

Apart from the comparison of Jewish and German tunes offered, we give some more parallel tunes of the German-Catholic song in table XXVI, such as 1, which is similar to XXV, 4. The German melody was printed in 1619 and an older setting of it is known from 1582.⁸⁴ In like manner do we find for XXV, 7, a parallel in XXVI, 2.⁸⁵

Jewish elements, we find only in example XXV, 5, in which the concluding motive is derived from the *sof-passuk* of the Prophetic mode, while 1 and 6 have the flavor of the Biblical modes. Thus, in the group of tunes for poetical texts we notice that the Jewish element is almost abandoned, that the rhythmical element became the basis, and that in most cases the tunes are either in toto or in their main features and elements adoptions from that period of German religious and secular folk-song.

The reasons for the stagnation of the musical creation of the Jews in Germany in the later period of the medieval era are manifold. Of first importance is the desperate social position into which the Jews were forced since the thirteenth century. German music was enriched through the Minnesinger, the Meistersinger, and, beginning with the sixteenth century, through the Protestant movement which strengthened German song and brought about the birth of German poetry and music. At the same time Jewish culture, the product of a small, oppressed, and disfranchised dwindling and scattered minority, declined, impoverished by reason of cruel persecutions and brutal expulsions from century-old settlements to Eastern Europe, to Italy, and the Balkan. The German neighbors, at first inferior culturally, became superior; and the Jews, crushed in body and spirit, were influenced by the song of their oppressors. The song of the Synagogue in Germany, beginning at least with the sixteenth century, became Germanized. All musical

material that originated in that period has typical German characteristics with but little Jewish flavor.

This fact may give us a clue to the reason for the attitude of the spiritual leaders in Germany toward the tunes "newly" introduced into the Synagogue. With the beginning of the sixteenth century complaints were levelled against *chazzanim* for abandoning the old sanctified tunes inherited from the fathers, tunes which gave tonal expression to the religious thoughts. The above cited *chazzan* Herz Treves inveighs against the new *chazzanim* who neglected the traditional functions of the precentor and the study of Jewish lore, who centered their interest in displaying their singing and their art, employing tunes which had no relation to the prayer texts. They further embellished the poem with elaborate music, and did not pay attention to the prayers proper. The *chazzanim* chose to officiate only during the *Musaf* service because that service offered them the opportunity to display their art, and they considered the officiating at the *Mincha* service beneath their dignity. This change took place at the same time when in Central Europe the *ars nova* began its inroad from Italy into Germany.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the Protestant movement abolished the Gregorian chant about the same time and replaced it with the German folk-song.

The introduction of new songs into the Synagogue aroused opposition by reason of the innovation. But a more fundamental, if less obvious, cause for the antagonism was something in the very nature of the new tunes that was displeasing to the Jewish spirit, while in the old tunes there was something that spoke to the Jewish sentiment. Of that "something" we become aware on examining the two types of songs. The older elements explained in I, II and III (A) still bear Jewish Semitic features in that they consist, to a considerable part, of Jewish motives and retain to a certain degree the modal form;

while the "new" type, i.e., the tunes for the poetical texts treated in III (B), comprise adaptations and imitations of German folk-tunes. No wonder that in these melodies the people felt sentiments expressed which were not their own. And the Jew in medieval Germany certainly had sentiments different from those of his persecutors. Even the hopes which the Jews had placed in the liberal Protestants turned into disappointment, for the attitude of the latter toward Jews was by no means better than that of the Catholic Church.

For a long time the new tunes were tolerated by the rabbis. They remained secondary and inferior to the Biblical and prayer modes as well as to the *Missinai* tunes, namely, groups I, II and III (A). These groups of songs were adopted by all Ashkenazim and were retained also by the Ashkenazic settlers in the East; the "new" tunes in group III (B) remained mostly within the borders of Germany and did not survive in the East, in all likelihood on account of their German character.

In the Catholic Church an effort was made, beginning with Gregory I (d., 604) and continuing to the present time, to preserve the traditional song of the Church and to keep away vulgar secular tunes. In the Synagogue no laws or orders were issued to that end; the Jew being guided merely by his instinct. As long as his Jewish consciousness was strong, wherever he developed his spiritual culture and lived accordingly, his religious song was Jewish.

As stated at the opening of this chapter, at the period of the flourishing of Jewish culture in Germany, the rabbis paid much attention to the ritual of the Synagogue. The last prominent rabbi who rendered great service to the Synagogue song was *Jacob Levi Mölin*, called *Maharil* (born in Mayence c. 1356, and died in Worms in 1427). He found it his joy and considered it his high duty to be precentor on festivals, fast days,

and High Holidays. By means of this office he could render service to his people, elevate their spirits and arouse devotion in them by his inspiring rendition of the prayers and songs. He used to travel to many communities in Germany, and in every place he officiated. The *Maharil* was the greatest rabbinical authority of his time, at least in German countries; and therefore his word was accepted as law all over the country. His opinion was that the communities should hold fast to their traditional customs and melodies. When in the fourteenth century the decay in the spiritual life of German Jewry began, the *Maharil*, through his exalted personality, saved the integrity of the Synagogal ritual and music by sanctioning the old tunes. The following legendary incident told about him illustrates his attitude toward the sanctity of traditional melodies. While officiating once on the High Holidays in Regensburg, without being informed of the local customs, he changed a tune and used a hymn not used there. In the same year his daughter died; and he considered the blow a punishment for his violation of a local custom. Many of his settings of poems and prayers, as mentioned above, remain traditional to the present day.

In spite of the care the *Maharil* exercised in Synagogue song, the high spirit of the Ashkenazic service was affected during the atrocious persecutions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in which period many ancient communities were molested and partly expelled. The German Jew, hated and enslaved during the week, wanted to be refreshed on Sabbath and on the festivals by attractive popular songs which would make him forget his dire position. Hence, the less cultivated people urged the *chazzanim* to satisfy their desires despite the protest of the rabbis. These people mingled all the week with gentiles in business, and returning home to the Ghetto on Sabbaths, they would demand that the *chazzan* sing the tunes

from the outside world for religious texts, to the greatest dismay of the more highly educated Jews.⁸⁷

In many cases, ethics and morality declined in Jewish life in that period and lowered the standards also of religious life. More than once it happened that the service was interrupted by quarrels, and that the *chazzan* was attacked while officiating even on Rosh Hashanah and the Day of Atonement and was removed from the pulpit by police.⁸⁸ These same chaotic conditions were prevalent at the same time in the Catholic Church.⁸⁹

The repeated expulsions of Jews naturally produced an unsettled community life, which resulted in many congregations not engaging permanent *chazzanim*. Consequently, the *chazzanim* used to wander from city to city giving concerts, guest-services, without finding a permanent engagement. This abnormal condition developed the type of the wandering *chazzan*, with all the bad habits of the wanderer. These, in addition to the artistic strain, gave the *chazzan* a minstrel-like character, resembling that of the wandering Italian musicians of that time who overran Central Europe.

Partly as a consequence of political and cultural circumstances and partly influenced by the above-mentioned wandering music-makers, the *chazzan*, as stated above, abandoned all functions connected with his office (Chapter VI), and confined himself to his music, constructing dazzling tunes in order to capture the attention of the mob. To put an end to this demoralization, at the request of the old community of Bamberg, Rabbi Moses Minz wrote detailed regulations for the *chazzan*: how he should behave in the synagogue while officiating, what garment he should wear while in the synagogue, how he should conduct himself with members of his congregation, and that he should always be concerned about the dignity of his sacred office.⁹⁰

However, in those communities which were fortunate enough to escape the brutality of the raging Christian clergy and mob, the dignity and continuity of tradition were maintained. Consequently, their "*minhag*" (custom) became the standard for other communities which, after having been ruined by the "holy" crusades or other mob outrages, tried to re-establish their religious practices. Therefore, in places like Frankfort, Prague, Mayence, and Worms much stress was laid upon the dignity of the service and upon the quality of the *chazzanim*. And, indeed, we meet in those communities *chazzanim* of high rabbinic learning and ethical standard. Thus, an author of the seventeenth century, Joseph Hahn, states that his grandfather, Isaac Hahn, was appointed *chazzan* in Frankfort not because of his sweet voice but on account of his piety.⁹¹

From the evidence presented in this chapter, we conclude that the Synagogue song of the so-called Ashkenazim was well established at the end of the sixteenth or at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and that, with the exception of typical German tunes, the Ashkenazic song created in Southwestern Germany spread all over Central and Eastern Europe.