

Persian translation of this paper entitled:

اندیشه یهودیان در ایجاد کنیسه

نمونه موردی: محله جویباره در اصفهان

is also published in this issue of journal.

Jews' Mindsets in Constructing Synagogue Case Study: Juybareh Neighborhood in Isfahan

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Received; 2019/07/23

revise; 2019/10/28

accepted; 2019/12/04

available online; 2019/12/26

Abstract

The study of the synagogue is the exploration of the history of Israel. There are no periods of life imaginable without this place of public praying and religious teaching. Synagogue was very soon transformed into the main center of Judaism and, due to the same reason, long after Jews' scattering, Jews' beliefs and rites were preserved. The synagogue was the center of the Jewish society's activities the same way that Jerusalem Temple was the center of all Jews. In fact, the synagogue was a small sacred place for the compensation and lack of the main temple for the scattered Jewish community. Therefore, disregarding the idea that how can the details of synagogues' construction differ in various countries, the building of the synagogue and the praying and rituals in them are the most important visible manifestations of Judaism; the main goal of their construction was the unification of the Jews who were scattered all around the globe. The main purpose of the current study is to introduce the method of the Jewish ideas' formation regarding the construction of the synagogue. Assuming the effect that the Jewish mindset has on the construction of the synagogue in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, the present study presents historical-interpretive research to find answers to the following questions: how can the Jewish mindset influence the architectural design of the synagogues in Isfahan? How can the survey and observation of the synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood in Isfahan help to figure out the formation of the synagogue in Iran?

This article initially deals with the formation of the Judaism, history of Judaism in Iran, including Isfahan, and Jewish thoughts in the construction of synagogue; then, using survey observations and records in Juybareh Neighborhood, several samples of synagogues are analyzed and investigated. The recognition and classification of the architecture in Isfahan's synagogue enables a better perception of the synagogues' spaces.

Keywords

Jewish mindset, Jewish rites, Architectural design of synagogues, Juybareh Neighborhood.



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Introduction

In its simplest form, a synagogue is a praying place for the Jews who gather around therein for holding praying ceremonies. Of course, Jews can also perform their daily prayers anywhere in an individual manner, but some of the prayers can be only fulfilled in groups; which are called Minyan in Judaism. They are performed in a group comprised of at least ten adult men. According to this Jewish tradition, saying prayers in groups will be followed by a greater blessing than the individual prayers and synagogue is highly venerated after Jerusalem Temple amongst Jews.

The most important goal of the present study is to introduce the method in which Jewish mindsets have been formed for the construction of synagogues, including Isfahan's synagogue in Juybareh Neighborhood. The author attempts to identify some of the synagogues in Isfahan's Juybareh Neighborhood through survey observation and survey so as to be able to figure out proper answers in regard of the Judaism mindsets in architectural design of the synagogue assuming that how Judaism mindset influences the construction of synagogue in Isfahan (Juybareh Neighborhood).

Research Method

In terms of the study paradigm's ontology, the reality is not a material phenomenon in this study but it is dependent on the researcher's interpretation of it. In epistemological terms, the knowledge is not objective but subjective in this study. So, the study's philosophical basis is a historical-interpretive perspective hence one of the qualitative research methods should be selected as the research method. The data collection method is library and internet research through note-taking as well as survey via observation.

Study Background

According to a review of the study subject's literature,

there are many books and numerous articles in Iran and the world regarding the history of Judaism. It can be stated in this regard that the mindset and history of Judaism in synagogue construction dates back to His Highness Moses (PBUH). In the historical area in Iran and outside it, research by [Tawfighi \(2015\)](#), [Saltz \(2004\)](#), [Ebrami \(1997\)](#), [Finklestein & Alshersilberman \(2017\)](#) & [Epstein \(2009\)](#) can be pointed out. In the area of synagogues' architectural design, the works by Dr. Honarfar can be pointed out. According to him, Isfahan has 20 synagogues 16 of which are situated in Juybareh Neighborhood ([Honarfar, 1965](#)). [Dehghan \(2010\)](#) has made references in the book "architectural design of the religious places" to the components of synagogue and method of synagogues' formation in Judaism ([Ibid](#)).

But, none of these investigations has clearly specified the relationship between the Judaism mindset and the architectural design of the synagogue. Thus, in line with the study subject, the present research paper aims at investigating the quality of this relationship based on a historical-interpretive method.

Meanings of Synagogue

Kaniseh or Kenisah [synagogue] is the temple of Tabernacles(Borhan); temple of Tabernacles and Christians (Ghiath); church of the Christians or Jews (Montaha Al-Arb) (cited in Anendraj); sanctuary of the Jews; its plural form is Kanayes (Mohzab Al-Asma'a); sanctuary (Dehar), church, Keliseh, Kelisia, Christians' temple, Arabic word for sanctuary, prayer hall, prayer room, plural form: Kana'es ([Dehkhoda, 1963](#)). In Arabic, synagogue is the temple of Jews, Christians and Kaffirs and the temple of Jews is currently called "Kanis" and the Christians' temple is called Kaniseh in Arabic; the Muslims' temple is termed "Jame'e" and "Mosque" and the temple of the idolaters is called "Heykal". Hedayat states that Kaniseh is the temple of Jews and Christians so the author of Borhan has made a vivid mistake by saying

that it is the temple of Tabernacles (Tabrizi, 2012); in the city of “Raha”, there is a synagogue that is the largest, the most prosperous and the most strange in the whole world and monastics monks reside it (Sotudeh, 1983).

The term “Kaniseh” points to the place of the Jews establishment. It is a place for praying; many of the Jews call it the house of meeting. Synagogue can play an important role in the society of the Jews. The term “Betk’neset” indicates that these synagogues play a very valuable role as a place of prayer and worship as well as a social center. There are performed proper activities in them like those carried out in Jerusalem’s temple. Modern synagogues are usually constructed with meeting rooms or classrooms in the building. Sometimes, a hall is constructed to be used by the general public as a place for holding many events like a wedding ceremony as well as a celebration when the children reach 13 years of age¹. Thus, synagogue works as a center for all the ages, holding sessions of the youths clubs, holding speeches and offering a place of meeting to the senior managers of the citizens (CBAC, 2016).

The History of Synagogue’s Emergence

The history of a synagogue can be seen to be in two inter-wined components – there is the history of the building and its architecture and the story of the community or communities who have built and used it. In the Jewish context this is particularly important as there has rarely been a distinction between religious and social life in the communities and the synagogue has always functions as a social and community centre, hence the Jewish tradition of talking in services and traditional allegations that Jewish worship lacked decorum! At JTrails, our experience is that the physical history of a building is an important starting point, but what the history of a building is really about are the people who saw fit to create and use it. A community building, like a synagogue, is very much a stage for the life of

a community and the individuals who have used it. Therefore it is important in writing the history of a synagogue to present both the architectural history, as well as to give space and time to the life of the community who created used the building (Roberts, 2011).

Arguments surrounding the origins of the synagogue, where they refer to structures that predate the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, are wholly based on literary and epigraphical evidence, in which the Greek terms προσευχή and συναγωγή are used to describe what we have come to know as houses of prayer or synagogues. 13 Other words that are used in the Hebrew Bible (and sometimes interpreted as relating to the synagogue) are (קהל congregation)¹⁴ and עדה (assembly),¹⁵ but these describe an assembly of people not a place in which to assemble.¹

The first Jews’ place of worshipping was considered as an altar in such a way that it was the repetition of the movable tents in the threefold system of Egyptian temple including including yard, hall and a chamber with the statue of one of the gods² (Dashefsky, 2018). There were eleven columns in the width of the altar and there were twenty one columns in the length of the altar that had been established like a beam of the tent. There were white curtains between these columns except in the eastern gate that had been covered with movable blue and purple curtains that also filled the empty spaces (TACHAU, 1960); (Fig. 1).

The first synagogues or Jews’ praying houses had been in fact formed after their exodus from Egypt by his highness Moses from Egypt and their acceptance of Judaism. After exiting Egypt, Offspring of Israel (it is worth mentioning that another name of His Highness Jacob has been Israel and, in fact, Offspring of Israel refers to the children of His Highness Jacob) were in Sinai Desert for forty years. During this time, the synagogues were indeed large tents in which, beside praying issues, canonical and religious matters were taught by His Highness Moses and the elders of the tribe.

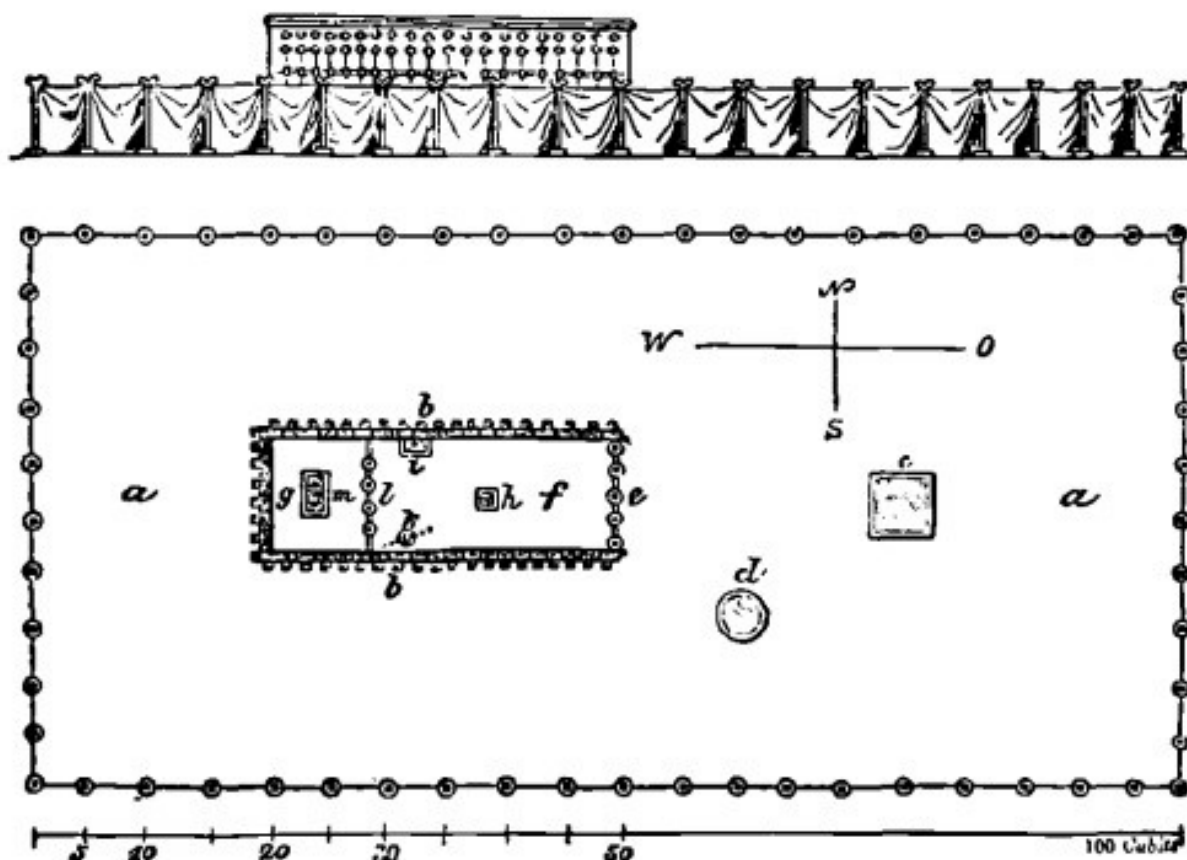


Fig 1. the façade and plan of the mosaic tabernacle. Source: TACHAU, 1960.

After Israel's offspring entered the land of Bayt al-Muqaddas and during the kingship of His Highness the prophet Solomon, a large synagogue or praying place was constructed in this city that had stone walls in which, beside praying and fulfilling worshipping rituals, animals with kosher meat were sacrificed in a special place. This temple that was called Bayt Hamiqdash or the holy house is the most important religious place and the largest synagogue of the Jews. It had been constructed about three thousand years ago by his Highness the prophet Solomon and was in prosperity for four hundred years.

After 400 years, this synagogue was destroyed in an attack by Babylonians under the command of Bakht Al-Nasr and set on fire. Offspring of Israel was captivated by Babylonians (Noss, 1975).

Cyrus the Great Attack on Babylon

After Cyrus, the great king of Iran, invaded Babylon and defeated Babylonians and freed Offspring of Israel, he permitted them to either reside Iran or return to Bayt Al-Muqaddas. In fact, the first exodus by Jews to Iran occurred about 2500 years ago at the time of Cyrus the Great. The Iranian king granted money and the required facilities to a group of Jews who wanted to return to Bayt Al-Muqaddas so that they can reconstruct a large temple and synagogue.

After returning to Bayt Al-Muqaddas, the Jews reconstructed the Bayt (Hamiqdash) or their temple and called it Hamiqdash II and called Cyrus the great the father of Jewish Tribe for he had freed them and given them money for the construction of the synagogue and the Jews from all around the world are still respecting Cyrus the great. For example, the

largest synagogue in Tehran is called Synagogue of Cyrus and/or the best school of Jews has been named School of Cyrus.

The Emergence of Synagogue

After Jews returned from Babylon, their religious society was given a new system and they constructed temples which were later called synagogue. These temples were the religious gathering place of the Jews and featured a special architecture like the other temples and contained altar and other special places. At present, the Jews' temple is called synagogue. Jews say prayers towards Solomon's temple (Aqsa Mosque). Only Samaritans say prayers towards Jarzim Mountain in the vicinity of the city of Nablus, on the west bank of Jordan River. They say prayers thrice a day: morning prayers, afternoon prayer and evening prayer. When there are at least ten men in

the synagogue, group prayers is fulfilled and, in this case, a person who is usually older than the others and knows Hebrew very well, stands in the front and recites parts of Torah or some petitions in Hebrew and bends down in some cases. The most popular expression read is Shema (means listen) which is an excerpt from Torah: "O' Israel, listen; Jehovah, our God, is the One. So, treat Jehovah, your God, kindly with all your heart and all your power" .

Judaism in Spain

At the time of Muslims and Islamic Government's domination in the south of Spain, Andalusia, there were many Jews living in Spain and they had strong amicable relationships with the Muslims and they were even present in the army of the Muslims as ministers and war commanders. After that Spain was occupied by Christians, they made people either

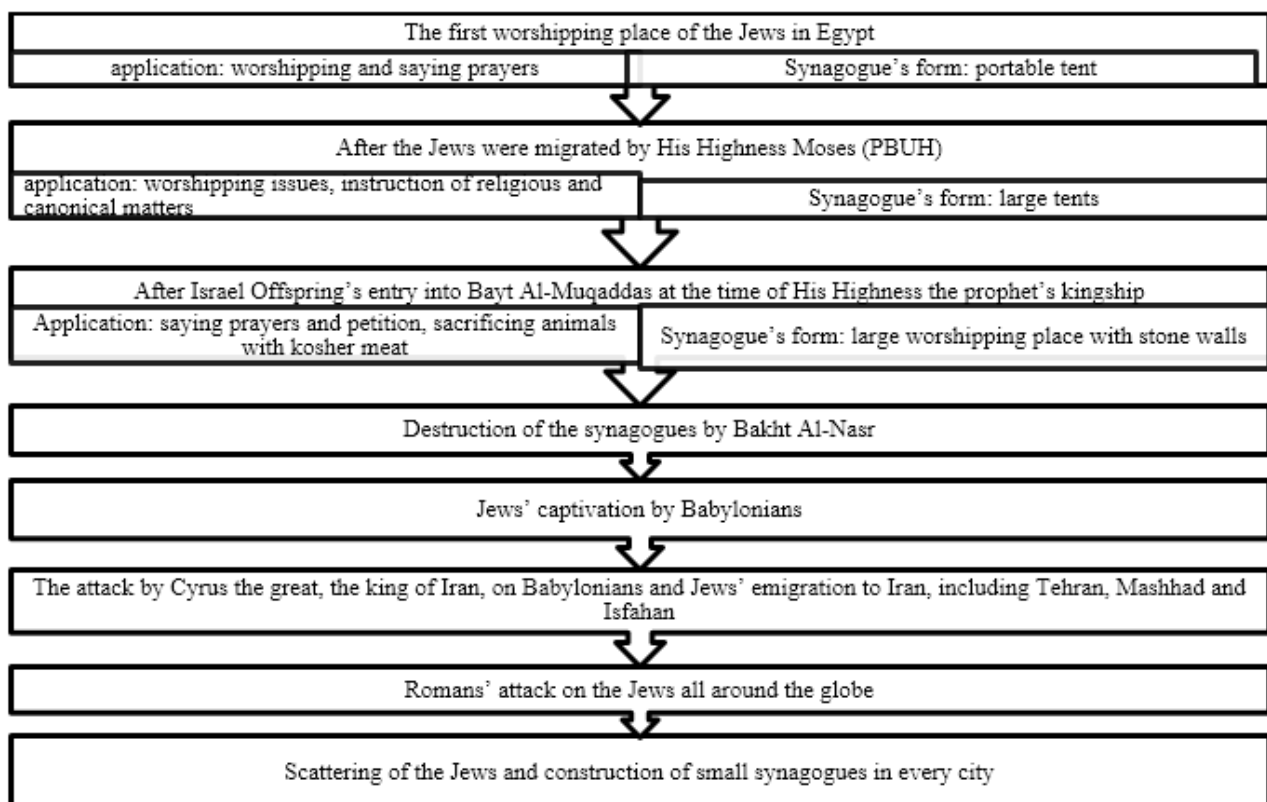


Fig 2. the history of synagogues' emergence. Source: authors.



Fig 3. main components of the synagogue. Source: authors.

convert to Christianity or exit Spain. Jews were also forced to exit Spain along with Muslims and, at this time, the second exodus by the Jews to Iran occurred. The second-largest synagogue or the second Bayt Hamiqdash was also prosperous for four hundred years until 2100 years ago that it was set on fire in a Roman attack under the command of Titus. Only a wall was remained of that large synagogue and it is still visible and termed Western Wall (wailing wall) (wailing means crying and mourning and the people expressed a lot of grief near the wall following the burning of the synagogue which was later on given the same name). This wall is located in Bayt Al-Muqaddas and exactly in the vicinity of Aqsa Mosque and it is amongst the important pilgrimage places of the Jews worldwide; they go to it for saying prayers and, in fact, the Jews from all around the globe say prayers towards this wall and the city of Bayt Al-Muqaddas.

After the attack by the Romans, Jews were scattered around the globe and resided every land afterward and constructed small synagogues (Noss, 1975); (Fig.2).

Main Components of Synagogue

These components are the main court wherein the Jews say prayers (sitting on the ground or in chairs), chaplain's counter and prayer desk (tribune), shelf (Hekhal) which is the position of the Pentateuch and the platform in front of Hekhal, named Bilocular, wherein special ceremonies are held by the monks. In every synagogue, shelf and tribune are mostly made of the best wood and decorated with beautiful and classical carvings and ornaments (Fig. 3).

The traditional synagogue is completely administered

by men and the women do not play any roles for leading the petitions, reading the Torah scroll, preaching and/or sitting at the side of the main entry gate. They usually sit in a women-only balcony or in the lower floors behind a barrier (Mechitzah) which is usually a partition or a pavaran.

Special rites are exercised in various synagogues depending on the host society and the related Jewish community. For instance, the eastern Jews take off their shoes before entering the synagogue and sit around it whereas most of the western Jews sit in rows in the desks facing Jerusalem. "The ceremonies and rites and rituals held in civilized Jews' temple and the synagogue of German orthodox are very formal and heavy; but, the prayer rooms in "Hasidy" (Shtiebel)³ which are mostly attended by Ashkenazis⁴ are completely informal and devoid of rituals" (Antreman, 2006). Hasidy groups even prefer to shake their bodies strongly (shokeling⁵) so as to provoke zeal for praying in themselves.

In conservative and reformed synagogues, the men and women use a commonplace for sitting. They even get the female prayers and worshippers (Tzalyanit: female prayers) more increasingly engaged in their programs than the orthodox synagogues. In a number of the reformist Jewish gatherings, women have also been appointed as Rabbi. Therefore, the women have generally been exempted from the observance of some regulations though this does not mean that they are prohibited and they can fulfill those rites if they want but without any canonical compulsoriness. As an example, women are not required to cover their shoulders with Sisit (Tzitzit) or tie Tefilin to themselves; they are not even required to perform Shema Yisrael in the morning and evening (Holmes

& Bocker, 2008).

Amongst properties like the use of native languages during the prayers, changes and moderation of the group prayers' rituals, formation of choir groups in synagogue, use of musical instruments along with the worshipping songs during saying prayers in synagogue and so forth, some can be also seen in the orthodox synagogues but the orthodox usually enumerate these amongst imitations from Christians and condemn them (Antreman, 2006).

Place of Prayers

The synagogue is the place of general Jewish public's attendance and it has been created in the course of captivation by Babylonians during 6BC at which time synagogue served as the gathering place of the Jews (Hillens, 2006 & 2007).

This pattern was developed and completed after the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD. So, it became a center for saying prayers and worshipping by the members of a locality and also reciting the Pentateuch. Nowadays, the synagogue is the separating factor of the Jews' group-oriented religion and it is also given a superior position to the house by some of the modernist Jews in terms of the centrality of the religious life.

Prayers are fulfilled either individually or collectively. Although prayers can be said individually in Judaism, the writings by rabbis constantly underline the significance of praying in public and in groups in synagogue in such a way that it is recommended in Talmud that "saying prayers and worshipping are answered by the God only if they are performed in the synagogue" (Kohan, 2003).

Since the time that the words and times of the prayers were clearly determined forever, another important institution called synagogue (Heknesht idol) was established. Since the petitions had been arranged based on the collective needs of Jewish ethnicity, the prayer-saying ceremonies were also held in groups in such a way that it is stated in Halakhah

(verdicts of the canon) that every male adult Jew can take responsibility of the leadership of the prayers, reading Torah and execution of the other rituals in synagogue.

The synagogue is the institution the affairs of which are totally dependent on the non-clerical persons and it is only the granting of the blessing⁶ that has to be performed by the monk. However, the responsibility of the chaplain is given to the individuals who have been taught full-time and are called Chazan and they have been commissioned to this task from Gaons' era and have certain qualifications. As an example chaplain, the prominent chaplain has to be away from any sins, be humble, intellectual and agreeable and he has to have a good voice. However, Halakha explicitly states that religiosity and knowledge of Chazans are more important than the quality of their voice (Antreman, 2006).

Holding Group Prayer Ceremonies in Synagogue

Since the time and the words of prayers were set forever, another important institution called synagogue (Heknesht or Kanisa idol) started working and because all the prayers have been arranged based on the entire needs of the Jewish tribes, it was stipulated that the prayer ceremonies have to be held in groups. But, the homogenization of the prayer ceremony did not have any effect on the private petitions made by the individuals based on their personal needs to God. This question that how many individuals should be considered as a group is an old question the answer to which is even older and there is no exact information available about the idea that when was this question seminally proposed and/or if it has been accepted as a primary tradition in the oral canon. Thus, the synagogue was the place wherein the religious groups residing the villages, cities, and estates gathered around to say prayers and it was used for meetings on the emergency occasions. Most of the synagogues were envisioned as the schools for the neighborhoods' children or sometimes religious

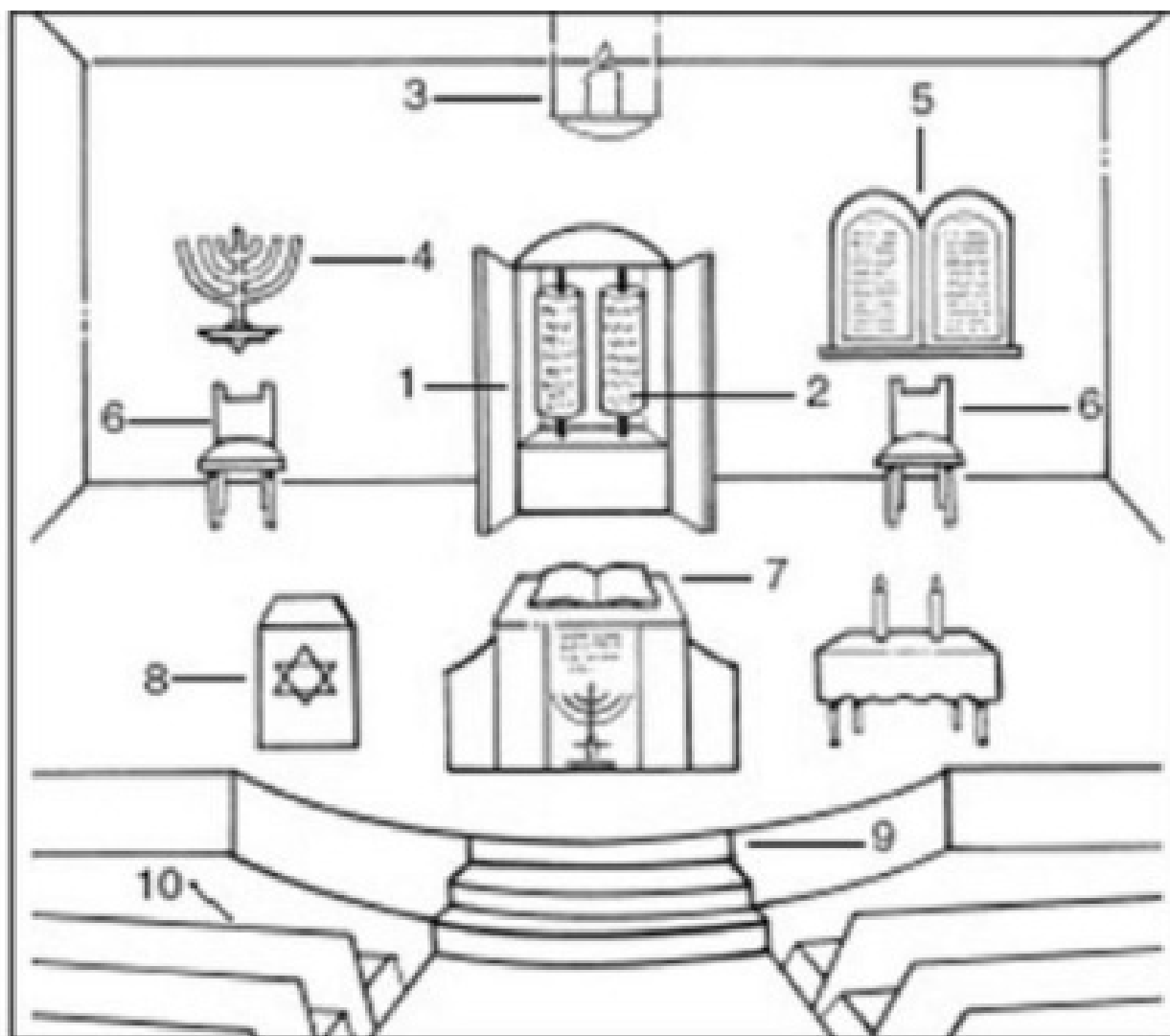


Fig 4. components of a synagogue in an order of the numbering, ark of Torah, position of Torah, ten commandments, position of Shema, the position of a rabbi, platform or Bimah for preaching, the special position of a rabbi for reading Torah, desks for individuals to sit down. Source: Slideplyer.com.

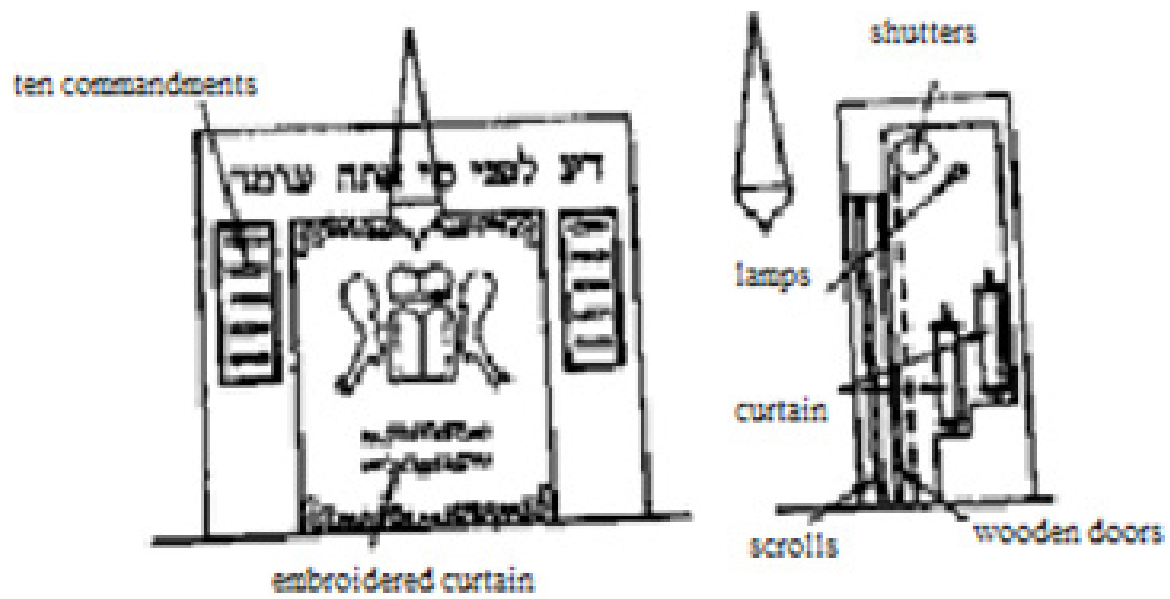
seminaries for the adults.

Placement of the Synagogue's Components in Architecture:

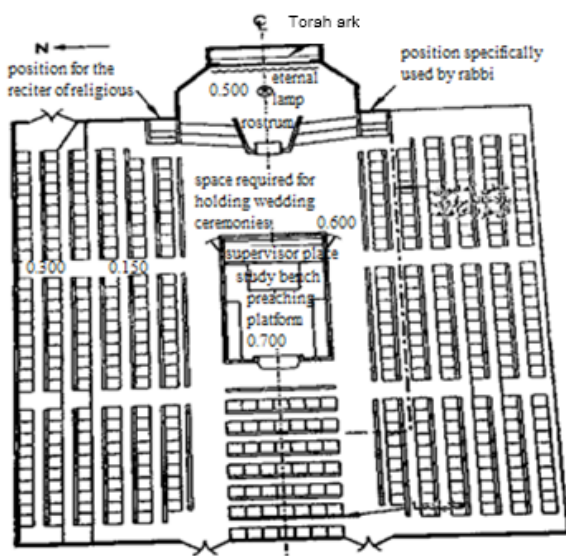
Synagogue's building is constructed facing Jerusalem (Bayt Al-Muqaddas). There is an ark on the front wall wherein Torah scrolls are kept. The ark and its contents are the most sacred symbols of a synagogue and it is comprised of one part in European regions (Askenasi) and three parts in eastern Jews' regions (Separdic). There is a hall between the tribune and the Torah scrolls that are used for holding collective ceremonies or the initial program for reading the

scrolls.

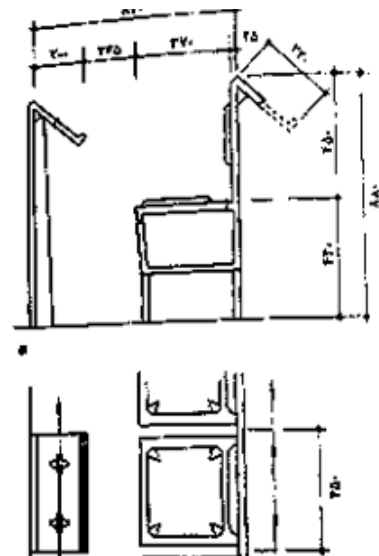
The plan of each synagogue is a novel effort for solving the problems of locating a spiritual turning point which is the tribune (i.e. a centralized and traditional building) with the spatial turning point which is the Torah scrolls (i.e. a long modern hall). The symbolic elements, in shape of star of David, seven-branched chandelier and the ten commandments of his highness Moses, are also of great importance. Some of the synagogues from the fifth or sixth century AD also included a rostrum but its use became prevalent after the eighth century.



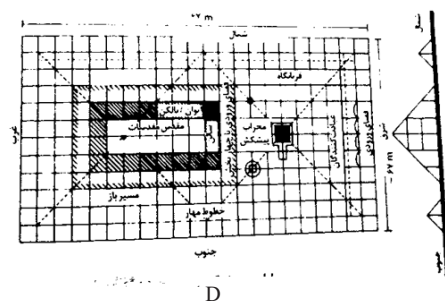
A



B



C



D

Fig 5. components of synagogue. A: Ark of Torah or Holy Ark . B: Bimah or preaching platform . C: Sitting and book-keeping place. D: Overall plan first synagogue. Source: authors..

It was usually used for reading texts other than the holy scripture as well as for offering them to the worshippers. It is a usual instrument with ordinary ornaments.

A synagogue is usually a part of an assembly center comprised of gathering and praying spaces. There is often a separate position for women in a hall that is outside the view range of the men. In the entry space, there is a fountain or basin for washing the hands. The religious bathroom and the washing place for women are usually in the basement. Natural water should be flowing and it must not be passing through the metal pipes. In some modern synagogues and temples, there is also citadel but of course with no parts being visible. The image of human beings is not a part of the synagogue's decorations and only ornaments with plants and geometrical shapes and calligraphy are allowed (Dehghan, 2010).

Judaism's Entry into Iran

Synagogue in Iran dates back to the beginning of Jews' life. There are still about a hundred synagogues striving in the cities of Iran like Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, and Yazd. Various patterns have been implemented in the construction of Iran's synagogues and they were influenced by the local or stylistic movements such as Islamic-Iranian architecture. The humble and simple exterior view of the synagogues did not differ from the other residential buildings but the interior introvert spaces of them were made based on a special plan; it was a language rooted in the Judaism's basics (Gharipour, 2014) (It is worth mentioning that the Iranian Jews migrated to Iran in two stages; the first one was about 2500 years ago at the time of Cyrus's kingship and the second one was about 700 years ago).

Judaism's Entry into Isfahan

A number of Jewish captives had been forced to migrate during early Achaemenids Era towards the south of Kalded; later on, they started moving from

there towards the periphery of Karun, especially Shush and, some time later Ešakhr and Pazargad through the current Basra. The advanced towards Isfahan and Lenjan Region in the next centuries. There, they built a city and called it Jay which became later on known as Yahudiyeh. number of Jewish captives who had been forced to migrate, in the early era of The Achaemenids, towards the south of Kaldeh started moving from the south of Kaldeh and through the current Basra towards the periphery of Karun, especially Shush, and later on Ešakhr and Pazargad. Then, they advanced towards Isfahan and Lenjan region in the next centuries and built a city there and called it "Jay" which became later on known as Yahudiyeh.

As it is understood from the writings by some antecedent geographers, the current Isfahan has been built over the ruins of the very ancient Jay City and later Yahudiyeh City. The majority of the people in Isfahan are originally the descendants of the old migrants (Mostafavi, 1990). The existence of the tombs of the Jewish prophets like Yushe'e and Ash'aiya in Isfahan is reflective of the long presence of Jews in this city in such a way that Isfahan was divided into two main districts in the past called Yahudiyeh and Shahrestan. Kalimis in Isfahan have been taught and exposed so much to Iranian culture that they forgot Hebrew and used to write Pahlavi language in Hebrew. Isfahan's Kalimis' speak a mixed language Kalimis speak a mixed language which is amongst the Iranian Jews' non-Torah dialects somewhat close to the former dialect of the people in Isfahan and amongst the dialects of central Iran. Like the Christians, the Kalimis of Isfahan have been peacefully living along with the majority of the Muslim population in the city and had worshipping places for themselves. Large, Small, Molla Ya'aghoub, Molla Nasiyan, Molla Rabi'e, Golbahar, Jama'ati, Keter Davud, Madreseh, Shah Goli, Molla Alyahoo, Samuel, Shokri, Khorshidi, Mushe, Yusuf Samuel Simoen, and Sangbast are synagogues of the

Jews in Isfahan and most of them date back to Qajar Era and only seven of them have been registered in the list of the national monuments.

Juybareh Neighborhood

Juybareh is the most primary initial core of the city of Isfahan with its origin dating back to Achaemenid Government and the migration of the Jews from Babylon by the order of Cyrus. The spot wherein the Jews were residing was known as Dar Al-Yahud till the fifth hegira century but it was later on changed and became known as Jahanbareh or Juybareh. Of course, the reason for such an appellation has been said by some to have been a ditch flowing therein. In the post-Islamic eras, Juybareh became one of the neighborhoods in Isfahan and it was used as the capital of the city during the Seleucids Period. The ancient historical monuments like Sareban Minaret and Chehel Dokhtaran Minaret indicate that Safavids and Qajaris neglected the neighborhood and let it wear out and the Pahlavi government segmented the body of the old texture by constructing several streets and therefore, this is how the Isfahan's Juybareh Neighborhood was treated harshly and left abandoned in practice. The issue became more exacerbated and severe with the migration of its Jewish residents during the past years. The neighborhood is no longer completely dwelled by Jews. Older families have migrated and the current residents are more migrators who have gone there for supplying themselves with cheaper houses (Sangtarash, 2016); (Fig. 6).

Synagogues of Juybareh Neighborhood in Isfahan

Synagogues of Juybareh Neighborhood of Isfahan After settling in Isfahan, Jews became capable of constructing temples known as a synagogue for themselves. These synagogues were prosperous in various periods and their historical relics from the Qajar Era are currently seen.

Typology and orientation of the synagogues

buildings are west-eastward and there are Karbandi (ribbed vault) ornaments seen in them but they are mostly lacking the platform whereon religious ceremonies were held. The architectural style of Jewish synagogues in Isfahan is simple and humble, environment-friendly and sustainable. Isfahan has 20 synagogues 16 of which are positioned in Juybareh Neighborhood (Fig. 7)

The oldest synagogue in Isfahan is called "Amoo Ash'aiya Synagogue" in Juybareh Neighborhood and the closest of them to Muslim-dwelling neighborhood is in the vicinity of Atiq Square (Molla Nesiyan Synagogue). This synagogue is situated in an alley called Pir-e-Palanduz. On top of each of the dome-shaped rooms of the synagogue, there are skylights supplying the interior spaces with the required light. The aforesaid synagogue is simple and undecorated in the external view and decorated with various ornaments on the interior sections (Fig. 8).

• Molla Ya'aghoub Synagogue

At the side of the tomb of Kamal Al-Din Ismail, an Isfahani poet, and on Kamal Street in Juybareh Neighborhood, there is a hundred-year-old one hundred-year-old synagogue. After passing through the entry door, there is a corridor that opens to a small yard in a 90-degree turn. One edge of the vestibule leads to the worshipping place and the other edge reaches a small yard. The entry to the worshipping place is possible through the southern corner of the eastern edge; in another section of this vestibule, there is a staircase specifically used for women and it is attached to the building in the form of a half-storey on the southern front. The window above the Torah Ark is one of the most impressive elements of this building and performs the religious command indicating the opening of a window towards Jerusalem. The spatial structure of these synagogues like most of the other synagogues in Juybareh is composed of a central dome-house. The roof of the dome house is of 16-sided karbandi and is constructed on four stone columns the section parts of which are

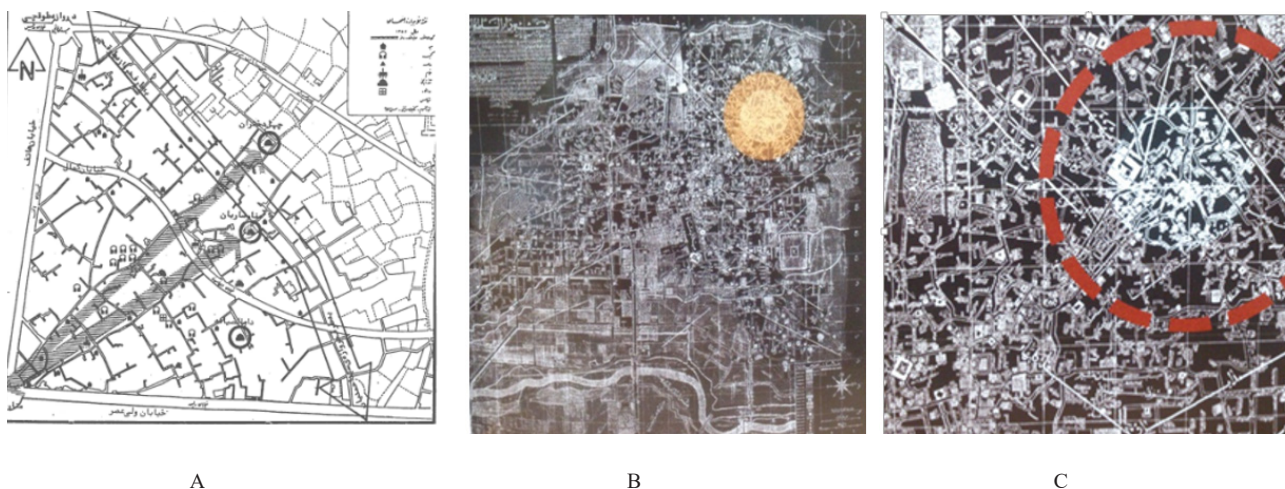


Fig 6 . A: Juybareh neighborhood in Isfahan's urban scale. B: Isfahan Urban Scale Area. C: Juybareh Neighborhood's zone. Source: authors.

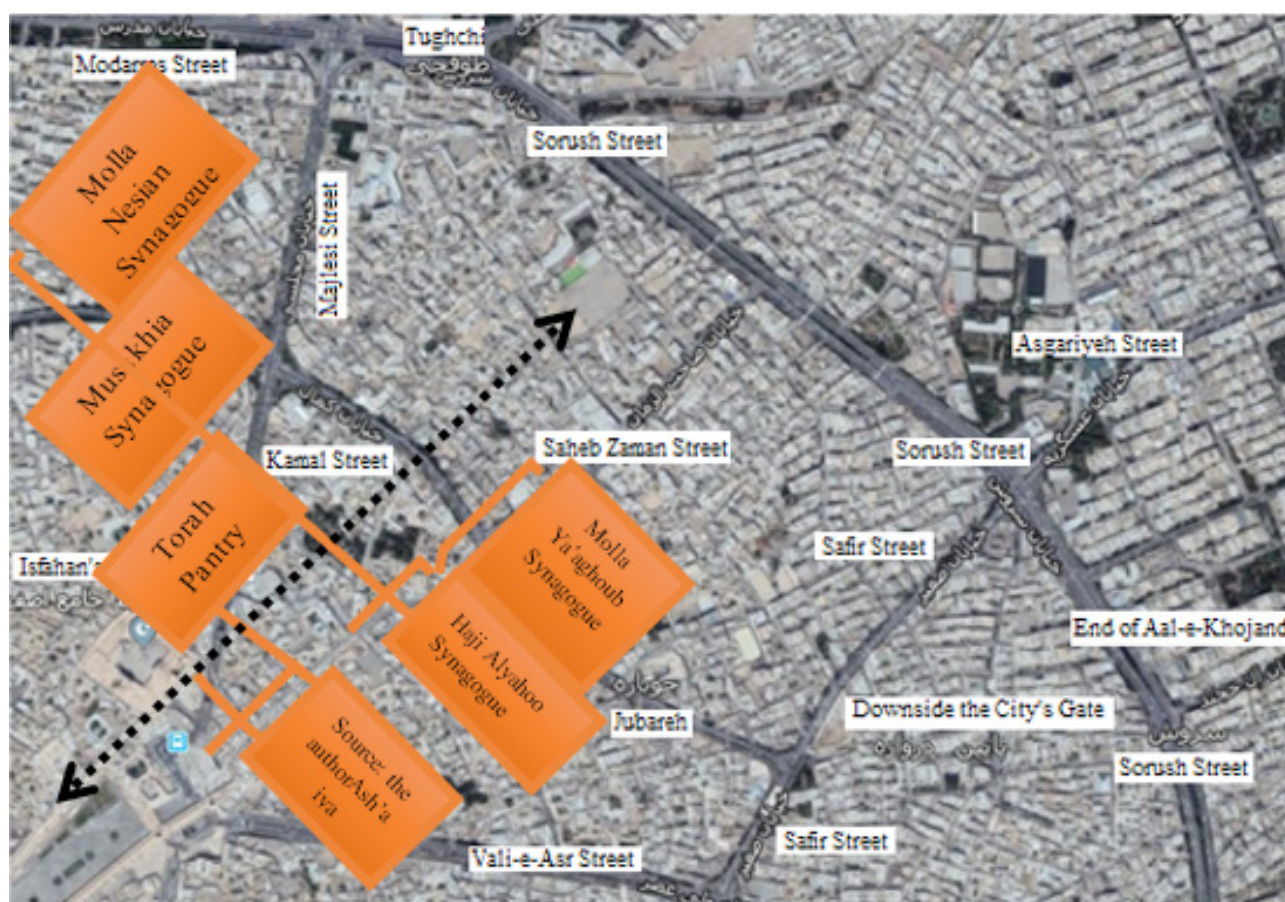


Fig. 7. Locations of the Jouybara neighborhood synagogues on Kemerzin Stree. Source: authors.

round but the capitals are gradually transformed from circular shape to square shape and acquired a pot-like shape (Fig. 9).

• Torah House

It is situated in the northern part of Molla Ya'aghoub synagogue on Kamal Street (Fig. 10).

• Molla Nesian Synagogue

It dates back to the late Qajar Era and it is situated in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, Qiam Square, Bazarqaz, within a distance to fish-sellers' juncture. This monument was registered on the 20th of May, 2008, under the number 19037 as



Fig. 8. Amoo Ash'aiya Synagogue. Source: authors.



Fig. 9. Molla Ya'aghoub Synagogue⁷. Source: authors.



Fig 10. Torah House. Source: authors.

one of The Iran National Monuments.

The building's construction was finished in 5675 Hebrew year (87 years ago) and the chaplain's seat was completed in 5680 Hebrew Year. Disregarding the simple exterior appearance of this synagogue, it is one of the most beautiful ones in Isfahan. The level of this synagogue is one meter below the alley's level. The influential element in this building is a small vestibule that opens to the worshipping house and synagogue's yard. Although this synagogue is in general similar to the other synagogues, the cover of its ceiling and its load-bearing style differ from the others. This synagogue has one of the most beautiful Torah Arks with a lot of decorations. The ornamental balusters can be also observed in the western front. This building is the most widely used synagogue existent in Juybareh in terms of plaster karbandi; it has a rectangular plan and by two slim ribbed vaults enables the karbandi to be constructed on two boards on an diamond shape (octagonal) ground. Such Karbandi has four formal sides four formal (sides) and 32 non-formals (sar-seft in Farsi) in the first base and it ends in 16-sided formal karbandi in the next base. The skylight part, as well, has been decorated with 16 formal karbandi on an octagonal-based plaster ground.

The synagogue has two windows on the western front that are placed symmetrically with respect to Torah Ark. The women's part is positioned on a floor on the eastern side and it is somehow connected to the synagogue's space. This part of the windows existent in the eastern front absorbs the light from the yard and its visual connection with the synagogue's space has been restricted by means of lattice brickworks. Similar to Molla Ya'aghoub's synagogue, this is a completely symmetrical and centralized building and the only factor directing the space is Torah Ark (Jerusalem Axis); (Fig. 11).

• Shokra Synagogue

The current location of the building is on Kamal Street in Juybareh Neighborhood and the date recorded on

one of the curtains in this synagogue dates back to 5569 Hebrew year, i.e. 198 years ago, and, according to Ibrahim Eshaghiyan, it dates back to 100 years ago.

The building's specifications are as follows: after passing through the entrance door, there is a dark corridor the floor of which is three steps beneath the alley's surface and generally cuts the connection with the external environment. The goal of such a quality in the synagogues has been stated to be cutting the human beings' connection and attention from the external world and preparing them for worshipping. But, this theory does not seem to be so much rational because the dished worshipping places and the crypts have been common in Iran and other spots around the globe (Javadi, 2019). The issue cannot be dealt with and analyzed here. For more information, please refer to Hami, 1974. The entrance of the prayer room's space is through the corner of the eastern edge and towards Jerusalem; the building of the worshipping place is a rectangle with its longitudinal axis being directed east-westward and the roof of the synagogue has been constructed using wooden frames.

• Asiaban Synagogue

It pertains to the late Qajar Era and it is situated in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, Kamal Street, Shahid Tutuni Alley. This monument has been registered on the 20th of May, 2008 under the number 19075 as one of The Iran National Monuments.

• Musakhia Synagogue

It dates back to Safavid-Qajar Era and is located in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, fish-sellers' juncture within some distance to Kamal Street. This monument was also registered on the 20th of May, 2008, under the number 19071 as one of The Iran National Monuments (Fig. 12).

• Haj Al-Yahoo Synagogue

It dates back to Qajar Era and it is located in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, Shahid Kazem Khanali Alley, Haj Al-Yahoo Dead End. It was registered on the 20th of May, 2008, under the number 19040 as



Fig 11. Molla Nesian Syangogue. Source: author's.



Fig. 12. Musakhia Synagogue. Source: authors.



Fig 13. Haj Al-Yahoo Synagogue. Source: authors.

one of The Iran National Monuments (Fig. 13).

Analyzing the Synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood:

According to the samples existent in Juybareh Neighborhood and as shown in Table (2), each of the existing synagogues has been analyzed in terms of the historical period, placement axis, plan, shape

of roof, materials used and plan's diagram (Table 1).

According to Table (1), the construction of the synagogues in Isfahan dates back to Qajar Era and Safavid Era to some extent. In terms of the placement axis, they are located eastern-western and rectangular in shape (rectangular or square temples with eastern-western orientation are rooted in the temples from

Table 1. analysis of the synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood in Isfahan. Source: authors.

Synagogue's name	Historical period	Placement axis	General shape of plan	Shape of roof	Materials used	Plan's diagram
Amoo Ash'iya Synagogue		Eastern-western	Rectangular	Dome or with skylight	Plaster of clay and straw	
Molla Ya'aghoub Synagogue	100 years	✓		The dome-house's roof is built based on 16-sided karbandi constructed on the foundation of four stone columns.	Brick & adobe	<pre> graph TD Entry[Entry] --> Corridor[Corridor] Corridor --> Vestibule{{Vestibule}} Vestibule --> SouthernCorner((Southern corner of the worshipping place's eastern edge)) Vestibule --> Yard((Yard)) SouthernCorner --> Staircase((Staircase specific to the women)) Vestibule --> SouthernEdge((Southern edge specific to the women)) Staircase --> SouthernEdge </pre>
Molla Nesian Synagogue	Late Qajar Era	✓	Rectangular, symmetrical and centralized	Dome house or skylight	brick	<pre> graph TD Entry[Entry] --> Corridor[Corridor] Corridor --> Vestibule{{Vestibule}} Vestibule --> SouthernCorner((Southern corner of the worshipping place's eastern edge)) Vestibule --> TorahHouse((Torah house in the western section)) SouthernCorner --> Yard((Yard)) Vestibule --> EasternEdge((Eastern edge specific to the women)) Yard --> EasternEdge </pre>
Shokra Synagogue	200 years ago	✓	Cubic	Wooden roof or frames	Wood and cob	<pre> graph TD Entry[Entry] --> Corridor[Corridor is three steps beneath the ground level] Corridor --> Vestibule{{Vestibule}} Vestibule --> EasternEdge((Eastern edge of the prayer hall facing Jerusalem)) </pre>
Asiaban Synagogue	Late Qajar Era	✓	Rectangular	Dome roof	Cob	
Musakhia Synagogue	Safavid-Qajar	✓	Rectangular	Dome roof	Cob	
Haj Al-Yahooo Synagogue	Qajar	✓	Rectangular	Dome roof	Brick and cob	

ancient Iran and before Zoroastrianism) (*Ibid*). The roof of the synagogues is a dome house and the skylights face Jerusalem. The hierarchy of the synagogue's plan is similar to Iran's traditional architecture in such a way that the floor of the synagogue is three steps below the ground level and one would find oneself in a vestibule after passing through a corridor. However, in terms of the placement of the worshipping place, prayers' seat, yard, Torah ark's position and interior decorations, these synagogues are in accordance with Judaism's mindsets. According to Judaism mindset, some large synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood, including Molla Nesian's synagogue, the placement position of the prayers' hall special for women is on the eastern edge of the vestibule with the worshipping place being located on the southern corner of the eastern edge to the vestibule with the Torah Ark being positioned, as in Molla Nesian Synagogue, in the southern corner of the eastern edge. In terms of the materials, all of the existent synagogues in Isfahan's Juybareh Neighborhood have been constructed by cob (plaster of clay and straw) in their external façade.

Conclusion

In Judaism's mindset, the synagogues mostly play a role as a place for gathering of the Jews in one place for performing religious obligations like study and research in classrooms for adolescents to learn how to read Torah and religious texts as well as for gathering and holding religious ceremonies. Furthermore, these places function as an institution of social assistance and collect and distribute money and other life requirements for the poor.

The abovementioned materials indicate Judaism's mindset in the creation of synagogue. Considering the field records made through observation, it seems in first glance that the synagogues are in coordination with the urban space in Isfahan as well as with the other land uses in terms of urban façade and they are not recognizable from the other buildings. The facades of these synagogues are very simple and undecorated

but there are many ornaments used inside as inspired by the traditional Iranian architecture and basics of Judaism architect. The element that isolates the landuse of the synagogue from the other peripheral buildings in the neighborhood is the dome house's space, roof and skylights facing Jerusalem. In all of the synagogues, the roof's height is observed based on the urban regulations of Isfahan. It has been noted that Jews have solved this case by constructing the synagogue at a lower level than the ground. All of the synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood have been constructed three steps beneath the ground level. In general, the synagogues in Isfahan, Juybareh Neighborhood, have been constructed with an emphasis on such principles as introversion, centralism and axis-orientation. Centralism means that the central and middle point is the focal locus of attentions and all of the components and elements are arranged in respect thereto. In the synagogues in Juybareh Neighborhood, this case is well evident along with the position of the Torah house with the use of such elements as dome and windows that open towards Jerusalem. However, the spatial axis is originally stretched in such a way that these spaces be placed in an east-westward direction and facing the west with one point being devoted to the western part to the Torah scrolls. Synagogues have been currently transformed into gathering places in Judaism Mindset.

Endnote

1. Barmitzvah
2. Cella
3. Shtiebel is a place wherein the Jews say Friday prayers but this place is smaller in dimensions in contrast to the synagogue.
4. Ashkenazi is a group of Jews originally from eastern and central Europe. It is stated by the researchers that there are now over 11 million Ashkenazis living in 67 countries and accounting for 80% to 90% of the today's Jewish population. Except Ashkenazi, there are other Jewish groups amongst which Safardi and Mazrahi can be pointed out.
5. Shokeling is a rite exercised during Jews' saying of prayers and it includes moving of the body back and forth or from a side to another. This procedure dates back at least to eight centuries ago and probably to Talmud's era.
6. Prayers said for blessing the people by the monks; these were finally inserted to the synagogue's prayers as a part thereof (see also numbers, 6, pp. 22-27).
7. The second image from the right: tomb of martyr Kamal Al-Din Ismail (a poet who sought solitude in this place for worshipping and was killed in by Mongols).

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Sangtarash, F. & Pourmand, H. A. (2020). *Jews' Mindsets in Constructing Synagogue Case Study: Juybareh Neighborhood in Isfahan*. *Journal of Art & Civilization of the Orient*, 7 (26), 31-40.

DOI: 10.22034/jaco.2019.99672

URL: http://www.jaco-sj.com/article_99672_en.html

