

## From the Parnas

By Mark I. Wolfson

Yom Kippur 1781

One of the most famous members of Mikveh Israel was Haym Salomon. Though Salomon's life was brief, his contribution to the birth of the United States, to American Jewry, and to Congregation Mikveh Israel was enormous. Salomon was born in Lissa, Poland on April 7, 1740 to a Sephardic Jewish family of Portuguese origins. He died in Philadelphia on January 6, 1785. Salomon spent several years in his youth moving from place to place in Europe, developing a proficiency in at least 7 languages including English, Hebrew and German. He arrived in New York City in 1772.

As tensions heated up between the American colonists and the British, Salomon was very sympathetic to the American cause. While establishing himself as a successful merchant in New York, he also became active in the New York Sons of Liberty and the patriot cause through an acquaintance with Alexander MacDougall. When the war broke out in 1776, Salomon began serving the Americans, providing supplies to the troops. He was arrested by the British in September as an American spy and sentenced to death. While serving his sentence, he convinced his British captors of his talents and proficiency in German, and was eventually pardoned and hired by the British to interpret for the Hessian soldiers. In actuality, he convinced quite a number of the Hessians to desert the British, telling them that there was free land being offered by the colonialists for homesteading if they would join the American cause.

On January 2, 1777, Salomon married Rachael Franks, daughter of Moses Franks of NY. By 1778, the family had escaped to Philadelphia, where Haym set up shop in a little office on Front Street as a broker. During the next few years, Salomon worked closely with Robert Morris, the Superintendent for Finance for the Thirteen Colonies. He brokered bills for the French, Dutch and Spanish governments, and thereby provided much of the funding for the Revolutionary War effort. He also loaned money to a large number of the American leaders including Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton and Morris himself.

In Morris' diary, Salomon's name comes up frequently. Morris wrote: "This broker has been useful to the public interests...". James Madison, who Salomon kept financially afloat during the revolution, acknowledged the "kindness of our little friend in Front Street, whose assistance will preserve me from extremities, but I never resort to it without great mortification as he obstinately rejects all recompense". Upon his death, the Philadelphia Packet wrote, "He was remarkable for his skill and integrity in his profession and for his generous and humane deportment".

Haym Salomon was very active in Congregation Mikveh Israel, serving on the Board of Adjuntos for many years. He was actively involved in the building of the first synagogue building, which was completed in September, 1782. He was the largest contributor to the construction, contributing fully a quarter of the total cost with his donation of 300 pounds. In the board minutes, it was recorded: "The Parnass reported that he had received from Mr. Haym Salomon his quarter part of the cost of the new synagogue. The Parnass moved that a letter of thanks be wrote and be signed by the Parnass and Junto to Mr. Haym Salomon for his generous donation." Salomon was given the honor of officially opening the door to the new

building.

In August 1781, the Continental Army had trapped Lieutenant General Charles Cornwallis in the Virginia coastal town of Yorktown. Washington allied himself with the French army and decided to march to Yorktown to deliver what turned out to be the decisive blow to win the Revolutionary War. But Washington's war chest was empty. There was no money for the troops for food, boots, guns, or ammunition. There was talk of mutiny among the ranks. Washington contacted Robert Morris and gave a short, urgent order: "Send for Haym Salomon".

The following is the stuff of legends:

It was Shabbat, September 29, 1781, Yom Kippur. There was a knock on the synagogue door. A messenger urgently needed to deliver a note to Haym Salomon. The message was from Robert Morris. Morris wrote that money was urgently needed for Washington's army and the finance minister could not cover the two notes that were drafted to fund the battle. He begged for Salomon's help. In spite of angry protests from congregants and from the Minister, Gershom Mendes Seixas, Salomon addressed the congregation assembled for the service. He spoke to the patriots who had already done so much towards the revolutionary effort. He himself pledged 3000 pounds. He urged the others to help. He spoke of Washington, the troops dying of starvation, the cause. He spoke of living in a country where the Jews would be treated like any other citizens, of religious freedom. Within 15 minutes, they had raised the 20,000 pounds that Morris needed to fund the battle and allow the army to continue. On October 19, 1781 the British surrendered at Yorktown. Even though the fighting would go on for another 2 years, the outcome was no longer in doubt. The new American nation would be victorious and the world would be changed forever.

Haym and Rachael Salomon had a daughter Sallie. Sallie married Joseph Andrews on October 31, 1824 in Philadelphia. They had a son whom they also named Joseph Andrews, who married Miriam Nones in 1849. This Joseph Andrews had a son David who married Frances Lyon in 1895. They had a son, whom they also named Joseph Lyon Andrews who married Katherine Louise New in 1925. They, in turn, had a son born in 1938 whom they named Joseph Lyon Andrews, Jr. who married Margareta Langert in 1969. This Joseph Andrews, who is Dr. Joseph Andrews, will be at Mikveh Israel on Sunday, October 14th, at 10AM and will deliver a presentation entitled, "Haym Salomon, George Washington's Money Man and My Ancestor: Myth vs. Reality ... What Do We Really Know?". A presentation with film and slides not to be missed!

Tizkuh Leshanim Rabbot to all. Muchos Años!