

Appendix to: Judaism

Group I

Ner Tamid – lamps which always shine before the aron ha-kodesh (Torah ark), where Torah scrolls are kept. They represent the menorah lamps, burning all day in Temple times.

Sefer Torah – The text of the Torah was kept in the **synagogue**, held in reverence as a person, not an object, since worshipping objects in Judaism is forbidden. Sefer Torah was written by a sofer (a scribe) with a goose quill on separate sheets of parchment later sewn or glued together and scrolled in two separate wooden rollers. Such a scroll was called ‘**rodale**’. Torah scrolls were often dressed with a **sash** (embroidered garment) and decorated. The top of the scroll was customarily decorated with crowns, i.e. ornamented elements made of noble metal imitating crowns decorated with bells (when Torah scrolls were removed from a cabinet called **aron ha-kodesh**, where it is stored, the believers rose when they heard bells ringing). They may be replaced by so called **rimmonim** (silver decorations in the shape of pomegranates which symbolised life). The scrolls were also decorated with a **tas** – a square decorative sterling silver breast plate ornamented with symbolic representations. Torah was read every day in synagogues, starting from the beginning every year. Accordingly, the Torah was divided into 54 sections called parshiot (parasha), the number of **Shabbat** days in Jewish leap year (in the usual cycle of the year, two parshiot are read in a single Shabbat).

Group II

Women’s section – the name of a separated part of the synagogue designated for women. Women in orthodox Judaism could not be present in the main chamber of the synagogue, therefore, when in the Middle Ages women started to participate in prayers, separate rooms were built for them. An opinion that women in the main chamber would distract praying men was common. The earliest accounts of separate rooms for women in synagogues is from 1213. Women’s section may appear as a separate room situated beside the men’s section, in the gallery or in the balcony (emoura). Commonly, synagogues with women’s sections were built or the sections were added to already existing ones in 15th – 16th century.

The women’s section had to have a separate entrance and such connection to the main chamber so that women were not heard or seen by men gathered in the synagogue. For this reason, the only connection between women and men sections was through small windows.

Yad, “hand” - a ritual hand-shaped pointer, with a pointed index finger or shaped as a stick. Made of ivory or a noble metal or wood. Beautifully ornamented, often with expensive jewels. It facilitates reading **Torah** and it ensures that the parchment is not touched during the reading. (*You might not be able to find this object*)

Group III

Mezuzah – a small wooden, metal or glass container of symbolic, historical and religious value, with a piece of parchment with two verses from the Torah (Book of Deuteronomy 6.4-9 and 11,13-21). The parchment with the text is rolled from left to right so that when unrolled it can be instantly read from the beginning. Letters are written on a rolled-up parchment in order to mark the top and bottom of the text. Frequently a word Shaddai (Heb. Almighty). The text can be also found in the

Shema prayer. In order for the mezuzah to be kosher it is only a sofer who can write on the parchment. Certain Jewish factions treat mezuzah as a protective talisman, however, it must be underlined that its original purpose was completely different. According to Talmud, mezuzah is one of seven commands given by the God to Israeli to show His love and that only in such a way it should be treated.

Mezuzah is fixed to a doorframe or door case of houses of religious Jews hand-breadth deep. As a literal fulfilment of YHWH's command, it should be at the front door, placed in skew, on the right hand side at the height of 2/3 of the doorframe. It must be permanently fixed, preferably with nails. Parchment text is checked regularly to assure that they are in good condition. In the case of mezuzah it should be twice in every seven years, and in public once in every fifty years. A Jewish person can leave without mezuzah in a flat or house for 30 days. Fixing mezuzah on the door is preceded by an appropriate blessing.

Kippah (yarmulke) – is a cap made of six wedge-shaped silk, velvet or satin pieces of cloth. Jewish law requires of men to cover their head to express respect and the fear of God during prayers, blessing, studying Torah, being in a synagogue or yeshiva. This practice is rooted in biblical times, when priests during performing different rites had heads covered.

Group IV

Tefillin (from Greek: **phylacterion**), is a set of small black leather boxes containing four scrolls of parchment inscribed with verses from the **Torah** (Book of Deuteronomy 6, 4-9 and 11, 13-21 and Book of Exodus 13, 1-10 and 11-16), strap wrapped around the left arm or forehead and worn during weekday morning prayers. Its opponents among Reform Jews believe they come from charms and they reject using them. Using tefillins was an attempt to literally realise recommendations of the Book of Deuteronomy 11, 18 “You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead.”

Bimah - an elevated area or a platform in a Jewish synagogue in the form of a tent, bower with a balustrade or a grating and a canopy or In the form of a chapel with a dome roof with a lantern. Inside, you can find a table intended to serve as a place for reading from the Torah. It also serves as a lectern, a place from which the cantor leads prayer.

Group V

Mikveh – a bath for ritual immersion of people and objects. Since the Middle Ages it has been associated with a bath house, similarly referred to as mikveh. Hasidic Judaism have a similar bath on daily basis, before prayer, and all men are required to have one before Yom Kippur holiday. In Orthodox Judaism women should take baths after every menstruation, before their wedding and after giving birth.

Menorah - is a seven-branched candelabra and the symbol of Israel placed on passports, government offices, etc. This ornate lamp stand was used in the Tabernacle and the Holy Temple. Menorah is one of the oldest symbols of the Jewish nation. According to the tradition it represents a burning bush, seen by Moses on Mount Sinai. At the beginning there was only one menorah, which was made strictly according to Moses' instructions. It was made of gold, similarly to all other

utensils required to handle it. It was placed in front of The Ark of the Covenant in Tabernacle, later in the Holy Temple. After Jerusalem was conquered by Romans it was brought to Rome as spoils of war (this incident was commemorated as a low relief on the Arch of Titus). Menorah was placed in Temple of Peace in Rome. According to the tradition, after Rome was looted by Vandals in 455 it was taken to Carthage and in 534 to Constantinople, and was recovered in Jerusalem as a gift from Justinian. The menorah has vaguely disappeared.

Group VI

Tallit – a square shawl worn by Jews on head or shoulders during prayer, usually white with black or blue stripes (the colour of the Tribe of Judah) on sides and fringes known as tzitzit in the corners. Some devout Jews wear under their everyday clothes a special smaller tallit katan, worn throughout a day. The fringes (tzitzit) are one of the most important elements of the tallit and Jews are ordered to wear them by the Torah in Book of Numbers 15,37-41. There is one particular fringe, the longest one, which is the most significant, and this is where tassels are tied. Tallit can also have an atarah (crown) – a 1 m long and 6 to 12 cm wide stripe, often beautifully embroidered.

Aron ha-kodesh – an altar closet which contains Torah scrolls. It is one of the most important elements of the main praying chamber of the synagogue and is on the wall facing Jerusalem. In eastern Europe, the shape, the frame and the ornaments depended on the period in history and the location where it was made.