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Synagogues, Europe: Medieval to Eighteenth Century

Samuel D. Gruber, Dr., *Syracuse University*



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JUDITH R. BASKIN
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of Isaac (according to 2 Chron 3:1, this event took place on "Mount Moriah," the Temple Mount); on the left were representations of a seven-branched menorah, a palm frond (*lulav*), and a citron (*etrog*). In 244/5 CE the walls were completely covered with paintings representing biblical events read through the prism of Jewish biblical interpretation (*midrash). Sixty percent of the paintings have been preserved. The generally heroic themes include the discovery of *Moses by the daughter of Pharaoh, the crossing of the Red Sea, the tribes encamped around the Tabernacle, *Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones, and *Esther before King Ahashuerus. The paintings, inscriptions, and a unique prayer text on parchment parallel traditions preserved in rabbinic literature. **Map 4**

Impressive synagogues have been uncovered in Ostia Antica, the ancient port of Rome, and in Sardis in modern-day *Turkey. The Ostia synagogue building was originally constructed toward the end of the first century CE. It was renovated for use as a synagogue during the second and third centuries and was enlarged and partly rebuilt at the beginning of the fourth. The triple entrances in the facade of the second- to third-century basilica are aligned toward the east-southeast, perhaps in the direction of Jerusalem. A stepped podium stood on the wall opposite the main entrance. A Latin and Greek inscription from this construction phase mentions a shrine for the Torah. During the fourth century, the southernmost entrance portal on the eastern wall of the synagogue was sealed and replaced with a large free-standing Torah shrine. This Torah shrine is similar to images in wall paintings and gold glass discovered in the Jewish *catacombs of Rome and on oil lamps found in Ostia.

The Sardis synagogue is the largest synagogue yet uncovered, with its main hall measuring 54 × 18 meters. This impressive building, part of the southern side of the municipal center of Sardis, was taken over by the Jewish community and remodeled as a synagogue during the fourth century. The remodeling included the installation of two aediculae on stepped podia on the eastern wall of the synagogue and the construction of a podium in the center of the hall. The significance of these aediculae is made clear both by their prominence and by a nearby Greek inscription that reads, "Find, open, read, observe." Another Greek inscription refers to the Torah shrine as the *nomophylakion*, "the place that protects the Torah." Survey works on the history of the ancient synagogue include S. Fine, ed. *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (1996); and L. I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (1999).

STEPHEN FINE

Synagogues, Europe: Medieval to Eighteenth Century.

Few physical traces survive of medieval synagogues because Jews were expelled so often from their places of residence. Moreover, prohibitions against building new synagogues were intermittently in force throughout Christian Europe beginning in the fourth century. The most substantial synagogues were in *Spain, *Sicily, southern *Italy, and *Central Europe. Medieval synagogues were often located in or near the house or business of a wealthy community leader. A stone house in the medieval Italian town of Sermoneta may have housed such a synagogue; worshipers would have met in a large room on the first floor (above ground level).

A fifteenth-century Italian manuscript illustration shows a similar open room with a large decorated arch supported by Corinthian columns and a wooden coffered ceiling. A tall wooden ark (*aron ha-kodesh*, in which the Torah scroll or scrolls are stored) is set against one wall and a lower reader's table set before it; at either side are chests or desks for worshipers, facing the room's center. Later versions of domestic synagogues survive in Dubrovnik, Croatia, where a prayer room was created after 1532 on the third floor of a fourteenth-century house, and in Pfaffenhoffen, France, where a small house synagogue built in 1791 retains a medieval character.

More public "hall-type" synagogues include two examples in Trani, southern Italy, which were converted to churches in the fifteenth century, and fragments of two synagogues in Sopron (*Hungary) and one in Budapest. The partially reconstructed thirteenth-century synagogue of Sopron is set back from the street through a passageway between two houses. The sanctuary was a vaulted space with the small ark set permanently into the east wall and decorated with carved stonework; the women's prayer room had a separate entrance on the south. The synagogue complex included a caretaker's house, a fourteenth-century building to house travelers or the sick, and a *mikveh (ritual bath).

Vaulted stone synagogues were erected in larger towns with prosperous Jewish populations. Double-nave structures appear in Central Europe beginning in the twelfth century, including the synagogues at Worms (*Germany) and *Prague (Czech Republic). Other examples are known from Regensburg (Germany), *Vienna (Austria), and Maribor (Slovenia). The Worms synagogue was rebuilt after its destruction in World War II. The original structure built in 1034 was renovated between 1170 and 1200; the men's hall (1175) was divided by two columns on the east-west axis into parallel aisles of equal size. The ark stood at the east end; the *bimah* (elevated platform used for *Torah reading) was between the columns. A women's annex, at right angles to the men's section on the north side, was built in 1213. The so-called *Rashi chapel was added in 1624 at the short west end. In 1842, the women's annex was opened, and the wall separating it from the men's hall was broken by two large doorways with pointed arches.

The oldest synagogue in continuous use is Prague's thirteenth-century Altneushul (Old-New Synagogue). The Altneushul also has a double-nave plan, with two tall octagonal piers. The *bimah* is between the piers; its wrought iron enclosure with pointed arches probably dates from the fifteenth century. The women's section in the west annex, dated 1732, was later extended to the north side. Narrow windows about three feet above the floor level connect the women's annexes with the main hall.

The hundreds of synagogues that existed in medieval *Spain and *Portugal reflected Middle Eastern Jewish models and Muslim cultural influences. In Toledo, where there were at least nine synagogues and five *midrashim* (small chapels), two survive. The older, originally the Great Synagogue, is now commonly known as Santa Maria la Blanca, after the church into which it was transformed following the 1492 expulsion. Inside the modest exterior, four rows of thirty-two octagonal piers, which support horseshoe arches, articulate an impressive open space, and stucco ornaments in the clerestory windows convey a sense of opulence. There is no

women's section or gallery. A similar synagogue in Segovia is now a church. The private Toledo synagogue of courtier Samuel Halevi Abulafia (1320–1360), known as El Transito, is very different. It was joined to his palace on the east side, and the large rectangular interior has rich stucco decoration with Hebrew inscriptions encircling the nave just below the high decorated ceiling. Some inscriptions praise King Pedro I, and others hail Abulafia as "prince among the princes of the tribe of Levi." A spacious gallery on the north side was possibly for women.

Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, Italian Jewish communities built impressive synagogues. The finest were in Livorno, Ancona, Padua, and especially in the *Venice *ghetto, where five separate synagogues survive; each served a segment of Venice's diverse community. The Scuola Grande Tedesca (1528–29, rebuilt 1732–33) is located high up in a tall building in the Ghetto Nuovo. This location fulfilled the talmudic dictum that synagogues should be located at the highest point in town. The trapezoidal sanctuary is two stories high and has an elliptical gallery for women at the second level (a result of eighteenth-century remodeling); this gallery masks the room's irregularity and is reminiscent of contemporary theaters. Originally, the *bimah* was located in the center of the space. The Scuola Canton (1531–32; rebuilt with a new ark in 1736) is a small rectangular room filled with light, color, and delicate ornamentation reminiscent of Venetian patrician parlors or the meeting places of Christian confraternities. As in most Italian synagogues, the ark and *bimah* are set across from each other in a bipolar arrangement. Benches line the sides of the room, and congregants would follow the service by looking first left, then right. The richly carved and gilded wood ark is typical of Baroque-period Italian synagogues, but its size harmonizes with the intimate Renaissance space. The *bimah* (1780) is set in a raised niche protruding from the building and overhanging a canal. A little cupola provides light for the Torah reader; its columns are intricately carved with intertwined branches and twigs.

Two major synagogues were built in Venice's Ghetto Vecchio: the Scuola Levantina (built after 1589; remodeled in the seventeenth century) and the Scuola Spagnola (built after 1589; remodeled in the mid-seventeenth century). Grandier than earlier synagogues, they employed workshops of prominent Christian architects, probably including Baldassare Longhena. The Scuola Grande Spagnola has a bipolar arrangement of ark and *bimah* set within a large rectangular space; an elliptical women's gallery is inserted high up in the tall room. The interior is sumptuously decorated with black and white marble, rich woods, and faux-marble wall painting. The exuberant ark design of rising classical elements culminates in a series of pediments and arches. Within this composition is the *Decalogue mounted on a frame of golden rays, a device used by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

Several eighteenth-century synagogues in Piedmont, such as Carmagnola, Cuneo, and Casale Monferatto, are unmarked on the outside, but richly adorned within. Most centrally placed *bimot* are octagonal, and ornate arks decorated with twisted columns refer to the Jerusalem *Temple. Two synagogues in southern France are similar: Carpentras (1367; remodeled in 1741 by Antoine d'Alemand) and Cavaillon (rebuilt in 1772 by Antoine and Pierre Armelin).

These *Sephardi synagogues present a taste of Versailles in their delicate frothy Rococo decoration.

A second arena of intensive synagogue building in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was in the new Dutch Republic and areas settled by Dutch traders. In 1670, the Portuguese Jewish community in *Amsterdam began building a grandiose place of worship with offices, a library, and schoolrooms on a plan by master-builder Elias Bouman. Similar to Bouman's design for the Ashkenazi Great Synagogue erected the year before, the synagogue is a restrained interpretation of the classical style: opulent but without the drama of the Italian Baroque. Dedicated in 1675, the Esnoga was at that time the largest synagogue in the world, seating 1,200 men with places in the galleries for more than 400 women and other visitors. Four giant Ionic columns on massive plinths on either side support the wooden barrel-vaulted ceiling. The columns on the east and west walls are engaged. Six smaller columns sustain the galleries, which run around three sides of the building. Part of the balcony accommodated women, the first instance of what would become standard practice in synagogue design. The great wooden ark is surmounted by pediments, crowns, and obelisks; above the central bay, in an aedicule beneath a crowned pediment is the *Decalogue. The seventy-two windows ensure bright light; in the evening, twenty-six magnificent chandeliers of various sizes and candlesticks on each bench light up the interior.

London's Sephardi Bevis Marks Synagogue (1701) recalls the red-brick exterior and interior plan (80 ft × 50 ft) of Amsterdam's Esnoga. London's Ashkenazim built their first synagogue in 1722, in Duke's Place, and another, the Hambro Synagogue, was erected in 1725; both are modeled on Bevis Marks. Inspired by the Amsterdam and London synagogues, Dutch and English Jews built similar structures in the New World. Amsterdam Jews who settled in Curaçao in 1659 erected a four-story synagogue in a tiled courtyard, reflecting the Esnoga and Spanish Baroque architecture. Other *Caribbean synagogues were erected in Surinam, Barbados, Nevis, St. Eustatius, and St. Thomas.

In Kraków, *Poland, legends date the Old Synagogue to the fourteenth century, but it was probably first erected in the late fifteenth century and then rebuilt by Italian architect Matteo Gucci in 1570. Many Polish synagogues of this era were designed by Italians, who adapted Italian architecture for Jewish use. The Old Synagogue retains the medieval double-nave plan, but incorporates many Renaissance features. The Remu Synagogue, built in 1557, was probably the first masonry Renaissance-style synagogue in Poland, replacing a 1553 wooden structure. This small rectilinear building with a single nave has round-headed windows set high in the walls and a Roman barrel vault; a separate room for women to the west was added in the nineteenth century. Built-in furnishings, including the ark and the poor-box, resemble sculpted wall tombs produced for the royal court and Polish churches. Similar "hall-type" synagogues, erected over the next century throughout Poland, included the famous, and now destroyed, 1582 Nachmanowicz Synagogue (also known as TaZ Synagogue, or Golden Rose) in Lwów (now Lviv), *Ukraine. The Pinczow synagogue (ca. 1600) was one of the first Polish synagogues to include a women's section (situated over the vestibule). Deteriorated wall paintings from the second half of the eighteenth

century, attributed to the Jewish painter Jehuda Leib, survive. The large barrel-vaulted Izaak Synagogue in Kraków (1638–44) also has a women's section at the west end, built over an entrance vestibule. The sanctuary recalls Baroque churches, but like other synagogues, much of its wall space was decorated with Hebrew liturgical texts.

Another important type of synagogue in late-sixteenth-century Poland is defined by its square or almost square plan and the presence of a large central *bimah*, surrounded by four corner columns or piers that rise to the ceiling vault. This "*bimah*-support synagogue" provided wider roof spans and larger uninterrupted interior spaces to better accommodate large crowds. The large space and the centrality of the reader's platform created a dramatic effect. The first such synagogue may have been the 1567 MaHaRShal Synagogue in Lublin (rebuilt in 1656). Other examples in eastern Poland include Przemyśl (1592–95), Zamosc, (ca. 1600), Tykocin, (1642), and Lancut (1761) and, in western *Ukraine, Satanov (eighteenth century) and Zhovkva (1692). The Lancut synagogue, which was sponsored by a local noble, has a simple plan: a vestibule, a room on the entrance side, and a main hall beyond. Women reached their gallery above the vestibule by an external stairway. The unusually light main prayer hall, several steps below the vestibule, is lit by large windows; the center *bimah*, comprised of four large thick columns set on square bases, supports the central vault. Painted images include zodiac signs, musical instruments mentioned in the *Psalms, and images of lions, unicorns, monkeys, grapes, birds, deer, and flowers. While expensive masonry synagogues were springing up throughout greater Poland, a parallel tradition developed of building synagogues in wood (see SYNAGOGUES, WOODEN).

In German urban centers, new synagogues were erected in fashionable styles. The *Berlin Heidereutergasse Synagogue (1712–14) resembled contemporary Protestant church architecture in detailing and spatial configuration. In Wörlitz, the Duke of Anhalt-Dessau sponsored a synagogue (1789–90) in an English garden setting that resembled an ancient round temple; the architect even called it the Temple of Vesta. This classical style can also be seen at Lunéville, France (1785–88) and frequently in the 1820s in *Vienna (1826, Seitenstettentempel); Wrocław, Poland (1820s, White Stork Synagogue); Obuda, *Hungary (1821); and elsewhere. SAMUEL D. GRUBER

Synagogues: France. Eighteenth-century synagogues of architectural significance in the former papal territories of Carpentras and Cavaillon are now considered French national historical treasures. A synagogue in Avignon from this era did not survive, but was completely rebuilt in 1846. The first large modern synagogue constructed after *emancipation (1790–91) was in Bordeaux in 1812. When it was destroyed by fire, it was replaced in 1882, with partial funding from the Pereire family; the new synagogue was the largest in Europe at that time.

Perhaps two hundred and fifty synagogues were built throughout France in the nineteenth century. The architectural challenge was to invent something that was the equivalent of monumental European churches, but still had some specifically Jewish features. The Romanesque style was repeatedly chosen and the Gothic rejected. Respected

architects were often involved, and they used styles and materials that were being introduced everywhere. The buildings themselves indicated the participation of Jews in French culture. The synagogue on the Rue des Tournelles in Paris, dedicated in 1876, was designed by a student of the great Victor Baltard (known for the market pavilions at Les Halles), and it benefited from the introduction of the metal-work methods of Gustave Eiffel. In the early twentieth century, immigrant Jews built a synagogue on the Rue Pavée in an Art Nouveau style designed by Hector Guimard, the architect known for his Paris Métro design.

PHYLLIS COHEN ALBERT

Synagogues: Nineteenth Century. Although traditional synagogue building in local forms, materials, and design continued with few alterations outside the European sphere of influence, significant innovations occurred in Europe, North America, and colonized areas. The opening of trades and educational opportunities to Jews allowed them to become building entrepreneurs, property owners, and sometimes architects and engineers, even in European countries where they lacked full civil rights. With gradual legal *emancipation, Jewish communities erected synagogues on public streets or outside traditional Jewish quarters. A municipal building inspector might determine the synagogue's site, size, and style, but Western and Central European Jews made architectural decisions on their own. Traditional Jewish districts survived, but educated and prosperous Jews often moved to new areas where they were generally permitted to construct new synagogues. Some governments promoted a single large synagogue in major cities to facilitate the supervision of Jews who had previously been dispersed in a number of small prayer houses. Large synagogues promoted greater prestige for their occupants and provided opportunities for impressive architecture; however, a single community synagogue forced those with differing ritual needs to worship privately in modest quarters. Synagogues also rose in towns where Jews had earlier been excluded by law or custom. Overall, the nineteenth century saw the construction of ampler, more orderly, and sturdier synagogues, especially in capitals and major commercial cities.

Other political changes in Europe affected synagogue design, particularly the growth of nationalism after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. Throughout Europe, architects selected architectural styles from the past to express their distinctive national characters and histories. Italians often favored Roman-derived forms, whereas the French, inventors of Gothic architecture, promoted Gothic revival. However, the Jews, without their own European architectural heritage, spent the century trying to formulate a Jewish style. Thus, an Egyptian-style synagogue at Canterbury (1848, Hezekiah Marshall) evoked a country that had endured for millennia and that was close to the Jews' ancient homeland. Yet, because ancient Egyptians had persecuted the Israelites, that style soon lost favor.

Because Gothic architecture was specifically connected with Christian religious edifices, few Gothic synagogues were built, although several synagogues did include its slender, pointed-arched forms inside, where the congregation could privately enjoy the popular style. Only rarely and then among acculturated *Reform Jews did the Gothic style