

Musical and Ritual Practices in the German Synagogue

an undertone. Both these variations may lead to musical ramifications.

A difficulty may arise in defining the locus of *Minhag* Ashkenaz. Traditionally it was limited to that area of Germany west of the Elbe river. The areas of Eastern and Northern Germany officially followed *Minhag* Poland - a variant of the Eastern European *Nusah*. However, it would be grossly inaccurate to write off these synagogues in large areas of pre-war Germany from our discussion. The *Nusah* followed by these communities in recent times shares certain peculiarities with the *Minhag* Ashkenaz. Additionally, the use of *Minhag* Poland in these communities, refers mainly to the textual details. In musical matters the boundary between the German and Eastern European traditions is not as clear but in many ways most East and North German communities would fall squarely in the German category. This anomaly is due, at least in part, to the fact that culturally the Jews in all parts of Germany shared the Westernization that the enlightenment and political freedom brought them since the early nineteenth century. Nor is it always possible to determine which musical particulars of the German *Nusah* are due to varying traditions and which are due to the relatively recent adaptation of standardized settings by nineteenth century composers.

Another complexity in treating this topic is the question of the British *Nusah*. This *Nusah* defies clear classification as it includes, in an almost haphazard fashion, the elements of both Western and Eastern *Nusha'ot* with a small amount of Sephardic influence. It would seem that the foundations for the modern British *Nusah* were laid by

the emigrations from Germany in the late seventeenth century. The underlying *Nusah* appears to be closely related to the "Polish" -German *Nusah* of Hamburg. This German foundation has been overlaid by diverse Eastern European layers due to the immigration in the last 125 years. The Sephardic influence is probably due to the early establishment of the Western Sephardim as well as the continued prestige that this community enjoys. Including the *Nusah* of this community would enormously complicate the task at hand. However, ignoring it would mean ignoring the only large and vibrant example of any German related *Nusah*. We shall not endeavor to systematically treat the British *Nusah* but the reader should bear in mind that it shares many of the peculiarities of the German *Nusah* as well as having features of its own.

A further complication is that certain features of the Western European synagogue have become popular in the standard synagogues of North America, Israel, and elsewhere, particularly in those congregations that are usually styled "Modern Orthodox." This is especially true in the area of congregational singing.

A fair summary of the difficulties mentioned is that today, and, indeed, for the past few generations, there have been few communities in which a pure Eastern European or Western European *Nusah* has been preserved. The details of what is being chanted are often due to the background or whim of the *Ba'al Tefillah*.

THE ROLE OF THE SHATZ

Before describing some particulars of various services, it would be proper to mention a few characteristics of the