

# Synagogue and collective worship essay sample



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Synagogue comes from the Greek meaning, "Gather Together". It began in the Babylonian exile. Many aspects to do with the recent and standing synagogues relate back to the original temple in Jerusalem. Synagogues are used for lots of things today. It houses many social activities as well as being a place of learning for the young and old. Things like festivals would be held there, Jews assemble for all celebrations, worships and prayers. Hebrew classes are also held at the synagogue. Jews believe that prayer can be a communal activity and that they seek unity and gatherings such as this keep the tradition of the faith going.

In the synagogue there are the torah scrolls that are used for lots of things. To Jews they are regarded as central to life and are highly respected. The way they are prepared, treated and kept is also very important. They are kept inside silk or velvet covers and decorative crowns are placed on top. Bells can be attached so they are heard when the torah is carried around. It is considered a great honour to read from the torah and is very special, they use an instrument called a Yad to prevent the scroll getting dirty.

At 13 a Jewish boy will be called to read from the torah, as the torah is taken to the Bimah, man will lean forward and touch it with their tassels on their prayer shawls. In many synagogues, members who attend the faith have to pay an annual rent for a seat in the synagogue. This is a reason why some Jews who are not as wealthy don't believe that collective worship is essential. Reasons about collective worship will come into affect later in this project. The synagogue is very important top an orthodox Jew, it is important for them to study in it.

Also it is important to keep things like Mitzvat going to keep the sense of tradition and strengthen the faith. Some of things inside the synagogue are very important, like the two tablets above the ark that represent the 10 commandments received by Moses on Mt Sinai. Even though quite modern the ner-tamid or eternal light is a very important feature and is a symbol of god's presence. The menorah is another Jewish symbol; it is a candleholder that is very rare and unusual as it has 7 branches instead of the normal 8, as with the Hanukah Menorah.

The Holy Ark or aron Hakodesh, given its proper name was originally a wooden box covered in gold. Inside were the tablets of stone with inscribed teachings from god to Moses. The Ark was portable as the Jews spent a lot of time travelling. Today it is a cupboard of wood on the Jerusalem (eastern) side of the synagogue, containing the torah scrolls. It was a focal point and often covered with an embroidered curtain. Jews describe the synagogue as, House of Assembly, House of Study and House of prayer. House of Assembly- Jews describe the synagogue as a house of Assembly for lots of reasons.

Things like social events, to keep the faith going and keep a sense of community. Jewish awareness groups linked with things such as special evening meetings to respond to current and/or local events. Clubs such as youth clubs, elderly clubs, celebrations of family events and quiz nights. Also Ladies guild with preparation of the kiddishes for the elderly and sick. House of study - things like Sunday schools and advice centres. Special lessons for the children to learn about their faith, religious discussion groups and visiting lectures and speakers.

All these are why the Jews call the synagogue the House of Study, things to keep the faith going and keep a sense of tradition. House of Prayer - The main function of the synagogue is prayer. Things like daily prayer, mourning ceremonies, weddings, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Sukkot, Shabbat service, Shabbat, Bar/bat Mitzvah ceremonies and receiving a new torah scroll. I agree that collective worship is essential for the orthodox Jew but I can see why some people disagree with this. I think it is essential because most of the main traditions and festivals happen within the synagogue such as Bar Mitzvah etc.

It also keeps a feeling of community within the faith because if you just did individual worship you would not get the feeling of community. Tradition is a good reason why as it ensures the thinking of god having daily prayer in the synagogue and to pass on a sense of belonging. In most synagogues there is the opportunity to have a Minyan where 10 men have to be present to pray. Some say that collective worship is very essential or else the faith would die out and without the set prayers and religious observances from the 1st temple, the sense of tradition and belonging would disappear.