As an Orthodox Shul, only speakers whose personal views are in line with traditional Orthodox understandings of doctrines of faith should be invited to address the Shul on topics such as *halacha*, Jewish thought and religious texts. Special care must be taken with any subject matter that is hotly

debated such as authorship of *Tanach*. Teachers of *halacha* must abide by traditional halachic methodology and accept as binding the consensus views of *gedolei HaPoskim*.

Additionally all teachers of Torah must be willing to self-identify as Orthodox Jews. Those who comport with halachic observance and self-identify as Orthodox Jews are welcome to be invited to teach Torah, matters of *hashkafa* and religious significance in the Shul, providing their expertise in a given field is recognized as sufficient by the rabbi and the education committee. The rabbi alone, may use his judgment to relax these requirements in cases where the talks do not impact on *halacha*, Torah or Orthodox belief.