

Judaism & The Synagogue – Secondary Level

What is a Synagogue?

Watch this downloadable five-minute video, showing the Synagogues across Scotland, including Garnethill, and explains the defining features found in all synagogues:

https://www.scojec.org/resources/videos/synagogues_in_scotland.html

Questions

What are the three essential parts of a synagogue and what are their functions?

1. Bimah – Platform from which the service is led and the scrolls are read
2. Ark – Cupboard where the torah scrolls are kept
3. Eternal Light – represents God's eternal nature

What other items will you typically find?

1. Torah
2. Yad
3. Tablet with the Ten Commandments
4. Star of David
5. The Royal Prayer
6. Memorial plaques and commemorative windows

How many commandments does the torah contain? What are some that are of particular importance to the Jewish way of life?

The torah contains 613 commandments. This includes the laws of Kashrut – the Jewish dietary laws.

What are some differences between an Orthodox or a Reform synagogue?

In an Orthodox synagogue men and women sit separately and in Reform, they sit together.

In an Orthodox synagogue, there needs to be 10 men present to have a service. This is called a Minyan. In Reform, the Minyan can be both men and women.

What items are worn in a synagogue and what are the meanings of these items?

1. Kippah – A head covering to symbolise that God is above you
2. Tallit – A prayer shawl worn due to a commandment to wear a garment with four corners and tassels.

Discussion & Reflection: How is a Synagogue the same or different from other places of worship?

What happens on Shabbat?

Watch this short video, which shows how one family celebrate shabbat (also called Shabbos) at home:

<https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/schools/asset/a-family-shabbat/>

Questions

What is the reason for shabbat?

It commemorates God creating the world in six days and having a day of rest on the seventh day.

What things do the family do to mark the beginning of shabbat?

A family meal, light two candles, blessings are made over the wine and the food.

What special food is eaten? What is its significance?

Challah is eaten – a plaited bread. It represents the manna that God sent from heaven. Two loaves were sent on Friday so they didn't have to work on Saturday.

What is the purpose of the Havdalah ceremony and what happens?

Havdalah marks the end of shabbat and the beginning of the new week ahead. A multi-wicked candle is lit, spices are smelled, a blessing is said over the wine. The candle is extinguished in the wine.

Discussion & Reflection: Does your family have any days with special meals or traditions? Do you believe traditions to be an important part of your life?

General Resources

Educational resources with an emphasis on Judaism in Scotland are available on the website of JCoS (Jewish Council of Scotland):

<https://www.scojec.org/resources/education.html>

JCoS have produced downloadable posters with information about key festivals and events:

<https://www.scojec.org/resources/jjc/jjc.html>

The Jewish Museum in London has resources for primary and secondary level, including videos, podcasts, ideas for activities and a selection of objects from the collection:

<https://jewishmuseum.org.uk/schools/in-the-classroom/learning-portal/>