

- Read and make notes on the synagogue.
- Using the information created a leaflet explain the purpose of a Synagogue

The Role of the Synagogue

Jews meet together in a synagogue to worship G-d. The first Jewish place of worship was the Temple in Jerusalem which was destroyed thousands of years ago. While this was being rebuilt Jews met in a Beth Ha-Midrash, a place to study the Jewish Scriptures. The Second Temple was completed and eventually destroyed, by this time most Jewish communities has synagogues and so they transferred their community worship to the synagogue. The Temple had been a place to make sacrifices to G-d, however because the synagogues were too small to be able to do this, they became places of prayer.

Modern Synagogues combined the tradition of teaching and worship. They also contain the **cheder** (room), which is a religious school for children. According to the Talmud, the entrance to the synagogue should be on the side of the building that faces Jerusalem.

Public Worship

Jewish synagogues hold three prayer services each day:

- In the morning, because Abraham prayed early in the day so he could meet with G-d before anything else
- In the afternoon, b to G-d because Isaac stopped what he was doing to pray to G-d in the afternoon
- In the evening, because Jacob prayed to G-d in the evening to thank Him for the blessings for the day

During prayer a Jewish man will put on **tallit**- a prayer shawl with 32 **tzitzit**, these remind them of the laws G-d gave them to follow, **tefillin**, leather boxes which contain passes from the Torah, these are tied to his head and left arm, and he will also wear a **yarmulke** or **kippah** a small skull-cap on his head.

The synagogue service will be led by a rabbi, and traditionally there needs to be a minyan, a minimum of ten Jewish males over the age of 13 and the service will be carried out in Hebrew. Men and women sit separately to avoid distractions and all are expected to dress respectfully.

The Service

- The service usually begins with the lighting of candles and saying prayers
- Prayers are usually said in Hebrew, the language of the Jewish ancestors. And they are about remembering history and praying for the future
- Then there is the procession and reading of the Torah scrolls. This is often seen as the central and holiest part of the service.
- After this the Rabbi might read a sermon and then the service finishes with the remembering of those who have passed

Importance of Synagogue worship for the individual and community

Synagogues have always been community centres which help to keep the Jewish community and identity together outside of Israel.

The synagogue therefore allows the individual a place to connect with G-d, take part in rituals and festivals and it allows them to be part of the Jewish Nation in their own community.

Synagogue worship takes place in Hebrew and so allows the individual and community to connect with the Hebrew Scriptures, be in the presence of the Ark and to take part in daily prayers: shacharit (morning), minchah (afternoon) and ma'ariv (evening) as well as celebrate Shabbat as one community.

For Jews life revolves around the synagogue as they are seen as centres of worship, celebration, learning and relaxation.

Why it is important to have a synagogue

Synagogues are important as they help to foster a sense of community and allow the individual to be part of G-d's Chosen People in an active way.

Not only can people take part in worship in the synagogue but they can read from the Torah, be in the presence of G-d but also take part in community activities. For example:

- Hebrew classes
- Adult education classes
- Youth clubs
- Sporting activities
- Lunch clubs for the elderly
- Music and drama groups
- Celebrations of rites of passage
- Charity events