

Prayer & Worship		✓
Synagogue Bet Haknesset Shul	The Hebrew word for a synagogue is Bet Haknesset , which means house of assembly, a place where people gather (for prayer and worship). Sometimes it is referred to as the Shul , a Yiddish word based on the German word for school, as it is also a place of learning. The first synagogues were likely built after the first Temple, the Temple of Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. Today, the synagogue is a community centre with many functions including teaching, meetings, youth groups, and community gatherings. They often have a kitchen and a reception hall for weddings and Bar/Bat Mitzvah parties.	
Ner Tamid	The Ner Tamid is the ever-burning lamp. It is found in front of the Aron Hakodesh as a symbol that G-d is always present. There was always a burning lamp in the Temple.	
Aron Hakodesh	This is the 'Ark' (cupboard) at the front of the Synagogue where the Sefer Torah scrolls are kept.	
Bimah	Raised platform at the centre of the synagogue where the Torah and prayer books are read from. A Cantor usually leads the worship from the Bimah.	
Menorah	Seven branched candelabra symbolising the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest.	
Synagogue decoration	Synagogues are often very plainly decorated because the second commandment forbids the making of likenesses (graven images) and any pictures or paintings on display, especially in the room used for prayer, are likely to be abstract. Many synagogues will have no pictures at all, but may have other decoration in the form of patterns.	
Mikveh	Every Orthodox Jewish synagogue/community will have a Mikveh (ritual bath), one for men and one for women. People converting to Judaism must bathe in the Mikveh, women bathe before marriage and to observe the rules of Niddah (purity). Some Hasidic men bathe in the Mikveh every day. Reform Jews do not observe the Niddah ritual purity rituals, but are increasingly using the Mikveh to mark life events Bar/Bat Mitzvah or divorce.	
Synagogue Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the congregation are called up to read the Torah portion or to recite a blessing before or after the reading. Being 'called up' is called Aliyah (ascent) - the same as migration to Israel. • On Shabbat, festival and fast days there is an additional reading from the prophets called the Haftarah (conclusion). • The Rabbi gives a sermon, relating faith to the modern world and inspiring the congregation to live good and worthy lives. • Many synagogues employ a Chazan or Cantor - a good singer, to lead the singing and chanting of the prayers. They are also trained in Torah, Prayer Book and Halakhah. • Music is central to worship in Judaism, but the Ultra-Orthodox (Chasidim) do not permit the use of instruments. The Talmud stated that instruments were no longer allowed after the destruction of the Second Temple. • Orthodox synagogues may have a male voice choir, and use an organ on weekday - as playing the organ on Shabbat would constitute work! Progressive synagogues would have a mixed choir of men and women. 	

Common and Divergent Practices

In Orthodox Judaism it is only the men who are required to attend the synagogue for prayers, and in order for a communal act of worship to be valid there has to be a **Minyan** - ten men present. Only men can become Rabbis, only men can read from the Sefer Torah, and only men can lead services. Men and women sit separately, with the women sitting in a raised gallery. It is said that this is so as the men are not distracted from their prayers by the women's beauty! In Progressive Judaism (Reform and Liberal) there is equality between men and women in terms of the demands for prayer and worship, and attending the synagogue. Both men and women can be counted in the **Minyan** - the number of people required to make a communal act of worship valid. Both men and women can become Rabbis, read from the Sefer Torah, and lead services. In Progressive synagogues men and women sit together, with their children, as a family.

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Prayer	Prayer is communication between human beings and G-d, three times per day in Judaism. Prayer can be spontaneous or set, individual or communal, said or sung or silent, at home or in the synagogue.	
Importance of Prayer	Jewish people say that prayer is important because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praying with heart and mind and soul takes a person into a state of being that is different from their everyday awareness. • Prayer enhances a person's closeness to G-d. • Prayer changes our faith, and it changes us too. • Prayer enhances a person's closeness to their fellow Jews. • The formal prayer in the synagogue provides a weekly (if not daily) revision class in the fundamentals of Jewish belief: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Helping Jews to remember what they believe. ❖ Helping Jews find new insights into their relationship with G-d and with each other. 	
Types of Prayer	Different types of prayer have different purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praise - prayers which praise and glorify G-d. Most prayers and blessings begin with the words: <i>'Blessed are You, LORD our G-d, King of the universe ...'</i> • Confession - one of the most well known confession prayers is used at Yom Kippur. It begins with the words: <i>'We have trespassed; we have dealt treacherously; we have robbed; we have spoken slander; we have acted perversely; we have done wrong;'</i> • Thanksgiving - the prayer on waking in the morning says <i>"I give thanks before You, Living and Eternal King, that You have returned within me my soul with compassion; [how] abundant is Your faithfulness!"</i> • Supplication - humbly asking for something. e.g. The Amidah asks G-d to satisfy spiritual needs such as forgiveness, and physical needs such as food. 	
The Amidah	<i>The Amidah</i> is the core of every Jewish worship service, and is therefore also referred to as <i>HaTefillah</i> , or " The prayer ." Amidah, which literally means, "standing," refers to a series of blessings recited while standing.	
The Shema	The Shema is another of Judaism's important prayers. It is also the Jewish statement of belief. The word 'shema' means 'hear', i.e. 'Hear, O Israel ... (listen, people of Israel).	
Facing Jerusalem	Shortly after King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem, he prayed to G-d that the place be an eternal abode for the Divine Presence: <p style="text-align: center;"><i>"When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain . . . and they shall pray toward this place and praise Your name, and repent of their sin, so that You may answer them."</i></p> Based on this verse (and others), the Talmud understands that Jews in the diaspora should face toward the Holy Land when praying, those in Israel should face toward Jerusalem, those in Jerusalem should face toward the Temple Mount, and those on the Mount should turn toward the Holy of Holies.	
Where & When Jews Pray	Prayer and worship can take place both at home and in the synagogue. In fact, Jews can pray anywhere. The times for prayer were taken from the times of the Temple sacrifices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning • Afternoon • Evening (when the sacrifices were burnt) 	
Siddur	Jewish people use a prayer book called the Siddur . Siddur means 'order' and the prayer book contains the set forms of prayer written by Rabbis in the ninth and tenth centuries.	
<u>Common & Divergent Views</u>		
All Jews accept the Siddur as a vital expression of their hopes and convictions. However, Reform and Liberal Jews have their own versions which include more recent prayers and leave out some parts of the older prayers which they feel are no longer appropriate. e.g. prayers for the restoration of the Temple.		