

Do we need shared special places?

Year 1

Summer Term 2

Key Questions

Do you have a special place?

What makes it special?

Is the same place special for everyone? Do we all have the same special place?

Where is a special place to a Jewish person? What makes it special?

How do Jewish people feel about their shared special place? Does it make it easier for them to feel part of the group? Does it help them to believe?

In this unit the children will learn:

- About a synagogue and its key features
- How the synagogue is important to Jewish people
- Find similarities with other places of worship



Key content:

- The ultimate purpose of the synagogue is to make God's presence noticeable.
- Jewish synagogues serve three functions: as a house of assembly, a house of worship and a house of study.
- The synagogue in Oxford, for example, has a roof reminiscent of the waves on the sea, recalling the many stories of Judaism where the people of Israel are saved through water (Noah's flood, crossing the Red Sea, the Jordan e.g.).
- The internal layout is more consistent however and certain features are common to the majority of synagogues. There is an ark or cupboard, containing the scrolls of the Torah, a Bimah or platform usually in the centre of the prayer or worship hall from where the scrolls are read and prayers are led and the Ner Tamid, the eternal light that burns constantly to remind worshippers of the eternal presence of God.

Key Vocabulary

- **Judaism:** the monotheistic religion of the Jewish people
- **Old Testament:** the first part of the Christian Bible.
- **God:** the creator and ruler of the universe and source of all moral authority; the supreme being
- **Faith:** complete trust or confidence in someone or something
- **Sacred place:** a holy place
- **Synagogue:** the building where Jewish people worship God

Key content:

- Many synagogues have a community room, where people eat together and for most festivals there are special foods that are eaten.
- Most synagogues separate men and women in the prayer hall. In some, women sit upstairs while the men are downstairs (this is more usual in Orthodox communities); in others they sit on separate sides of the hall, or behind a barrier.
- The seating usually faces towards Jerusalem, the centre for Judaism and the 10 commandments are displayed somewhere near the ark, written in Hebrew.
- Many Jewish children will attend Sunday school (Schul) to learn Hebrew.

