

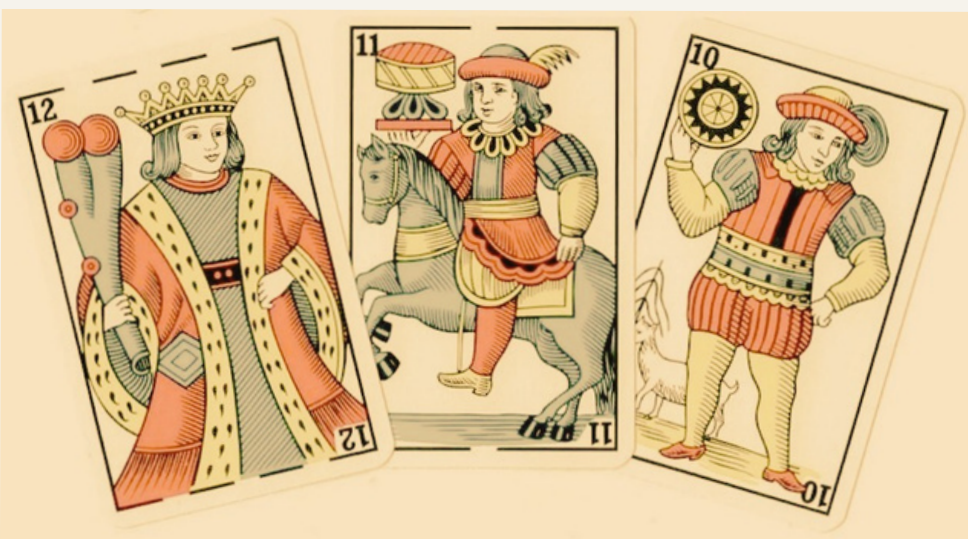


SephardicU

A Sephardic Guide

HALAKHOT AND TRADITIONS OF PURIM

A COMPILATION BY NATHANIEL POOL





HALAKHOT AND TRADITIONS OF PURIM

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to thank God for giving me the ability to help others while spreading the beauty of our rich Sephardic heritage.

Next, I am thankful to the members of Sephardic U. From high-rises in Manhattan to the jungles of the Amazon, Caribbean islands, and the shores of Europe and Asia, each one of you has a story, a dream and a desire to connect. I have learned so much from each and every one of you.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to my family. My parents' dedication to their boys, Judaism and helping others, have been a shining example. They were the impetus and catalyst that led me to launch Sephardic U.

I am equally grateful to my wife and son who continue to provide me the inspiration and support in all my endeavors.

I am truly blessed.



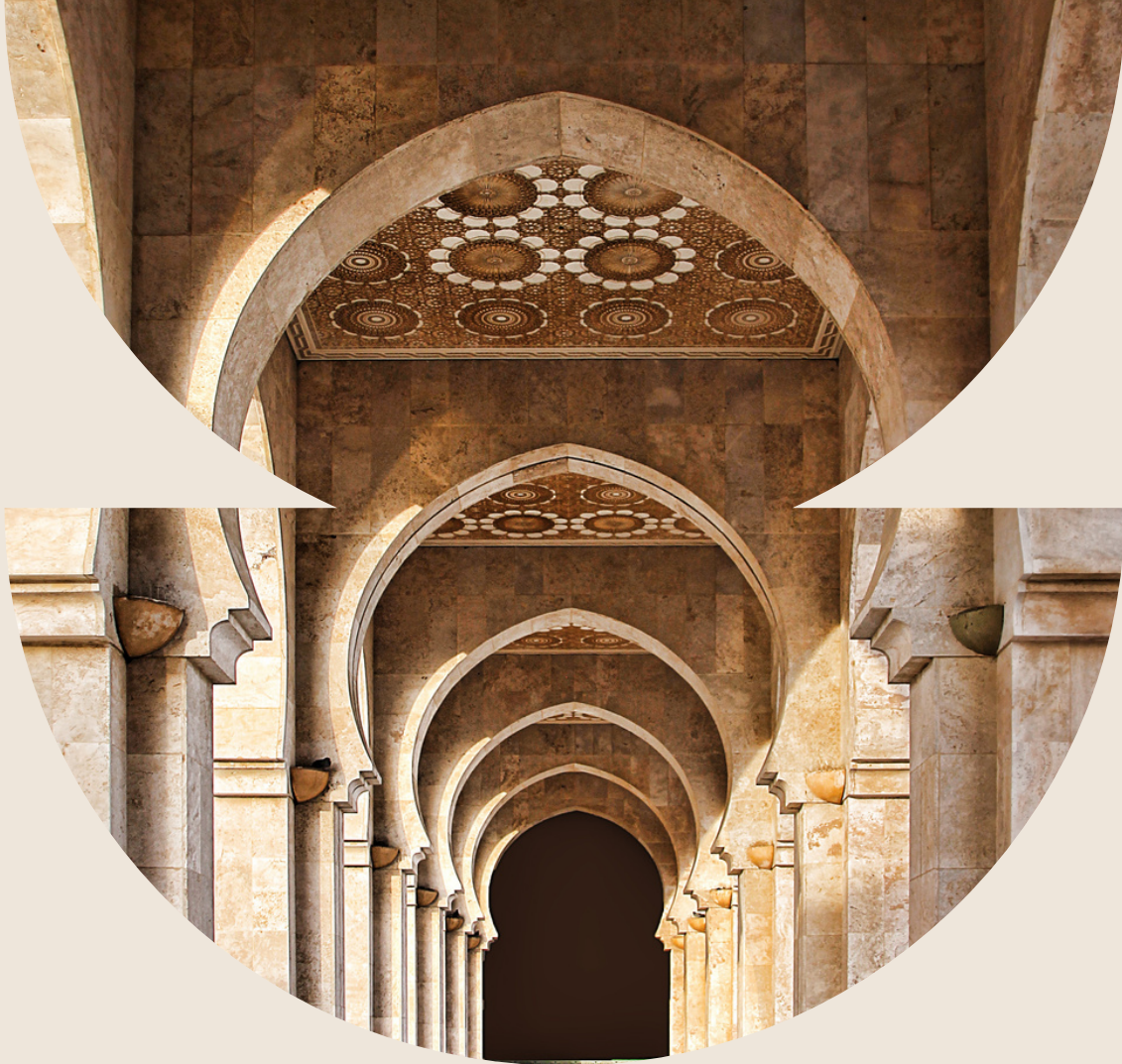


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CONNECTING JEWS TO OUR RICH SEPHARDIC HERITAGE.





ABOUT SEPHARDIC U

This Sephardic Guide: Halakhot and Traditions of Purim eBook is dedicated to all Jews, in order that they may continue to carry on our beautiful traditions and imbue themselves with our rich heritage.

Am Israel Chai!





01

OVERVIEW

After the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple in Jerusalem (586 BCE), the Persians defeated the Babylonians in battle (538 BCE), and became a World power.





OVERVIEW

In 722 BCE, the Assyrians had already driven the northern tribes of Israel into exile. The majority of the remaining Israelites, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, were banished from their homeland by the Babylonians and now dwelled in the vast Persian Empire.

The events of Megillat Esther take place in the Persian capital of Shushan between the Babylonian exile and the Return to Zion (later during that sixth century B.C.E., perhaps 516 B.C.E.).

The Megillah tells the story of Haman, King Achashverosh's principal counselor, who determined to exterminate the Jewish people, men, women, and children, during that time period.

It also recounts Esther's rise to the throne, Haman's motivation for his evil scheme (Mordechai, a Jewish leader, refused to bow to him), the specifics of the decree, and the amazing chain of events, including Queen Esther's intervention, that led to the miraculous saving of the Jewish People.

On the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar—days that have since come to be known as Purim—the Jews accomplished their astounding victory over their adversaries.



02

PRIOR TO PURIM

Preparing for the holiday.





PRIOR TO PURIM

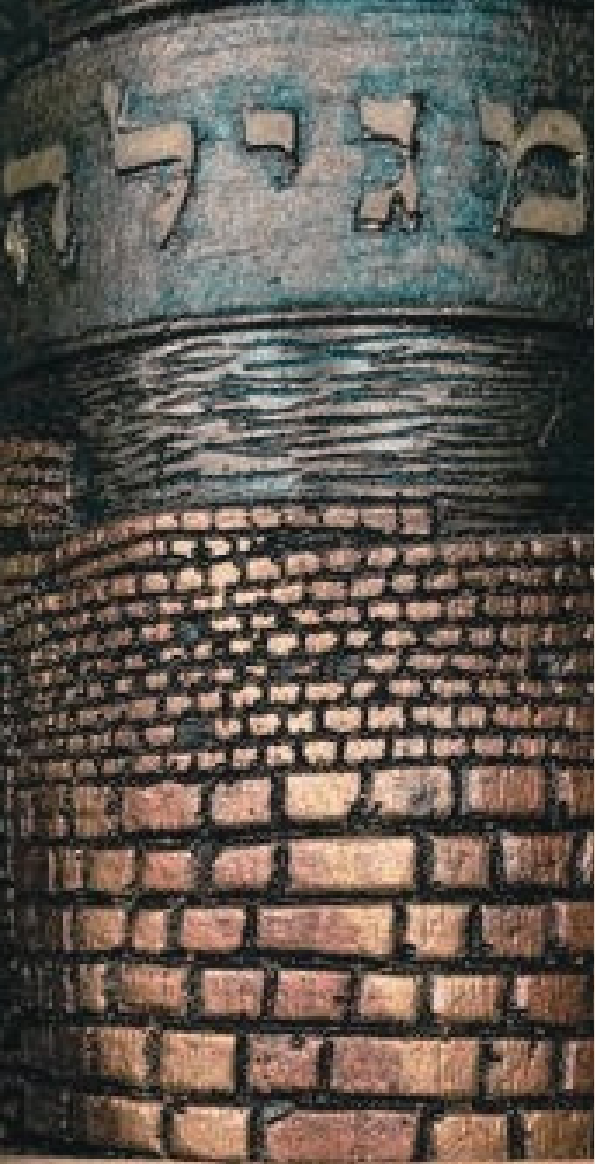
1. We read Parashat Shekalim on the Shabbat prior to Rosh Hodesh Adar or on Rosh Hodesh Adar itself if it happens on a Shabbat. After the daily Torah reading, we learn about the custom of paying a half-shekel, originally for the building of the Mishkan and later for the services rendered there, which was later transferred to the Temple. This obligation has been interpreted as symbolizing our efforts to oppose the evil intentions of the nation's enemies ever since Haman intended to pay 10,000 shekalim to the king's treasury in order to kill the Jewish People.

2. We read Parashat Zakhor on the Shabbat before Purim, following the regular Torah reading. This section exhorts Israel to keep in mind what Amalek did to us after we left Egypt and were journeying through the desert, worn out and tired. Amalek attacked Israel without provocation, specifically targeting the weak and stragglers because they had no respect for G-d. We are instructed to eradicate Amalek from the globe, who is thought to stand for evildoers. (We read Parashat Parah and Parashat Hahodesh on Shabbatot after Purim.)

3. Ta'anit Esther (the Fast of Esther), commemorated on Adar 13 (often the day before Purim), commemorates the fast the Jewish People reportedly maintained to inspire repentance when facing their oppressors. When Purim falls on a Sunday, the fast is observed on Adar 11, which is the preceding Thursday.

4. As the month of Adar begins, we start to celebrate more pleasant occasions and happy occasions as we look forward to Purim, which will be followed by Pesah.

5. One should strive to bring a Megillah with him when traveling to a place where he does not expect to find one. If it's not possible, he may read the Megillah starting on Rosh Hodesh Adar without a berakha. But on Purim day, you should also fulfill the other Purim mitzvot.



03

READING OF THE MEGILLAH

The first of the four mitzvot of
Purim.





READING OF THE MEGILLAH

1. On Purim, men and women must listen or hear the Megillah recited twice, once at night and once during the day, from a kosher Megillah scroll.

2. In order to help spread the word about the miracle, it is more appropriate to fulfill the commandment of reciting the Megillah in front of a congregation (pirsumei nissa). One may read it or hear it read aloud if they are unable to attend synagogue or take part in a minyan in any other way.

3. Berakhot: Before the nightly reading, three blessings are chanted on the megillah:

a) "Al Mikra Megillah" (for the reading itself);

b) "She'asah Nissim La'abotenu" (mentioning the wonders Hashem worked for our forefathers); and

c) "Shehehiyanu" (expressing gratitude that Hashem has kept us alive to participate in this occasion).

At the end of the reading, the benediction Harab et Ribenu is recited (acknowledging that it was Hashem who fought our battles).

4. Other than Shehehiyanu, the same blessings are recited for the reading of the day. If Shehehiyanu was missed in the evening, it should be repeated then. While the berakha at the end of the reading is exclusively recited in a minyan, the berakhot before the reading are recited even when the Megillah is being read individually (i.e., without a minyan).



5. Women who read aloud or hear the reading without a minyan are likewise required to recite the same berakhot. It is *pirsume nissa* and the concluding berakha is also recited if ten women are hearing the reading at the same time, even if this does not count as a "minyan" for other rites.
6. Anyone having a kosher megillah scroll may follow the hazzan in reading. Anyone without a kosher megillah scroll should refrain from reading along and instead pay close attention to what the hazzan says while keeping in mind that they have a commitment to fulfill. It is crucial that the hazzan pronounces each syllable clearly.
7. Anyone who reads Hebrew should ideally have the megillah's printed text in front of them so they can follow along silently. It is acceptable to read the words from the printed text to catch up if you miss some of the hazzan's readings as long as you only do this with a portion of the megillah.
8. There should be no talking or interruptions from the beginning of the first berakha to the end of the last berakha. So is improper and disturbing to stamp your feet while the reader is reading, so avoid doing it. Very small children and those with noisy toys shouldn't be present in the synagogue when the megillah is being read because they can cause a disturbance and prevent the mitzvah from being fulfilled. If such kids are present in the synagogue, a nanny should be made available somewhere else.
9. When reading the megillah scroll, as opposed to the Torah, direct contact is permitted (with clean hands of course).
10. Because the text in the megillah is referred to as a "letter," it is common practice to not roll up each page as it is read, unlike with a Torah scroll. It is rolled up when the reading is over in preparation for the final blessing.



11. When the fast finishes, at "set hakokhabim" (the appearance of stars), the time for reading the megillah in the evening begins. Before fulfilling the commandment, one shouldn't eat anything. It's possible to feel hungry or thirsty because Ta'anit Esther is typically the day that ends with "set hakokhabim." One may have a small food before the reading if necessary.



04

THE HALF SHEKEL

Machasit HaShekel - Giving of the Half-Shekel.





THE HALF SHEKEL

During the Second Temple period, it was customary for Jews to annually deposit a half-Shekel into the Temple treasury for the upkeep and maintenance of the Temple precincts, which was also used to purchase public animal offerings.

This practice applied not only to Jews living in the Land of Israel, but also to Jews living outside the Land of Israel. Archaeological excavations conducted at Horvat 'Ethy in Israel from 1999 to 2001 by Boaz Zissu and Amir Ganor of the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) yielded significant finds, the most valuable of which was a half-Shekel coin minted in the 2nd century CE, on which are embossed the words "Half-Shekel" in paleo-Hebrew (Hebrew: חצי השקל).

An identical coin has 6.87 grams of silver in it. The half-Shekel annual monetary tribute to the Temple in Jerusalem, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, was equal to two Attic or Athenian drachmae, which each weighed slightly more than 4.3 grams.

The custom among Ashkenazi Jews is to give at least three coins worth half the local currency (Dollar, Euro, NIS, etc.); however, most Sephardi Jews give the biblical Half Shekel. It is important to note that each individual can and should donate more than the minimum required.

If you are unable to perform this mitzvah in person, you can use the convenient form below to perform this precious custom:

<https://sephardicu.com/purim-machatzit-hashekel>

or

<https://sephardicu.com/giving/>



05

THE PURIM BASKET

Mishloach Manot





THE PURIM BASKET

Mishloach Manot

1. Each man and woman must send at least one person a food gift consisting of at least two types of food or drink that can be used for that day's festive meal. The primary goal of this mitzvah is to increase interpersonal friendship. It may also help some people who are in need.
2. It is commendable to send mishlo'ah manot to many people and to send portions in accordance with the giver's standards, thereby increasing harmony and amity in the nation.
3. At least one of the primary food gifts sent to fulfill the mitzvah must be sent and received on Purim.
4. Sending money does not fulfill the mitzvah.
5. A mourner must perform the mitzvah of mishloach manot. Others do not send to the mourner but may send to a spouse or another family member.



06

GIVING TO THE NEEDY

Matanot La'Evyonim





GIVING TO THE NEEDY

Every Jew is obligated to give gifts to at least two needy individuals.

1. In addition to mishloach manot, we must give food, substance, or monetary gifts to at least two poor people or their representatives on Purim.
2. If one can afford it, it is appropriate to give to many more poor people or their representatives than the minimum of two.
3. On Purim, "Whomever extends his hand, we give to him."

If you are unable to perform this mitzvah in person, you can use the convenient form below to perform this precious custom:

<https://sephardicu.com/giving/>



07

THE FESTIVE MEAL

Seudat Purim





THE FESTIVE MEAL

1. On Purim, everyone must eat a festive meal. This mitzvah is only performed during the day, not at night.
2. Because the Purim miracle was accomplished through festive banquets with wine consumption, the Purim seuda should have a similar quality, including alcoholic beverages for the adults.

According to the Talmud, one should be so happy that he doesn't know the difference between "Cursed is Haman, blessed is Mordechai (אָרוּר הָמָן לְבוֹרָךְ (מֵרְדֵּכַי)." Whatever interpretation is given to this statement, and there are many, it is crystal clear that one may only drink to the extent that he does not violate a halakha and can recite birkat hamazon and relevant prayers with proper concentration.

The celebration of Seudat Purim on Erev Shabbat is a rare occurrence. In fact, it happened only 13 times in 105 years, from 1900 to 2005, and will happen only 11 more times in the next 95 years, from 2008 to 2103. Friday Purim will not be observed again until 2021.

Seudat Purim is a Seudat Mitzvah. As a result, one may eat a meal even after Hassot Hayom or Erev Shabbat midday.

To honor Shabbat, our Sages taught us not to eat a large meal on Friday afternoon. They also advised us to observe Purim with a festive meal, known as Seuda.



How can both requirements be met without sacrificing the honor due to each?

There are two halakhic approaches:

The first is to start the Seudat Purim before midday in order to enjoy the meal while there is still time before Shabbat begins.

The second method is "Pores Mappah OuMekadesh." This method combines Seudat Purim and Seudat Shabbat into a single extended meal.

According to the Talmud's idea of "Pores Mappah," or "Spreading of the Tablecloth," one may begin his meal shortly before Shabbat candle lighting time, after reciting the blessings of Netilat Yadayim, HaGefen, and Hamotzi. The meal is interrupted to light candles and cover the table and food with a tablecloth (or at least to cover the bread).

Kiddush is recited without the Hagefen blessing because the wine has already been blessed for Seudat Purim.

Only Mekadesh HaShabbat follows Yom Hashishi. Kiddush serves as the Kabbalat Shabbat, so no Kabbalat Shabbat is said at the table. The tablecloth is then removed to allow the meal to begin. Bread must be consumed, even if it is the size of an olive. The recitation of Al Hanissim is included in the Birkat Hamazon prayer.



THE MEAL PLAN

The Arabic word “Hada” widely accepted as “Tradition,” actually means a knot, a binding. It is either a derivative or a mispronunciation of the Hebrew word “Akeda” as in the “Binding of Isaac.”

The following meal plan is from the Amar Family of Rabat, Morocco. These are their hadas. All these recipes can be found at www.koshercowboy.com

Purim Eve Menu (Breaking the Fast of Esther) - After the reading of the Megillah, the family comes home to break the fast with the following courses:

- Purim Vegetable Soup
- Fish in Tomato Sauce
- Chicken
- Moroccan Mint Tea
- Fejouela
- Raisins Clusters
- Moroccan Sand Cookies "Ghoriba"
- Marzipan Stuffed Dates, Kisses and Cherries

DINNER

Purim Day Breakfast

- Boyosa - A round loaf of bread decorated with two hard boiled eggs in their shells, which are meant to represent Haman’s eyes. The Boyosa is eaten with butter, honey or jam.

BREAKFAST

Purim Day Lunch

- Berkuks - A large couscous served warm milk and butter.

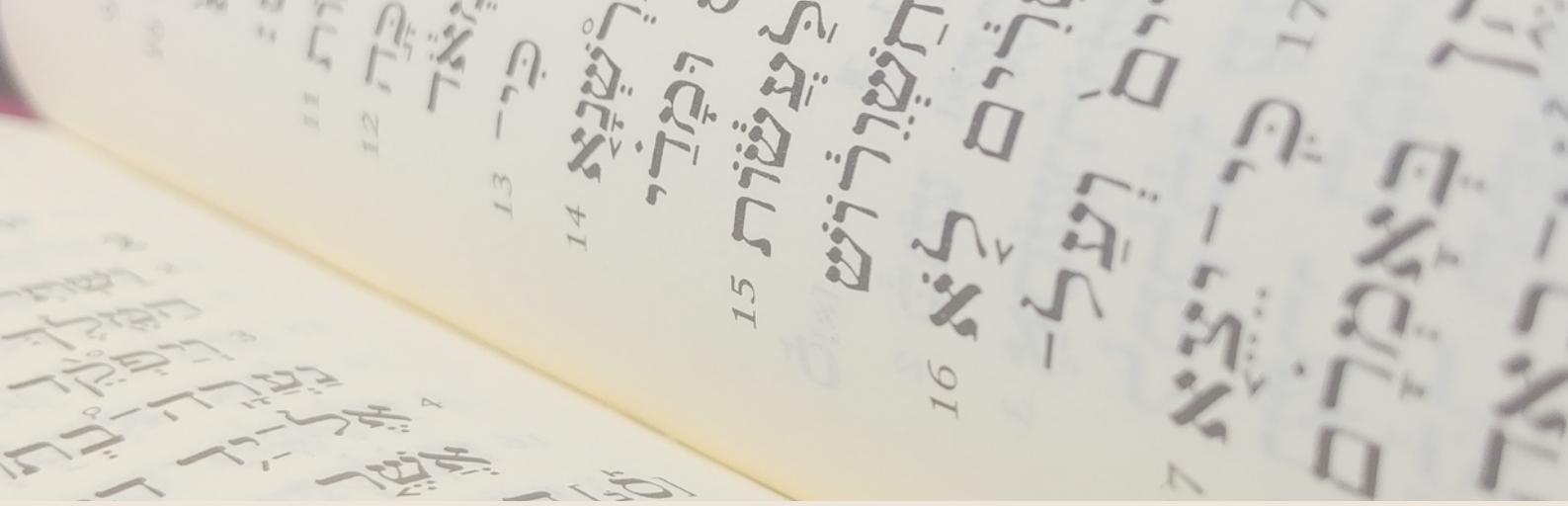
LUNCH



08

RESOURCES





RESOURCES

Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488-1575) discusses the laws of Seudat Purim in his “Shulhan Arukh” first printed in 1564, but makes no mention of Purim falling on the eve of Shabbat. The prolific author Rabbi Haim Yosef David Azulai (1724-1806) is also silent on this subject.

Rabbi Moses Isserles (1525-1572), author of “Hagah” printed in 1578, believes that the Seuda should take place in the morning. He bases his opinion on “Sefer Haminhagim” (1566) by Rabbi Yisshaq Tirna (1420).

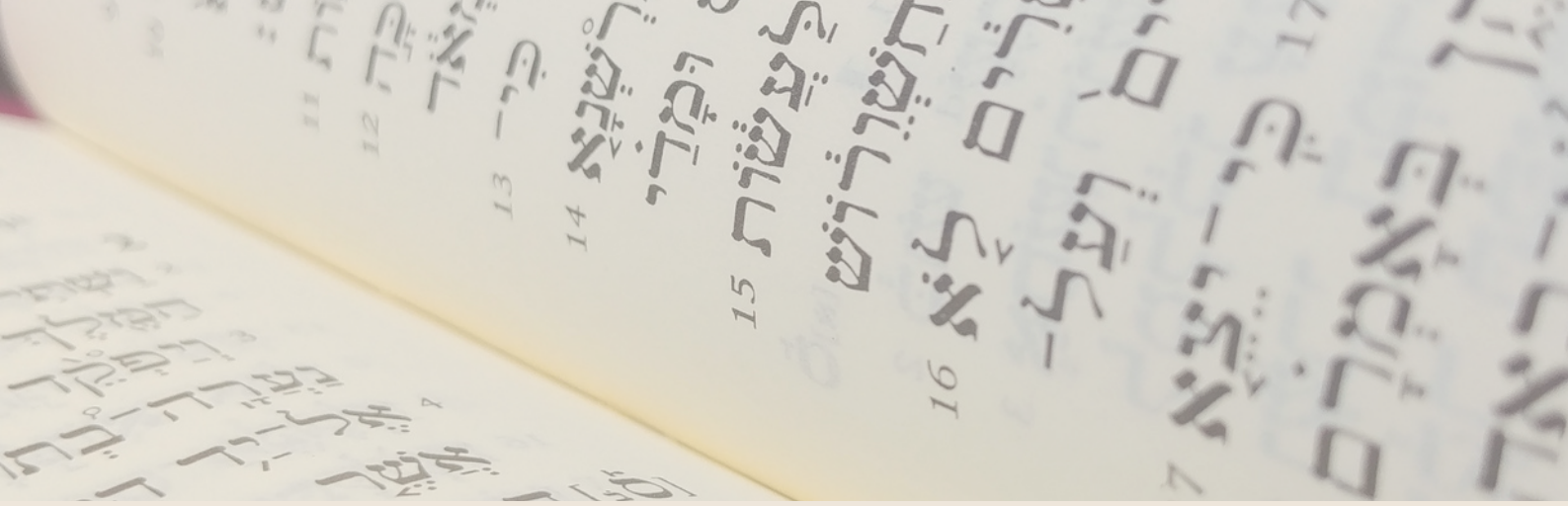
Rabbi Haim Palacci (1787-1868), Chief Rabbi of Turkey, writes in “Moed Lekol Hai” (1861) that, independent of the day of the week, the Seuda should always take place in the morning.

Rabbi Obadiah Yosef, former Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Israel, states in “Hazon Obadiah” that, following the Mekubalim (Kabbalists), he too favors the morning celebration of Seudat Purim.

The practice of “Pores Mappah” finds many supporters. In “Hilkhot Megillah,” Maimonides stresses the importance of spending most of the day of Friday distributing gifts of food and money to the poor.

Rabbi Yaakob Castro known as the Maharikash (1525-1612) endorses the evening celebration of Seudat in his book “Erekh Lehem” published in 1718.

So does Hakham Rafael Aharon Ben Shimon (1847-1928), Chief Rabbi of Egypt from 1891-1921 and author “Nehar Misrayim,” published in 1908.



Hakham David Cohen Sqali (1862-1949), Ab Bet Din and Chief Rabbi of Algeria, mentions in his scholarly book “Qiryat Hannah David” the practice of Pores Mappah.

Rabbi Shemuel Marciano of Deubdou, Morocco takes up the subject in his book entitled “VaYa’an Shemouel,” printed in Jerusalem in 1959.

Hakham Baroukh Abraham Toledano of Meknes, Morocco (1886-1970) elaborates on it in his responsa “Sha-Alou Le Baroukh.”

Seudat Purim on Shabbat is excerpted from the long and scholarly dissertation “Seudat Purim Be’Ereb Shabbat” by Mr. Joseph Mosseri. We are indebted to him for generously sharing his vast knowledge of Sephardic scholarship and traditions.

It was the custom of the Amar family to start celebrating Seudat Purim in the morning. First came the close relatives to partake of the delicious berkuks, then the neighbors and guests, invited or not, streamed into their dining room.

Their children were kept busy distributing the trays of delicacies to all who could not come to their home. They enjoyed being messengers, not only for the freedom it gave them from chores and school assignments, but also because of the joy they brought others.

The background of the image is a grid of approximately 20 small, square portraits of diverse individuals of various ethnicities, ages, and genders, all smiling or looking positively. The portraits are arranged in a roughly rectangular pattern, with some overlapping. The text is overlaid on this grid.

THE SEPHARDIC
APPROACH TO
RELIGION AND LIFE
IS CHARACTERIZED
BY CHESED,
OPTIMISM, AND A
SPIRIT OF
INCLUSIVENESS AND
HOSPITALITY.

RABBI MARC ANGEL

YOUR NOTES:



CURSED BE
HAMAN,
BLESSED BE
MORDECHAI.

ארור המן
לברוך מרדכי

THANK YOU FOR READING!

HELP SUPPORT OUR OUTREACH:
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