

A SYNAGOGUE FOR LUBBOCK

by

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PREFACE

The synagogue as an element in Jewish life had its beginning in Biblical days. The word "synagogue" itself is derived from the Greek words meaning "assembling together". As an architectural expression it has mirrored the complicated, harassed and uneasy life of the people it comforted. It reflects the life of a people profoundly affected by history. A partial explanation for the lack of a unique structure and form might be the hurried existence and intolerance of the Jews. I think it is significant that the only consistency in planning has been that of specific internal usage. This is related to the fact that throughout history, and despite external influences, the Jews have maintained a unity of religious concepts with very little variance in ritual procedure.

Synagogues have been built in every land in every known style. The first reference to the synagogue as an architectural form is found in the biblical description of the Tabernacle by the writers of Exodus.

In the brief history of the synagogue which follows, I have tried to indicate those elements of a synagogue which are fixed, either by Biblical commandment or long tradition, as opposed to those elements which are free

to vary according to the wishes of an individual congregation.

HISTORY OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The origin of the synagogues represents a new, unique form of worship. As an institution the synagogue was a revolutionary kind of a place to worship. The social cohesion made possible by this new kind of religious structure had important implications, and there are reasons to believe that this may have been at least partially responsible for the ability of the early Christian church to withstand and eventually outlive the Roman Empire.

The synagogue had its origin in Babylon in the 6th Century B.C., as a result of the exile. Previous to this period, the Jews had to worship in the Temple at Jerusalem. According to the Mosaic Law, this was the only consecrated place of worship. So in order to have a place to worship, especially since the Temple had been destroyed, the synagogue evolved as a place of worship. After the exile the synagogue became firmly established in Israel. At first it was an informal institution --the people gathered to hear the Scriptures read-- and it was the first place in the history of Judaism where the ritual was not conducted by a hereditary priesthood.

Thus the synagogue was a new institution, without warrant in Scripture. The importance of the synagogue as an institution increased over the centuries, as religious services came to be held more frequently. During the reign of David, the independent tribes of Isreal were united into a kingdom, resulting in changes of social life as well as religion. During this period the Isrealites were particularly influenced by the Phoenicians, a mercantile people who lived just to the west of Isreal. As trade between the two nations increased, Phoenician concepts of God began to influence the Jews. This is especially apparent during the reign of Solomon, who actually introduced an element of sun worship into traditional Judaism, but not without bitter opposition from the conservative elements. The new blend of tribal Yaweh worship with the new solar worship may be seen in the Temple which Solomon built, and which is described in some detail in the Bible. This Temple was essentially a solar sanctuary, and was built by architects and artisans imported from Tyre, the main Phoenician city. The setting of the Temple was the summit of a mountain; orientation was toward the East, exactly toward the point on the Eastern horizon where the sun, on the two days of equinox, would strike the image of Yahweh. This golden image remained there for 75 years until 899 B.C.E. The first reformation sponsored by the prophets of the day destroyed this idollic representation of God and substituted the ancient

Ark of the Covenant. The eastern facade of the Temple was the most elaborate. The porch stretched across the facade, and the doors were overlaid with gold. The Temple was conceived as a palace of Yahweh, which he entered once a year, on the annual equinoctial New Years Day. During the next several centuries, Solomon's Temple was destroyed and rebuilt several times, as for example during the Babylonian exile. After the reform movement discussed in Deuteronomy, a necessary feature of the synagogue was the Ark, in which the Torah was kept; this necessary feature continues to the present day.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the consequent dispersion of the Jews into all parts of the world, the synagogue underwent many changes which can be traced to local environment, the degree of anti-Semitism present, and so on. Representational art was avoided, and for the most part synagogues were erected by Jews themselves. In medieval Europe, the form and quality of synagogue architecture varied considerably. Jews were excluded from the Guilds, and were thus cut off from technological advances in building. And since most of the synagogues built were situated in ghettos, the architecture tended to be nondescript, so as not to be easily recognizable to the outsider. Not until the 19th Century did the Jews completely master church architecture. During these centuries the basic interior used in the

synagogue was developed. A room was needed in which to read from the Torah, recite prayers, and conduct other ritual. In the early centuries the scroll was generally carried in from a storeroom, but later permanent shrines were used to store the sacred scrolls. In the early days the Ark and Bimo (raised platform corresponding to the chancel) were separated, and the Torah was carried from the Ark to the Bimo in festive procession. Other than this, no specifications were made concerning the interior. However, three aisles were avoided because of the Christian connotation of the Trinity.

Externally, the synagogue has traditionally displayed a dignified, reserved character. The Jews did not introduce the idea of transept or chapel, neither did they use the tower for the purpose of calling the faithful to worship. They preferred "Skulklapfer", or going from door to door to invite the congregation to worship.

THE SYNAGOGUE IN AMERICA

The history of the synagogue in America has in many ways paralleled the history of churches and cathedrals in this country. During the 18th Century synagogues were built in the prevailing colonial or Georgian styles, a good example being the Touro synagogue in Newport, R.I., which is colonial in style. In the 19th Century the spirit of eclecticism was apparent in synagogue architecture just as it was in much of the other architecture of the time. Synagogues during this period became monumental,

overornate, and grandiose -- in short, they shared the defects of non-Jewish construction of the time.

In the 19th Century Greek pagan temples, Byzantine churches, oriental styles, and Islamic Moorish churches all found their modern counterparts in the synagogue. The one available form which was neglected was the Gothic, because the Jews thought that spires, the symbol of other-worldly aspirations, were inappropriate to the synagogue. The use of many different form of architectural expression was partly the result of the large Jewish immigration to this country during the 19th Century, and the resulting influx of new ideas. Examples of the oriental trend are the Central Synagogue in New York, Rodeph Shalom Temple in Philadelphia, and the Reform Temple (1870) in Galveston. Horseshoe arches, bulbous domes, and gaudy interiors were used here.

The next trend was toward the Hellenistic form; for example, the Sinai Temple of Chicago (1912). Other congregations built small replicas of the Parthenon. The Italian Renaissance form has also been employed; for example, Kenseth Israel of Philadelphia, which even boasts a campanile.

The period between the World Wars saw a great boom in the construction of synagogues in America, many of them very large and costly, as the Jewish population became more firmly entrenched in the financial and business

world. One of the largest of these is Temple Emanu-El in New York City, built in Italian Romanesque style and seating 2600. The cost of this structure, during a period of cheap construction, was well over \$4,000,000.

In summing up the architectural history of the synagogue, it may be said that no one form or style can be thought of as "the Jewish Style". A synagogue in Kaifeng Fu China reminds one of a pagoda, those of late antiquity show Greco-Roman influence, and in Spain the Moorish influence is evident. However closely knit and unified as a social group the Jews may have been (either by inclination or Christian persecution), their architecture has reflected the style of the country and period in which they lived. One exception may be noted. According to some Jewish scholars, a great affection for a domed and rotund structure has been more or less evident throughout Jewish history. It has been said that the dome symbolizes unity --the essence of Judaism-- just as the Gothic dome or spire symbolizes other worldly aspirations.

DESIGN RESEARCH AND CONCLUSIONS

I. The Ritual

A. The Sabbath service, held on Friday night, is the main worship service.

B. Festival services include

1. High Holy days
2. Rash Hashono
3. Yom Kippur
4. Sukas festival
5. Chanuko
6. Purim
7. Pesach

Attendance at services on High Holy Days and the major festivals usually includes almost every member of the congregation. Since the sanctuary is rarely large enough to accomodate all worshippers, overflow services into the auditorium assembly hall must be a design consideration.

C. Weddings and Funerals

A small chapel could be provided to accomodate the increasing number of weddings taking place in the synagogue. Funerals held in the synagogue are only for rabbis and congregational leaders.

II. The Site

A. Location is at the edge of the city, just off College Ave.

B. Ample parking is provided, since those attending will necessarily have to come by automobile.

C. The site is situated in a relatively underdeveloped area. It is assumed the area will gradually develop into a residential section.

D. Landscaping has been incorporated into the site planning.

The choice of my site may seem shortsighted based on assumptions differing from mine. The ills of most churches result from limited sites when the congregation expands. For my problem I assumed limited expansion in the congregation to be accomodated by existing facilities. I based this assumption on the relatively fixed number of Jewish families in Lubbock during the last 15 years.

III. The Building

A. Sanctuary and Bimo

1. The Ark is the repository for the Torah scrolls. The scrolls are usually stored in a vertical position, being held by supports. The average scroll is 2 feet high and 2 inches in diameter. Traditionally the Ark faced east but this practice is not followed in Reform synagogues. The Ark should be closed by either doors or a curtain. "And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; with cherubim the work of the skillful workman shall it be made" (Ex. 26:31).
2. The Eternal Light hangs over the Ark. "It shall be a statute forever to keep it burning from evening until morning throughout their generations on the behalf of the Children of Israel" (Ex. 27:20).
3. The Bimo is a raised platform used by the Rabbi while conducting the religious services. The bimo should be placed before the Ark because the Rabbi removes the Torah from the Ark and reads from the bimo. The lectern or lecterns and a table for the lighting of Sabbath candles are located on the bimo. Children sit on the bimo during Confirmation services.
4. The Menorah is the only candlestick called for. It traditionally has six branches and a central stem, and should always be constructed in this manner.
5. Sanctuary seating must be provided, facing the Ark and bimo. A central aisle is useful for weddings and funerals.

B. Educational Facilities

In Jewish tradition, learning is considered one of the fundamental duties. Sunday School has been conducted almost universally on a one-day-a-week basis. An assembly hall should be made available, complete with stage, picture screen, and necessary equipment for religious services. An adequate library is a basic part

of the educational program. Forums, panel discussions, lectures, musical programs and similar activities are held in the synagogue during the week. These functions require meeting rooms and lounges. The size and number of classrooms depends on the number of pupils attending. The Sunday School and regular Sabbath services are not conducted on the same day. Therefore the classrooms do not need to be directly accessible to the sanctuary. I used this as a clue to a design feature in my building. The sanctuary and educational units are separated by a court which will function as a social unit when weather permits. These two units are connected by a wide covered walkway which serves as a shelter for buffet dinners.

C. Social facilities

"Oneg Shabbat" means "Sabbath joy". In most congregations social hours are held following the Friday evening service. Refreshments are served, and frequently some kind of cultural or educational program is held. Thus there is a basic need for a space for friendly, social gatherings. There should be areas for dances, plays, lectures, concerts and exhibitions. There should be a kitchen for the preparation of food, and a large space for dinners. The Social Hall is probably the most important community facility. With a kitchen it becomes a banquet hall; adding a stage makes it a theater or lecture hall; removing chairs makes it a dance floor or game room. It can be used as an overflow space for High Holy Day and other such services. Dressing rooms are necessary, and storage space is very important.

The layout of the kitchen should not be that of a commercial kitchen: its use will be sporadic, kitchen help will not be trained. This means they will need more space than a commercial kitchen. The basic scheme for my kitchen was developed from the route the waitress follows in returning from the dining room. The plan sequence is for the kitchen workers to pass a soiled-dish station, behind which is the dishwashing equipment and dish storage. Next the workers passes the cooler station which is backed by a range, oven and space for meat and vegetable preparation. They then pass a cold table with refrigeration at one end. Next comes the pastry table. Additional features include: glass cupboards

so those unfamiliar with the kitchen can more readily find stored articles, and storage space for canned goods and other supplies.

D. Administrative Facilities

The office area should be easily accessible and related offices must be grouped together for efficient management and control.

In my plan the office area is located convenient to, and visible from the main entrance. The administrative suite contains the following units:

1. Waiting Room
2. Executive Directors Office
3. Mailing and Equipment Room

The Rabbi's suite should be easily accessible but not as public as the administrative unit. It must be convenient to the sanctuary area and the administrative offices. The Rabbi's office is served by a common waiting room in my plan. Dictation equipment, filing and indexing cabinets have been provided for.

Much of the Rabbi's time will be spent in his private library. I have provided ample shelf space for his books and periodicals. This room also contains a conference table and chairs.

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