

Beit Binyamin Synagogue

Kefar Saba, Israel

Area - 660 sq.m.

Cost - \$700,000

Date - 2003

Client - Beit Binyamin Synagogue

Design team: Esther Sperber, Elena Fernandez, David Serero

Reading the Torah, commenting on it, and seeking to reify it, is the touchstone act of Jewish religious life. It is the essential act of Jewish practice that has transmitted the tradition from generation to generation of the "People of the Book."

The Beit Binyamin Synagogue design is inspired by the shapes of the Hebrew letters and the idea of layering found in the layout of a Talmud page. The exterior walls are abstracted forms evocative of Hebrew letters although avoiding a literal representation. The spaces are organized in an onion manner wrapping and protecting the most sacred space in the center with layers of everyday program around it. The changing width of the wall is an opportunity for programmatic elements such as the prayer book storage and the ark to be part of the architecture itself.

The exterior wall is a composite system with an opaque layer in which a text is cut out. The letters are revealed with different degrees of sharpness and color inside of the sanctuary, depending on the exterior light conditions. At the dusk when the Shabbat enters, the light of the sanctuary reveals to the outside the writing on the façade. The Hebrew letters signify the centrality of the text to the Jewish project, and their immanence in the building structure marks the synagogue as a sacred space whose occupants seek to understand the text and bring it into their lives, and their lives into it.

diagram
facade & text study
building model
ground floor plan
lower level floor plan
second floor plan

