

Key Facts: Synagogue and Worship

- ✧ Jews worship in a synagogue. The building is used a place of worship, for study and for the community to gather.
- ✧ Jews can meet and pray anywhere, but there are certain prayers which can only be said in the presence of a **minyan** (10 adults). In orthodox Judaism this is 10 men over the age of 13 (after Bar mitzvah) in reform synagogues women can be part of the minyan as well (after Bat Mitzvah).
- ✧ The synagogue is important because it is the centre of the Jewish Community.
- ✧ There are differences between Orthodox and Reform Jewish synagogues – for example, in reform synagogues men and women sit together whereas in Orthodox synagogues men and women sit separately.
- ✧ Worship can take place in the synagogue or the home. Worship in the synagogue is **public worship**. Worship in the home is generally considered **private worship**.
- ✧ There are differences in emphasis between Orthodox and Reform Jews. Orthodox Jews emphasize the importance of following God’s instructions. Reform Jews emphasize the importance of individual choice in deciding how to worship and practice the faith.
- ✧ During morning prayer, Jewish men wear the tallit (prayer shawl) and tefillin (small leather boxes containing extracts of the Torah).
- ✧ During weekday services the Amidah (the standing prayer) made up of eighteen blessings.
- ✧ Jews believe that prayer is vital for communicating with God.
- ✧ Shabbat (the Sabbath day) is of great importance to Jews. It is celebrated both in the synagogue and in the home. Shabbat runs from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. In the synagogue, there will be a brief service on Friday evening and a longer service on Saturday morning including reading of the Torah. In the home, all work is done and everything prepared before Shabbat begins. The celebrations focus around lighting candles to welcome in Shabbat and a Friday meal including the kidush (blessings).
- ✧ Prayers are said three times a day either in the synagogue or in the home. Each home has reminders to keep God’s commandments e.g. a mezuzah on a door post or frame.
- ✧ Study of sacred writings is also important. This would focus on the Tenak (written law) and Talmud (oral law). Together these are regarded as the source for all Jewish laws, legal teachings and decisions that affect daily life.

KEY RELIGIOUS TEXTS

PRAYER (Tefillin)

“And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead – **in order that the teaching of the Lord may be in your mouth** – that with mighty hand the Lord freed you from Egypt.”

Exodus 13:9

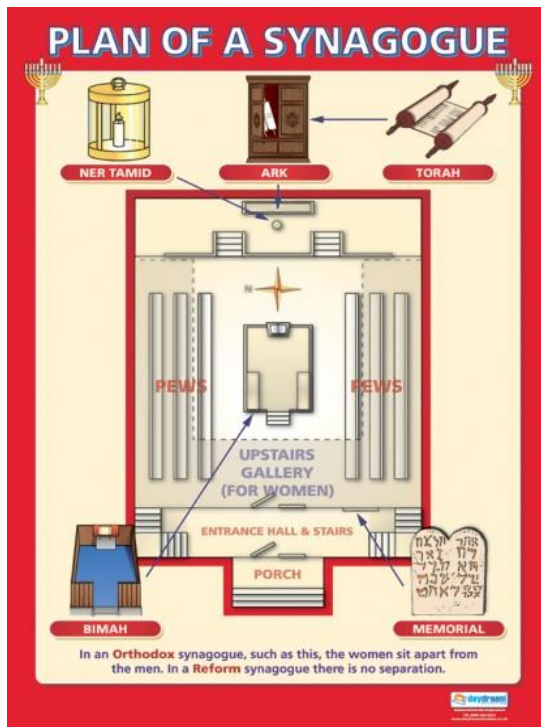
SHABBAT

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God: you shall not do any work.”

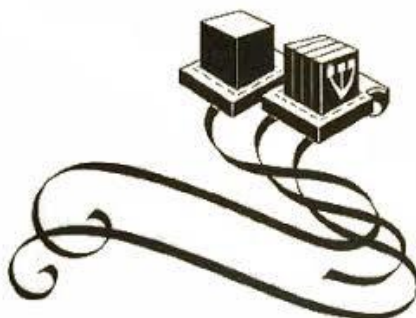
Exodus 20:8-10

KEY FEATURES OF THE SYNAGOGUE

Bimah	Platform from which the Torah is read.
Arom Hakadesh	The Ark – the holiest part of the synagogue which contains the Torah scrolls.
Rabbi	Jewish religious leader.
Ner Tamid	Eternal light; a light that is kept burning in the synagogue above the Ark.
Menorah	A seven branched candle stick.
Yad	A pointer to read the Torah scrolls.



Tallit



Tefillin



WORSHIP – KEY WORDS

Tallit	Prayer shawl; has 613 tassels to represent the 613 mitzvoh.
Tefillin	Small leather boxes containing extracts from the Torah, strapped to the wearers arm and forehead for prayers.
Amidah	Standing prayer; central prayer of Jewish worship made up of eighteen blessings.
Shabbat	Jewish holiday of the week; day of spiritual renewal beginning shortly before sunset on Friday and continuing to sunset on Saturday.
Minyan	A group of at least 10 adults; the minimum required for a Jewish religious service.

T → Torah – the five books of Moses which form the basis of Jewish law.

E

N → Nevi'im – the Prophets; eight books which show Jewish history and expand on the laws in the Torah.

A

K → Ketuvim – the writings; eleven books that contain a collection of poetry, stories, advice, historical accounts and more.