

A Visit to the Synagogue with Ellie

Learning objective: To understand the significance of the synagogue as a place of worship and the role of the Torah in Judaism.

Read the passage carefully and use your knowledge to answer the questions. Ellie the elephant, who loves history, has shared these notes about a special place she visited.

Ellie the elephant recently visited a synagogue, the place where Jewish people gather to pray and study. As she walked inside, she noticed the calm atmosphere. The most important object in the room was the Ark, a special cupboard on the wall that faces towards Jerusalem. Inside the Ark, the community keeps the Torah scrolls. These are handwritten texts on parchment, containing the holiest laws of Judaism. Ellie learned that the Torah is treated with immense respect; it is never touched directly by hands, so a small pointer called a yad is used to follow the lines of text while reading. The rabbi, who is a teacher and leader, helps the community understand these ancient stories. For Jewish families, the synagogue is not just for prayers; it is a hub for the community to meet, learn, and celebrate together. Ellie was fascinated to see how history is kept alive through these beautiful, ancient traditions that have been passed down for thousands of years, connecting people to their heritage and faith every single week.

Word bank: Synagogue · Torah · Ark · Rabbi · Worship · Community · Scroll

1. What is the name of the special cupboard where the Torah scrolls are kept, and which direction must it face? (2 marks)

2. Why is a 'yad' used when reading the Torah scrolls? (2 marks)

3. Based on the text, why might the community consider the Torah to be a very precious object? (3 marks)

4. Explain why the synagogue is described as a 'hub' for the community rather than just a place to pray. (3 marks)

5. Ellie believes that caring for sacred objects is important for keeping history alive. Do you agree? Justify your answer. (4 marks)

Draw: Draw the inside of a synagogue, making sure to include the Ark and a Torah scroll. Think about the patterns and details you might see in a place of worship.



Extension challenge: Imagine you are an explorer like Finn. Research and write a short paragraph explaining why the Jewish Sabbath (Shabbat) is considered a 'day of rest'. Compare how this time is spent compared to a standard school day. Justify why having a day of rest might be important for a community.