

## Musical and Ritual Practices in the German Synagogue

service in the German synagogues. The role of the *Sheliah Tzibbur* carries with it more prestige than in the Eastern European synagogues and this is apparent in several ways. In German synagogues the *Ba'al Tefillah*, in deference to *Kevod Hatzibbur*, is specially attired. He wears a *Tallit* at all services. On his head he wears a large cap similar to the type that Lithuanian *Roshei Yeshiva* traditionally wore. This practice, followed even on weekdays, has gradually died out in some German congregations. On *Shabbat* and *Yomtov* one form or another of the traditional cantor's cap is worn. Generally, the robe is not worn today, being seen as an outdated formality. In prewar Germany robes were the norm as they still are in British synagogues. Some German congregations insist, either officially or unofficially, that the *Ba'al Tefillah* always wear a necktie even on weekdays and in all seasons.

The prestige of the *Sheliah Tzibbur* is also seen in the reluctance of the German congregations to allow just anyone to officiate. Even a *hiyuv* is not encouraged to serve as a *Sheliah Tzibbur* unless the congregation knows him to be qualified. Depending on the synagogue, the qualifications most scrutinized may range from personal piety, fluency in Hebrew, and familiarity with the *Nusah* and *Minhagim* of the service.

Professional *Hazzanim* officiate more frequently in German congregations. The Friday evening service will invariably call for a professional, as might the *Shabbat Minhah*. Frequently when there is no qualified *hiyuv*, the professional will officiate at a weekday service. Furthermore, the German *Minhag* does not permit an *Avayl* to officiate on any

day which *Tahanun* is not recited, leaving many minor festival services at which the professional *Hazzan* or gifted amateur officiates. It can be seen that by limiting the accessibility of the *Amud*, both by setting minimally high standards for a *Ba'al Tefillah*, as well as by utilizing the professional or unusually gifted amateur for a maximum of services, inadvertently there is a degree of quality control of the service, difficult to match where the *Amud* is wide open.

The dignity associated with the *Amud* in German congregations leads to the professional *Hazzan* regarded as a clergyman who is entrusted with maintaining the dignity of *Avodat Hashem*. This sense of priorities leads to selection of *Hazzanim* who pay meticulous care to tradition as well as accurate treatment of the Hebrew text rather than those who emphasize showmanship and vocal gymnastics. Furthermore, the *Hazzanim* tend to remain with their congregations over long periods of time. While a German congregation might appreciate an itinerant *Hazzan* in a concert format, engaging a "guest - *Hazzan*" for a service would be unthinkable. Again, the result of this attitude is much greater stability and durability for tradition.

### RECITING THE PRAYERS

There is a greater amount of rigidity in the German synagogue in respect to which verses are recited aloud by the *Hazzan*, although it is not absolute. If one contrasts the Sephardic *Minhag* with the *Hazzan* chanting the service almost entirely aloud with some antiphony between him and the congregation, with the East-European practice of having the congregation *daven* indepen-