

From The Parnas:

By Mark I. Wolfson

The first Minister of Mikveh Israel was Gershom Mendes Seixas. He came down to Philadelphia when the British occupied Manhattan. He brought with him the Sefer Torah, a handful of families, and all of the traditions of Shearith Israel in New York. When the Americans recaptured Manhattan in 1784, his presence was requested back in New York by the president of Shearith Israel, Mr. Hayman Levy. This happened just before Passover in March of 1784.

In a letter dated March 15, 1784, Seixas writes to Mr. Levy to ask for permission to remain in Philadelphia during Passover so that he can remain with his family. He writes:

Dear & Worthy Sir

Should the Prayer of the Letter (that I can stay in Philadelphia until the new month of Iyar) not be though Eligible you will please let me know by Post - & I'll be with you for Shabbat Hagadol - & leave my Family till after Pesah - tho' - you must allow it to be a great Hardship for a Man to be without His Family on a Pesah.

Gershom Mendes Seixas

As we celebrate Passover together this year, we celebrate this time with our families. This means our families at home, our fellow Jews who are our brothers and sisters, and the Mikveh Israel family. I invite all of you to spend Pesah with us - join us for the Seders and join us for the beautiful services. I hope to see you all and greet you personally. May you enjoy a Hag Sameah Pesah, and may blessings be with you and your families during this holiday season.