

## The heart of the synagogue

The Torah is what makes the synagogue an important place.

**Q1.** What are the parts of the synagogue labelled **A**, **B**, **C** and **D**?

**A**  .....

**B**  .....

**C**  .....

**D**  .....

**Q2.** What is the name of the material the Torah scrolls are written on?

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**Q3.** What does the word Ark stand for in English?

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**Q4.** Give two reasons why a light is kept burning above the Ark.

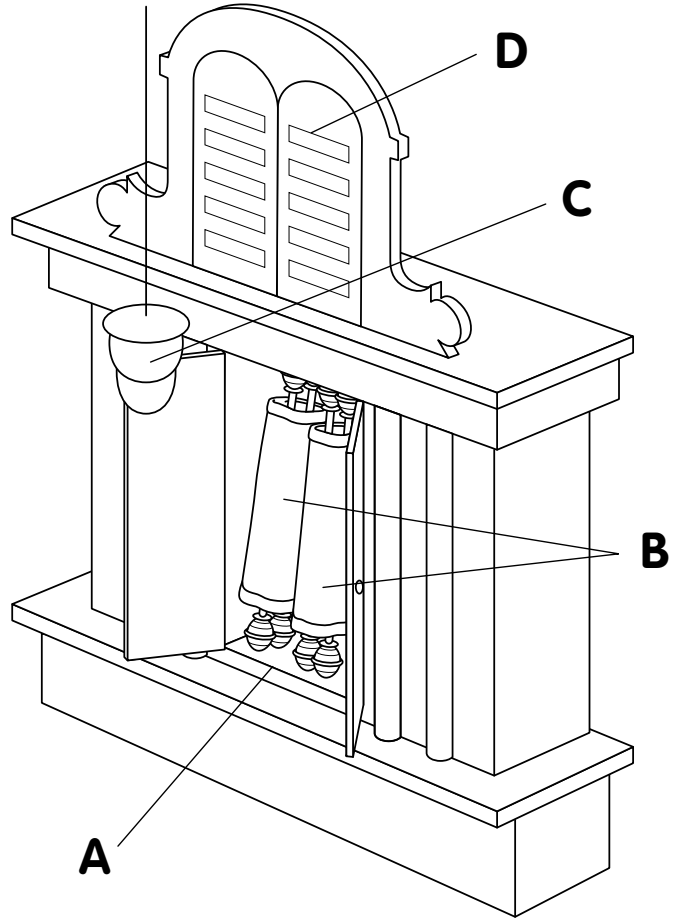
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**Q5.** What do the Hebrew letters on the plaque above the Ark stand for?

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## Answers

1. **A = Ark, B = Torah scrolls, C = ner tamid or eternal light, D = Ten commandments.**

2. **Parchment (cow hide).**

3. **Holy cabinet.**

4. **A reminder that God is always present.**

**A reminder of the commandment to keep a light burning in the room where the Ark is kept.**

5. **The first letters of each of the ten commandments.**

## Lesson objectives

- ▶ To explore the meaning of some of the most important items in the synagogue.
- ▶ To understand the importance of the Ark, ner tamid and Torah scrolls in worship.

## Teaching notes

### The Torah scroll

*The Torah is available in book form, but when it is read in the synagogue during worship, it is usually read from a specially prepared scroll called a Sefer Torah. The scrolls are handwritten in a fancy style of Hebrew calligraphy which is also used in the mezuzah scroll. In order to be used for worship, there cannot be any mistakes at all in the scroll. After many years the Torah will wear out and cannot be used for worship. But because the scrolls contain the word God, they cannot be destroyed. This is one reason why synagogues usually have many Torah scrolls.*

## The Ark

*The Ark in synagogues today is a reminder of the Ark of the Covenant, in which the ancient Israelites kept the Torah which, according to tradition, God gave to Moses on Mt Sinai. After King Solomon built the Temple in ancient Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was kept in a room called the Holy of Holies, or the sanctuary. Many of the things about the Ark, such as the curtains and the eternal lamp, are reminders of the sanctuary in the ancient Temple.*

## Lesson outcomes

- ▶ The children can identify some important items used in worship in the synagogue.
- ▶ The children can explain what the Ark and Torah scroll are used for.

## Complementary work

The children could use secondary sources to investigate how a Torah scroll is made. The children could look at photographs from web sites showing the sanctuary of different synagogues around the world and note the differences and similarities in design.

## Resources

Secondary sources about how a Torah scroll is made. Photographs of synagogue interiors from around the world, or a computer with internet access.