

Hakafot on Simchat Torah

I was asked why we don't do Hakafot on Simchat Torah in Amsterdam.

Hakafot are not mentioned in any Amsterdam Seder Hazzanut manuscript, going back to the oldest known manuscript by Jesurun Pintio from 1758. Nor is it mentioned in any of our Amsterdam Mongadim - מועדים books, going back to Da Silva Mendes in 1771.

There is also no mentioning of Hakafot in Thesoro dos Dinim by Menasseh ben Israel from 1645/

I found a possible reason for not making Hakafot in [Keter Shem Tob part 7 end of the page 202](#):

אודות מנהג לו' ואמ"ד שאין עושין הקפות ביום ש"ת, ראה
מ"ש לעיל שמנהג ההקפות לא נודע לראשונים ושורשו הוא לפי
מנהג אשכנז, ומטעם זה לא אבו הספרדים דפה ואמ"ד לקבל עליהם
מנהג ההקפות, ואלו הם מנהגים חדשים שקבלו עליהם המקובלים.

So, because Hakafot are a "new" and Ashkenazi and Cabbalistic Minhag, it was not adopted in London and Amsterdam.

Keter Shem mentions only London and Amsterdam as not doing Hakafot. He of course he didn't say anything about New York because he never visited NY.

Livorno

In the Livorno ה' מחזור מועדי printed in 1872 Hakafot are mentioned for Arvit only (page 124).

תקן שמחה תורה
קבר
ואומר זמן בקדוש משום ספיקא דיומא
ואחר תפלת ערבית נהגו להקיף בספר תורה • וזו סדר הקפות מועתק
מספר סבסיר לפורן שמיר לחרב סגדול ח"ק מ'ו כמוסר'ר חיד"א ז"ע
ז"ל תחלם וראשיניתו ספר תורה בתיבם ויסיס אללו ירא שמים וידו
אוחות בספר תורה כל זמן הקפות כי כן קבלתי מהמקיבל המופלא מסר'ש
שרעבי זלס'ס שסיס מקפיד על זס וכך סיס מנהגו • ואני בעניי סדרתי
תפלות אלו בס'ד וקודם הקפות יאמר •

As written in this introduction, the Hakafot were copied from the Chida (חיים יוסף דוד אזולאי), who lived in the 18th century (1724-1806). This might indicate that in Livorno Hakafot were introduced only in the 19th century.

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Hakafot in NY

Da Sola Pool about NY

Da Sola Pool (NY, 1986) brings Hakafot in the back of the מועדים (pages 483-492) without translation and without any comment.

Zachary Edinger about NY

Hakafot are a new addition to the Simḥat Torah service. There were no Hakafot held in New York until the middle of the 20th century.

Following World War II, the congregation began experimenting with Hakafot for children, held in the downstairs auditorium after the conclusion of the regular service. These proved to be popular, and by the late 1950s, Hakafot for all men were introduced in the main sanctuary—again following the conclusion of the evening service.

The evening service itself is conducted in the regular manner for festivals (including a special pizmon for the Hattanim which we have in NY but not in Amsterdam or London). At its conclusion, the Hazzan recites Tekubbal berachamim ubratzon et tefillatenu, as we do at the end of all services, and then announces: “The Hakafot will now commence.”

The songs we sing for the 7 circuits are not those that de Sola Pool printed in his festival prayerbook - which were meant for other communities.

PS - My grandfather, although he had to remain and help the Hakafot go smoothly (especially the taking out and returning of the Sifre Torah, usually 16 - 18 Sefarim) - hated the Hakafot and thought they were an inappropriate addition to our tradition. After his retirement in 1980 he never stayed after Yigdal for the Hakafot service.

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Hakafot in London

Keter Shem Tob about London

The above quoted [Keter Shem Tob part 7 top of the page 203](#) adds that he heard that they (London) used to do Hakafot and stopped, but he was in doubt about this.

**ועתה שמעתי כי מלפנים היו נוהגים להקיף, אך משום מעשה שאירע
פעם אחת שנפל ס"ת מידם בטלו מנהג ההקפות, ואני מסופק בזה.**

Martin van den Bergh about London

Hakafot are done in London. There is an interesting article in the [1992 edition of the Tabernacle prayer book of the London congregation](#) pages 255-256 on this topic.

This book writes on page 255 that *"the Hakaphot have, in point of fact, been introduced into our service during the last few decades; but it is at least possible that we ought really to speak of their reintroduction, and that the early community of the resettlement may have known them, and deliberately suppressed them..... but we happen to possess quite definitive evidence that in the early decades of the London community's existence the Hakaphot were in fact celebrated."*

There were complaints of lack of decorum noted on Simchat Torah in 1663, which might indicate that Hakaphot were indeed celebrated, but stopped because of that.

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Isaac Levy about London

The earliest London Sukkot S&P prayer book I have is from 1785 printed by Alexander. No references in the book to Hakafot for Simchat Torah. I am sure the Amsterdam books were widely used in London in the 1700s. David Levi also printed a Sukkot prayer book in London around 1790 and in the second edition I could not see any reference to Hakafot for Simchat Torah.

The only Hakafot I have found in a Moadim prayer book is from Livorno from the 1800s. I am happy to share a scan. It credits the Chida (Rebi Haim Yosef David Azulai).

In Gibraltar, where I am from, I think they had a book called Hemed Elokim which had special prayers for Sukkot. It was published variously in Venice, Livorno and Vienna. The earliest editions I have seen do not have the Hakafot for Simchat Torah but the Hakafot do appear in later editions.

I have also seen online that there was an early Seder Hakafot said by members of the Sephardi community in Ferrara.

But finding a source for the period referred to in the Pepys anecdote is elusive.

A PS to my reply. I remembered that I also have the attached [book printed in Amsterdam](#). I expect you have seen it before but just in case. Interesting that a Rabbi from London - Rabbi Abraham Haliwa -was involved in its publication.



I found another source for you from 1840. This book was widely used in Gibraltar in the 1800s. It was [compiled by Rebi Abraham Ankawa](#) (from Sale in Morocco) and cites the Chida. Although printed in Amsterdam, unclear if intended for use in the S&P community. (JBS: note it brings the Hakafot for Shacharit!)

