

## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Stained Glass Windows make the building beautiful and show important symbols of Judaism, tell stories from the Torah, explain important Festivals, and may also honour the memory of loved ones.

**New Year Window:** Scales, the symbol of the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah). Jews believe that G-D weighs their good and bad deeds in the past year to decide if the new year will be a good or bad one. What does the writing say in English on the windows?



**Sabbath Window:** The Sabbath is a devout day, blessings are recited as candles are lit at dusk on Friday. The Sabbath begins with prayers before the Friday evening meal, and is observed until late Saturday afternoon. Customary rituals of handwashing and special prayers are said over wine, or grape juice, and the bread before the Friday evening meal.



**Stories:** Look for the story of Jonah and the Whale and also of Moses in the windows.



**The Star of David** (the Magen or shield of David). The hexagon of intertwined triangles has become a well known symbol of the Jewish Community. Today it appears on the National Flag of Israel.

**Before you leave:** Look at the wall plaque by the door leading into the synagogue. How is the 250th Anniversary of the Synagogue written? Who was the Chief Rabbi in 2012?

What does the Roll of Honour board say about members of the synagogue 1939-1945?

## WORD SEARCH

Find these words in the Word Search:

ark  
mezuzah  
kippah  
scroll  
mitzvah  
yad  
bimah  
menorah

l	l	w	s	g	c	j	a
l	r	g	d	h	g	i	k
t	a	k	i	z	z	c	r
n	q	i	s	h	a	r	k
v	b	p	d	h	q	m	l
b	w	p	o	n	b	v	m
u	e	a	y	d	c	n	e
v	j	h	a	m	i	b	n
m	u	s	d	e	c	z	o
i	a	r	t	z	o	y	r
t	t	x	w	u	d	x	a
z	k	f	x	z	e	x	h
v	s	e	f	a	i	r	q
a	g	y	v	h	h	f	r
h	i	j	n	m	f	w	p
j	a	u	o	l	g	o	s
p	e	r	a	h	h	m	t
u	m	q	q	k	p	b	u
e	t	f	p	j	i	v	b
y	z	s	c	r	o	l	l

Word search created by Freya Davis, age 11

YOUR NAME:

## WELCOME TO PLYMOUTH'S HISTORIC SYNAGOGUE

Synagogues are where Jewish people come together to pray, learn and meet each other. Synagogue comes from the Greek word for 'assembly'.

Built in 1762, this is the oldest Ashkenazi (ash-can-ah-zee) synagogue still in use in the English speaking world. The Ashkenazi Jewish community came to live in Plymouth in the mid 18th century from central Europe, mainly Holland and Germany.

By 1745 members were holding regular services in their homes, and planned this synagogue in 1759. In 1864 the North and South wings were added to extend the Ladies Gallery.

Today, the synagogue is still open for Services for the Jewish Sabbath, which is on a Saturday, and all the Festivals.

Orthodox Jews believe in the practice of Jewish Law, the **Torah**, as written in the Five Books of Moses. They are the first five books of the Bible known as the Old Testament to non-Jews. To show their respect for their god, Jews only write G-D as you will see in this guide.

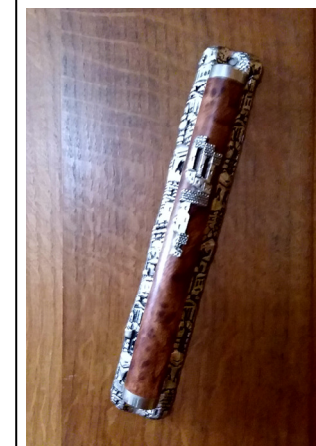
Many non-Jews also visit this historic synagogue to see this well known, peaceful and beautiful place of prayer.



## AT THE FRONT ENTRANCE

Look at the Hebrew writing above the door. It means **Seek Peace and Pursue it.**

This is the guiding motto for the Jewish way of life.



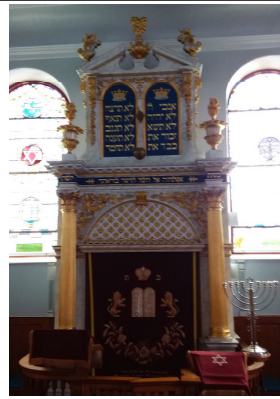
There is a small case on the right side of the doorway. It is called a **Mezuzah** (mez-oo-zuh), Hebrew for doorpost. Cases like this are put on doorways in Jewish homes.

Inside is a small parchment scroll with a written Jewish prayer, called a **Shema**, which means "hear" or "listen" in Hebrew. G-D commands us to hear his words.

## SANCTUARY (PRAYER HALL)

Here you will see the Ark, the special cabinet where the **Torah Scrolls** are kept. The Ark is placed at the front of the room on the side facing east towards Jerusalem. Everyone stands to face the Ark when it is opened during the religious service.

This Ark was probably made in Holland, brought by sea to Plymouth and assembled in the synagogue. This is a very beautiful, highly decorated cabinet, made from wood for the precious Torah Scrolls. An embroidered velvet curtain also covers the doors. The Torah Scrolls inside are also 'dressed' in beautiful coverings of velvet and silver to show their importance. Two tablets at the top show the first words of the Ten Commandments, 'I am the Lord thy G-D', written in Hebrew.



**The Eternal Lamp** (Ner tamid in Hebrew) is always kept lit as a reminder of G-D's eternal presence.

**Bimah** (bee-muh) is the platform in the centre of the room from where the religious services are conducted. It was made by skilled craftsmen from Devonport Dockyard.

It has a large desk on which the Torah Scrolls, written on parchment made from animal skin, are unwound to read during services. Hebrew is written from right to left.



**Yad**, the hand shaped pointer, helps the reader to follow the words without touching the precious Torah scroll parchment.

The **ram's horn** (shofar). This is one of the oldest symbols. There is a special tune, or sequence of notes, that is blown on the ram's horn for the services celebrating New Year (Rosh Hashanah), and the services for The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).



**Menorah** the holder for seven candles is the oldest symbol of the Jewish faith. Menorah means 'place of light' in Hebrew.

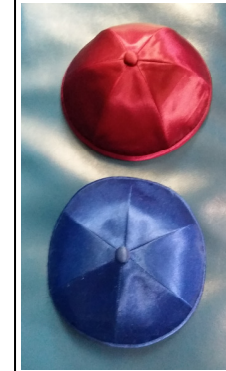
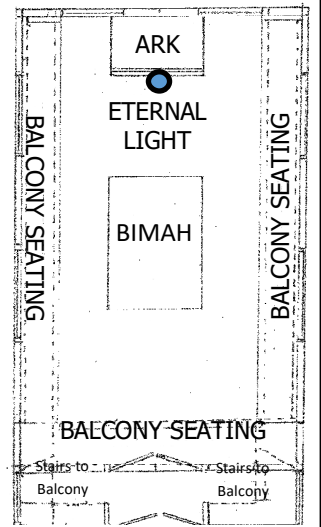
In most synagogues the menorah will have eight branches for candles. They are called Chanukkahs and are used for the Festival Of Chanukkah (Festival of Light).

How many branches can you see?

## CUSTOMS

This is an Orthodox Jewish synagogue and men and women sit separately. Ladies, girls, and boys under 13, sit upstairs in the gallery.

Orthodox synagogues are laid out like the ancient Temple at Jerusalem.



Men cover their heads to show respect to G-D. Jewish men and boys wear a skull cap (called a **kippah** in Hebrew). These coloured kippahs are worn for special festivals, usually men wear a black or dark grey kippah.

Married women cover their hair with a hat, or headscarf, and dress modestly with their arms and legs covered.

Festivals are holidays when everyone usually wears their best clothes, as we may for special occasions. When they pray, Jewish men wear a prayer shawl (called a **tallit**) on their shoulders as a sign of their duty to observe the Jewish law. A tallit has a fringe (called **tzitzit** in Hebrew) on the four corners as a reminder that G-D rules over four corners of the earth.



When they reach the age of 13 for a boy, 12 for a girl, they are expected to know right from wrong and to keep the Commandments.

**(Mitzvah)**. A **bar mitzvah** is the ceremony when the son (bar) is called to the Torah, to read or recite a blessing for the first time. He has come of age to sit with the men to pray, and wear a tallit. In Orthodox synagogues women do not take part in religious services.

A **bat** (daughter) **mitzvah** party is a modern idea for the girl at 12 to celebrate her 'coming of age' too.

Most religious services can be led by a lay person, as here in this synagogue.

In other synagogues a **Cantor** (Chazan in Hebrew) may lead the service, and the **Ba'al Koreh**, Master of Reading, reads or chants sections of the Torah (the five books of Moses).