

Laws & Customs

Synagogue

"Build a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell amongst them." This verse is the basis for the building of the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) and the Holy Temple. The Zohar tells us that included in commandment is the obligation to build synagogues (miniature Holy Temples).

Aron Kodesh

The Holy Ark (*Aron Kodesh*), where the Torah Scrolls are kept, is situated in the front of the synagogue. The Ark is the holiest place in the Synagogue. In most synagogues the Holy Ark is on the Eastern wall, so that when we face the ark, we are facing the holy city of Jerusalem, where the Holy Temple once stood.

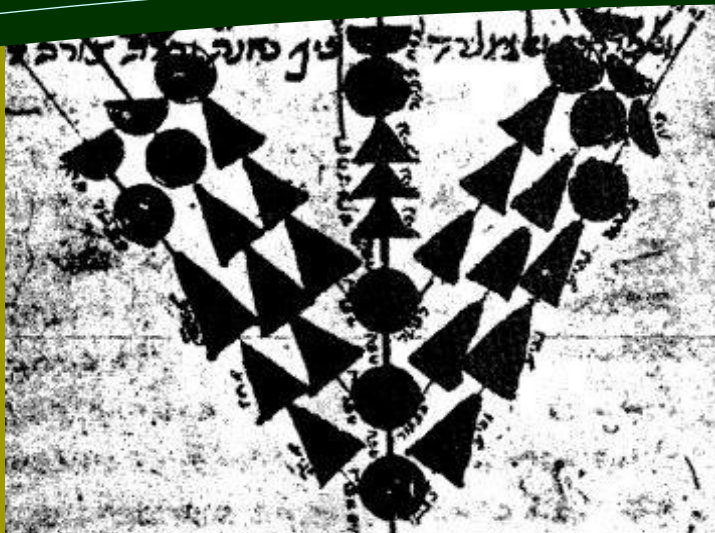
The curtain that covers the ark is called the *Parochet*. It symbolizes the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the adjacent section.

Bimah

The Torah reading and prayers are conducted from the bimah. It is a podium located in the center of the sanctuary. It's location is similar to the way it was in the Holy Temple, where the Altar was in the center of the courtyard.

Mechitzah

The partition between the men and women sections is called the *mechitzah*. It allows for concentration in prayer without distraction. The Holy Temple too had separate sections for men and women.



Menorah

The menorah is very frequently employed as a Jewish symbol. Nevertheless, the authenticity of the branches with which the menorah is usually depicted is a matter of question. Generally, these branches are depicted as semi-circular or oblong in shape. Nevertheless, Rashi in his commentary to the Torah,¹ explicitly writes that the branches "extended upward in a diagonal." Indeed, the very Hebrew word which the Torah uses to describe the branches, *ohbe*, implies a straight line.

An illustration in Maimonides' own hand, shows how the Menorah had straight and diagonal branches. The common practice of depicting the Menorah with curved branches derives from the infamous "Arch of Titus," erected by the Roman emperor to celebrate his defeat of the Jews and his destruction of the Temple, in which a Menorah (with curved branches) is shown being triumphantly carried off to Rome, and which bears the inscription "Judah Captive." It is most unfortunate that, for many Jews, the image of the Menorah is as depicted on an arch constructed to celebrate the Temple's destruction, rather than as described by the Torah and its traditional commentaries. It is up to us to correct this mistake and use the proper design of the Menorah.

ל" שבט - א" אדר
February 4-5 2011
Candle Lighting
17:44
Shabbat Ends
18:39

**In Honor of the
 Klein Family**

Doing it Right

In 1952, two boys, David and Jacob, found a wallet with \$ 150.00 in cash, a significant amount at the time. They took it to the bank, and contacted the owner. The man was happy with their act of kindness and gave the kids \$ 20.00 as a reward. As the school they attended was having financial difficulty, the boys donated the money to the school. The bank president thought it deserved to be disclosed, and reported the fact to a newspaper, which published it as a human interest story.

Over time the two moved away and lost contact with each other. Forty years later, David happened upon the newspaper article and wondered about the whereabouts of his friend. He made phone calls, searched the Internet, and wrote letters to people across the country, but was unsuccessful in finding his friend.

After much time and effort, Jacob was finally located. David called him, and the friendship was renewed. They arranged a meeting, and spent long hours recalling the events of youth, including the episode of the money found. They parted with a promise to keep in touch and keep the friendship again.

A week later, Jacob called David, all excited. "You will not believe! I lost my wallet in a store with cash. When I arrived home, there was a message that the wallet had been found with all of its money."

David replied: "Remember what we learned in school that God acts with us as we act with others? It took 45 years, but God always keeps His promise."

Saying

"When two Jews meet, aside from benefitting themselves, it should also benefit a third Jew."

Rabbi Yosef Yitchak Schneerson