

# A visit to Leicester Hebrew Congregation Synagogue



The Synagogue  
Highfield Street  
Leicester



Leicester Hebrew  
CONGREGATION



# History of Judaism in Leicester

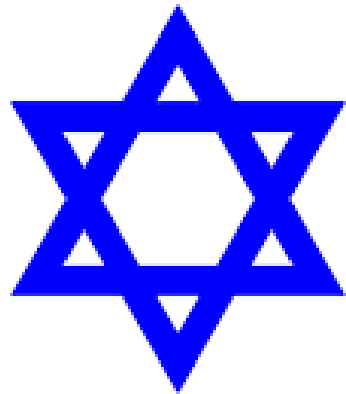
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- Leicester Hebrew Community is a traditional Jewish community with over 120 years of history and culture.
- It was founded in the nineteenth century, expanded as a result of the immigration of Eastern European Jews before the first World War, and grew considerably as the result of the Second World War.
- It is in 1849 that the first residents who can be identified as Jews are to be found. Many of them were shopkeepers, often associated with various clothing or tailoring manufacturing trades, but they were also to be found retailing, not least of all in the long-established Leicester market.
- It was after the foundation of a partnership between Israel Hart of Canterbury and Joseph Levy of Leicester to form what became the nationally known firm of Hart and Levy that the community began to take formal shape.





# Key Facts About Judaism



- Judaism is a religion followed by Jewish people and is one of the oldest religions. It is about 4000 years old
- There are different types of Judaism – Orthodox and Progressive
- Orthodox Jews have stricter rules, whilst Progressive Jews have adapted their rules for the modern age
- Orthodox Jews worship in a Synagogue with men and women being separated
- In Progressive Judaism men and women are allowed to worship together

# Key facts about Judaism

**Shabbat** (Sabbath) - this is the Jewish day of worship. It begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening. Jewish people will go to the Synagogue to worship.

**Kippah** – this is a special cap worn by many Jewish people as a sign of respect for God particularly when praying. Jewish people believe you should pray three times a day - morning, afternoon and evening.





## Inside the Synagogue

A synagogue is a place of worship for Jewish people. The synagogue in Leicester was formally opened in 1898.



# Inside the Synagogue

The **Aron Kodesh** (“holy ark”), is where the Torah Scrolls are kept, it is situated in the front of the synagogue. It is the holiest place in the synagogue.

The ark is opened only during special prayers and when removing the Torah to read during prayer services. It is customary to stand when the ark is opened.

**The Torah Scrolls** - this is a holy scroll that contains the 5 books of Moses (the first 5 books of the old testament bible). It is written in Hebrew. It is read by the Rabbi (teacher or religious leader).



# Inside the Synagogue

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- The Hebrew word **bimah** means “platform” and refers to the platform in the centre of the synagogue from which the Torah is read. The bimah is situated so that the reader faces toward the front of the synagogue.
- In addition to being the place from which the Torah is read, it is also the spot where the Rabbi stands when leading all other prayers.





# Inside the Synagogue

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**The Ten Commandments** are a set of rules that Jewish people believe were given to Moses by God. They aim to live their lives by these commandments.



# Inside the Synagogue

**Mezuzah** – this is parchment scroll, on which the Shema prayer is handwritten by an expert scribe. A mezuzah mounted on the right side of the doorpost designates the home or building as Jewish, reminding Jews of God and their heritage.

**Star of David** – this six-pointed star is a symbol of the Jewish people.





# Celebrations within Judaism

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Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement is the holiest day of the Jewish year. Jewish people fast, pray and ask God for forgiveness. It follows 10 days after Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year.)

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Passover (Pesach in Hebrew) commemorates the story of the Israelites departure from ancient Egypt.

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Hanukkah – Festival of Lights. This last for 8 days. Candles are lit on the special candle holder (Menorah) each day of the festival.

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Bar & Bat Mitzvah – These are coming of age ceremonies in the Jewish community. Bar Mitzvah is for boys and Bat Mitzvah is for girls.

# Further reading and information

- Background & overview of Orthodox Judaism - [jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org)  
<https://jewish-leicester.co.uk/>
- Jewish calendar - <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-jewish-calendar>
- Jewish celebrations - <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-holidays-and-festivals>