

Festival of Sukkot

Five days after Yom Kippur, the festival of Sukkot was celebrated. The street vendors would come to the Juderia a few days before Sukkot to sell myrtle and palm leaves for the festival. The Sukkah was like a booth and myrtle and palm leaves were used to cover it as a roof.

The children looked forward to decorating the Sukkah. They made colored paper lanterns and paper mache chains. They helped with the hanging of the fruit and "roskitas" "biscochos" (circular baked pasties). The walls consisted of white sheets, decorated with oriental rugs and chevres, tapestries made of velvet and also embroidered with gold threads. The doors were framed with palm branches and decorated with fresh flowers.



1930, Sukkot, Rhodes (Rebecca Capelluto Alhadeff Souhami, Amelie Notrica Hasson, Reina Notrica Capelluto, Rosa Capelluto Souhami & Rahamin (Raymond) Capelluto) - Photo Taken from the Rhodesli Jewish Calendar of 2018 by Aron Hasson, ©The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation

We ate all our meals in the Sukkah for eight days. Everyone in the Juderia at one time or another would stop in a Sukkah for the blessing (beraha) of the Lulav and Etrog. These two items were symbols of the harvest season. At night, a chair was placed on a table and a covered glass of water and a bible were placed on a chair. We were told that Eliyahu Anavi would come down from the sky to drink water.

The seventh night was the Vilada de Oshana Raba (a night dedicated to study). The sacred texts were read either at the Synagogue or at home of a mourner and lasted all night. The next morning it was a tradition to eat "alitreá" plain spaghetti with grated cheese, served with a beverage made with water, cinnamon and sugar. This was served only at the home of the mourners.

On the eve of the eighth day, Shemini Hag Atseret (Los Sigundos), the congregations had a procession of the hakafoth, circuits. The Torah scrolls were taken from the ark and paraded around the synagogue seven times. Songs sung on this occasion differed from those sung for the hakafoth of Simchat Torah.

On Simhat Torah everyone went to the Synagogue and all the Torah scrolls were

brought out and carried from one synagogue to another with much jubilation and singing. At this time several men were honored as "hatanim". Each synagogue selected three men to serve as "hatanim" or bridegrooms of the Torah. At one time the honor of being hatan was auctioned. Later, however, it became customary to award honors to deserving individuals. It was extraordinary to see thousands of Jews dressed in holiday clothes, dancing and singing as they made their hakafoth in the synagogues. The "hatanim" of each synagogue, accompanied by parents and friends, visited the other synagogues.