



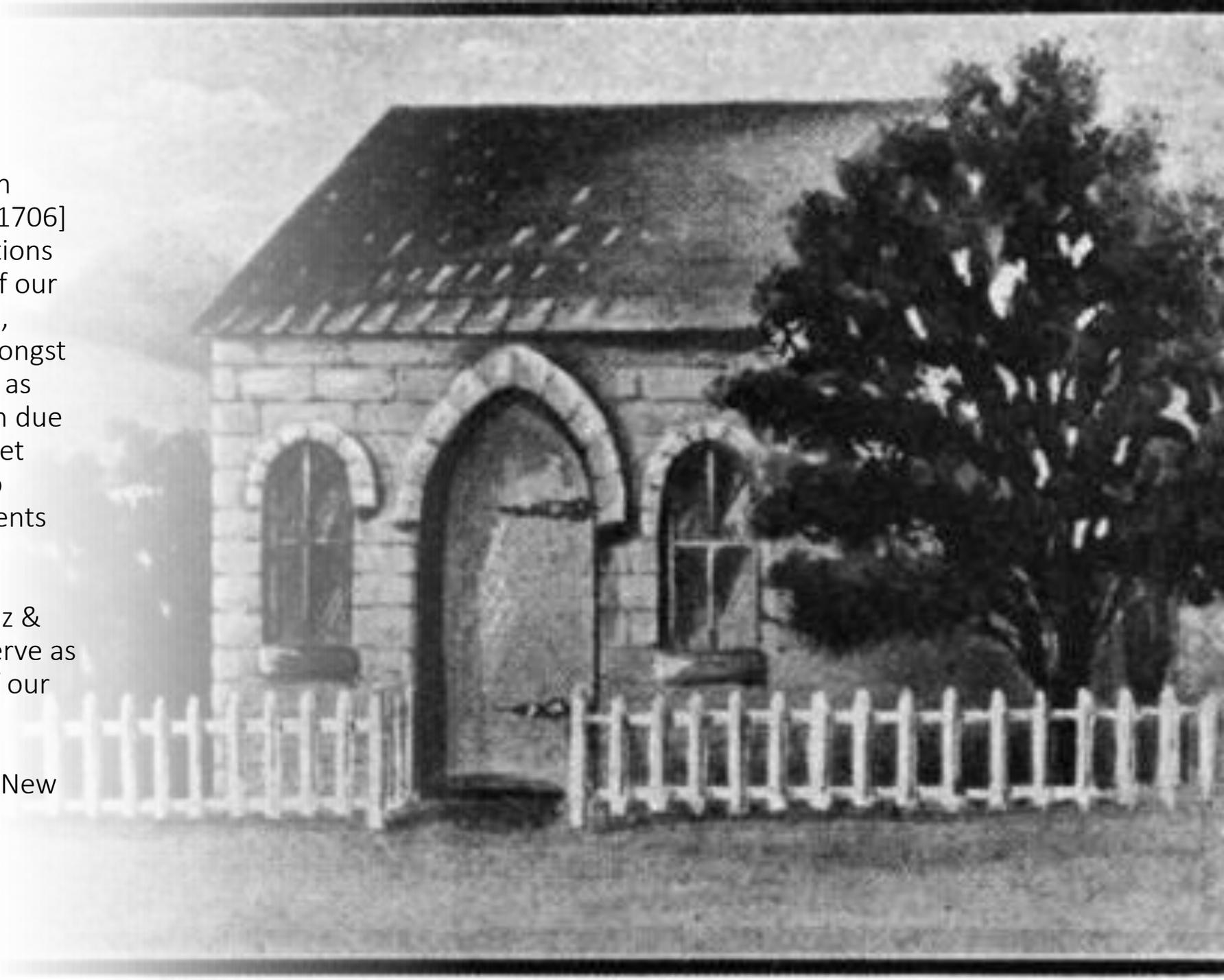
# A Synagogue Revolution? The Impact of "Independence" on American Judaism

Zev Eleff

In the Name of the Blessed God Amen  
Whereas on or about the Year 5466 [1706]  
certain wholesome Rules and Restrictions  
have been made by the then Elders of our  
Holy Congregation, to Preserve Peace,  
tranquility and good Government amongst  
ym [them] and those after them, and as  
they have Been neglected to be put in due  
force for some time past, we now meet  
with common consent and Resolve to  
Revive the same with some amendments  
and additions, which are as follows.

Firstly There shall be elected as Parnaz &  
Two Hatanim, which shall Like wise serve as  
assistants for ye good Government of our  
Holy Congregation ...

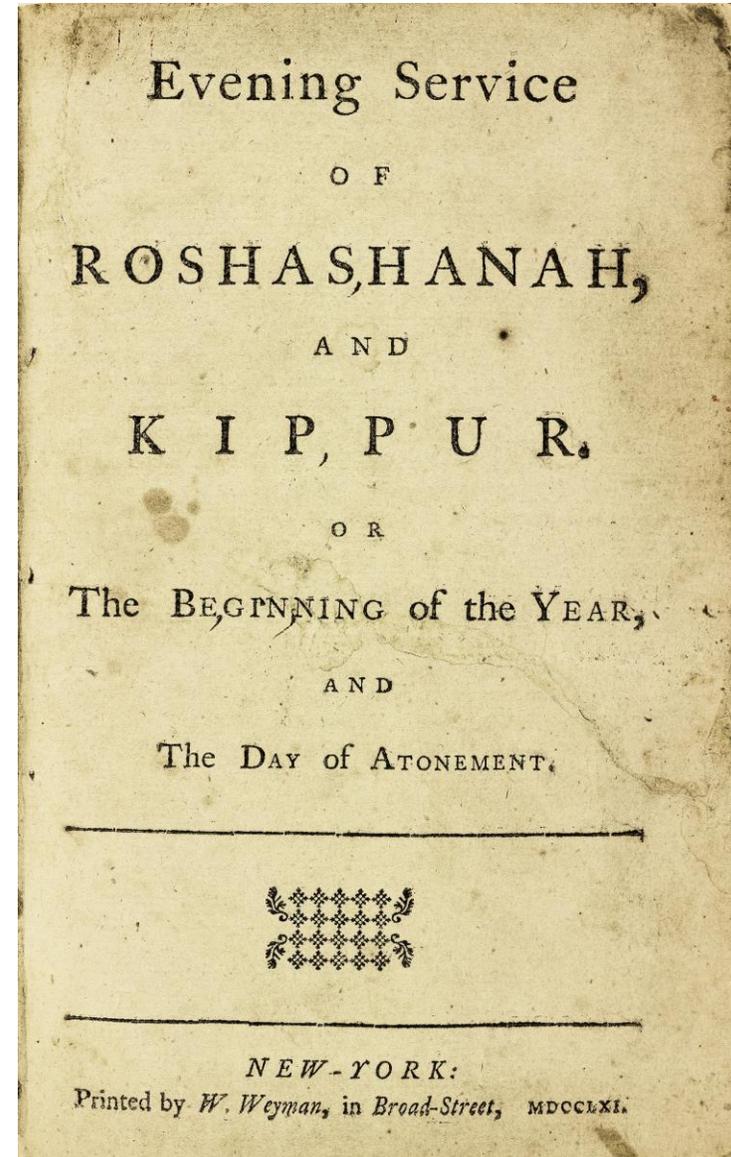
-- Constitution of K.K. Shearith Israel, New  
York, 1728

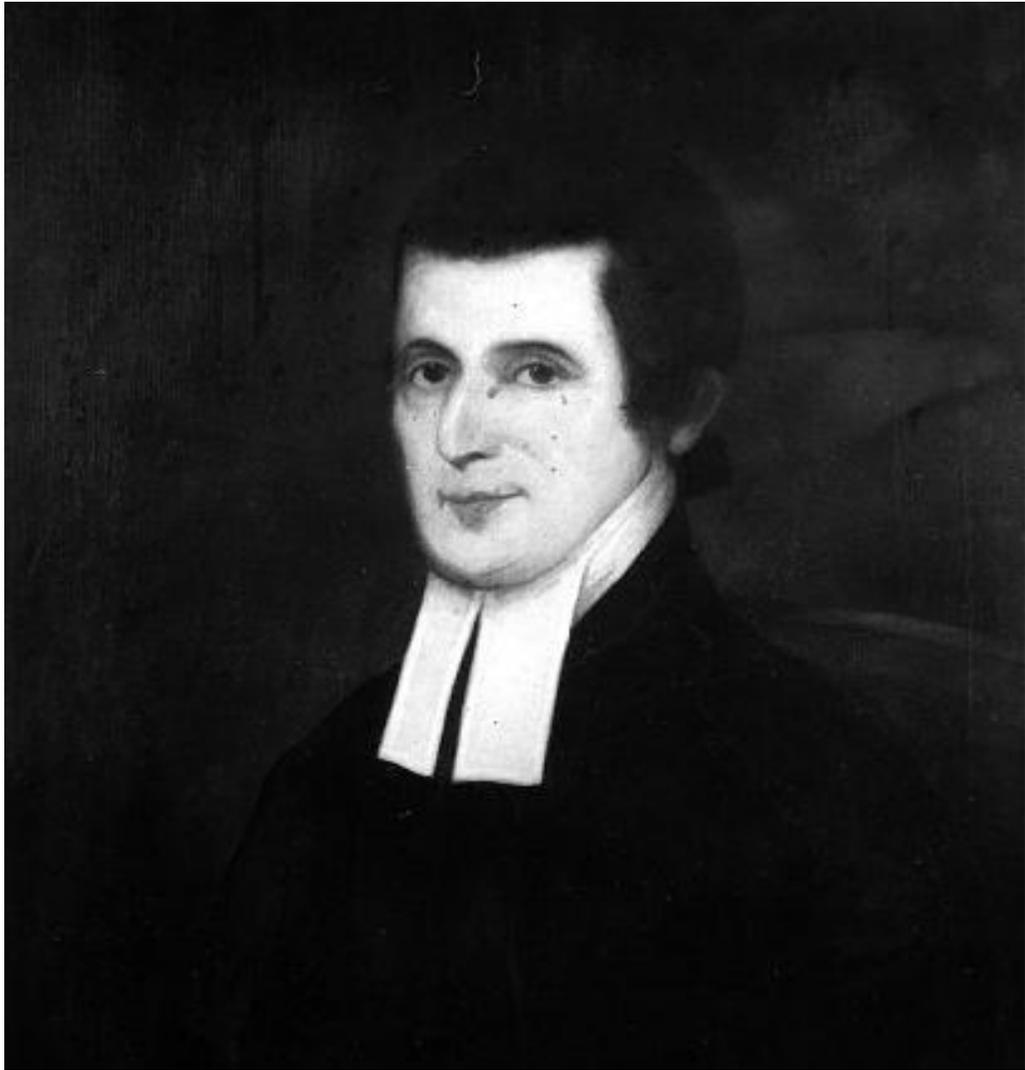


On the 20th day of SHEBAT 5521 the YECHIDIM of the K.K. were assembled and by plurality of votes Elected the following five persons, viz: Jacob Franks, Isaac Gomez, Myer Myers, Hayman Levy and Sampson Simson assistants to the PARNASIM, which office they accepted, and with the authority given them by the said YECHIDIM do Institute the following HASCAMOTH.

1. In conjunction with the PARNASIM they are to collect and Form such Laws and Rules as may be necessary for the benefit and tranquility of the Congregation. For which purpose they are to meet on the first day of every Month, or when required by the Parnasim. Sabbath and Festivals excepted.

-- Constitution of K.K. Shearith Israel, New York, 1761





We, the members of the K.K. Shearith Israel, met this day by a legal summons from the junta published in the synagogue two Sabbath days successively, do by these present in the most solemn manner, in the presence of the Almighty and of each other, agree to form such rules to serve for and be considered as a constitution, and to accede to such other institutions, rules, and regulations as may be conducive to the general good of this congregation ...

Whereas in free states all power originates and is derived from the people, who always retain every right necessary for their well being individually, and, for the better ascertaining those rights with more precision and explicitly, frequently form a declaration or bill of those rights. In like manner the individuals of every society in such state are entitled to and retain their several rights, which ought to be preserved inviolate.

Therefore we, the professors of the Divine Laws, members of this holy congregation of Shearith Israel, in the city of New York, conceive it our duty to make this declaration of our rights and privileges.

First, of Jews in general. That every free person professing the Jewish religion and who lives according to its holy precepts, is entitled to worship the God of Israel in the synagogue, and by purchase or gift to have a seat therein, and to be treated in all respect as a brother, and as such a subject of every fraternal duty.

-- Constitution and Bylaws of K.K. Shearith Israel, New York, 1790

## -- Constitution of Congregation Beth Shalome, Richmond, 1789

New moon of Elul, 5549, August 24, 1789

We, the subscribers of the Israelite religion residents in this place, desirous of promoting the divine worship which, by the blessing of God, has been transmitted by our ancestors, have this day agreed to form ourselves into a society for the better effecting the said laudable purpose, to be known and distinguished in Israel by the name of B'eth Shalom.

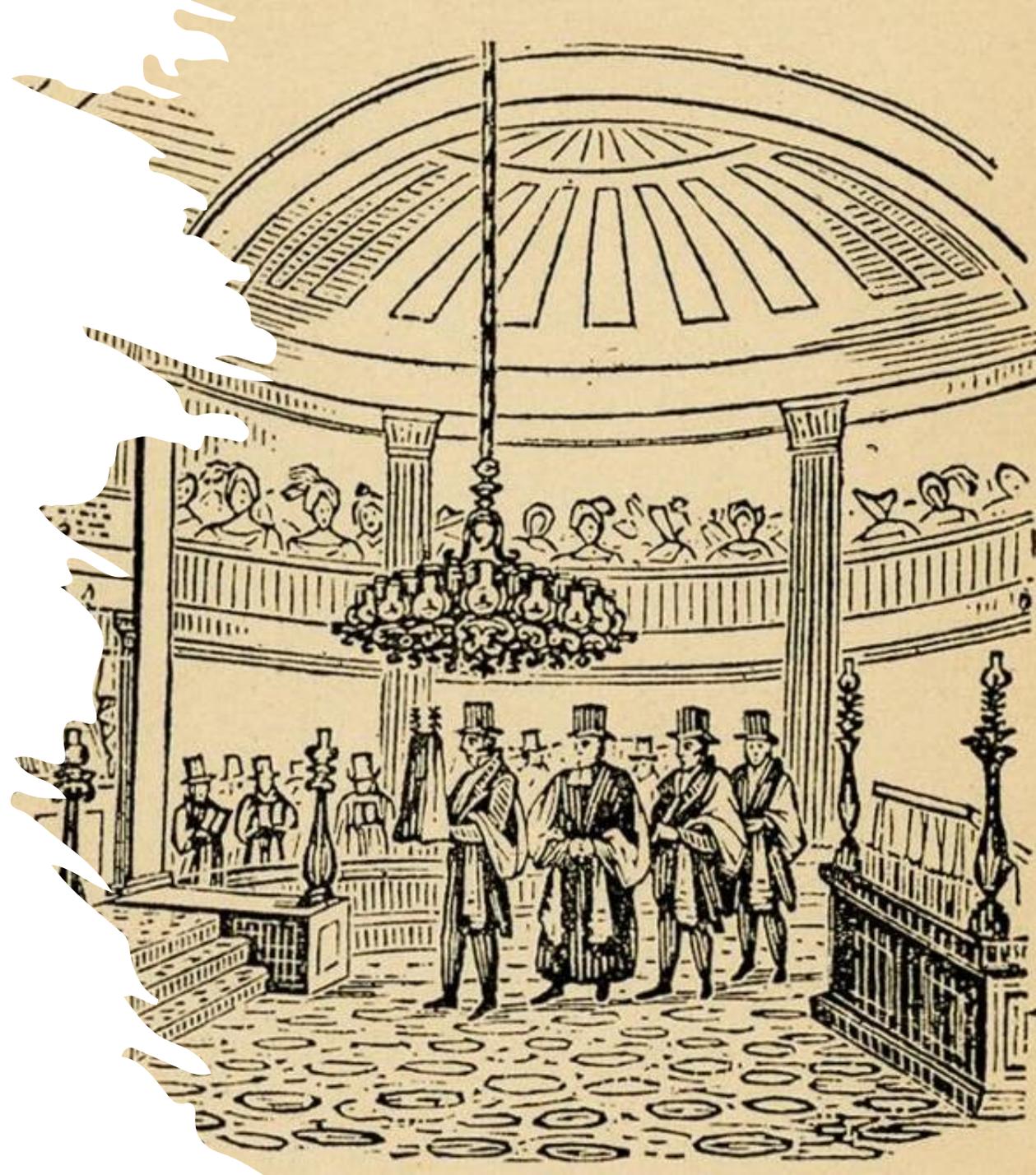
It is necessary that in all societies that certain rules and regulations be made for the government for the same as tend well to the proper decorum in a place dedicated to the worship of the Almighty God, peace and friendship among the same. We do, therefore, agree that the following rules be adopted and be continued in force until a majority of the congregation propose to alter or amend the same.

1. Every free man residing in this city for the term of three months, of the age of 21 years and who congregates with us, shall be a yahid of the kehilla and entitled to every right and privilege of the same.



We, whose names are hereto  
subscribed, electors of the  
Hebrew Congregation of the City  
of Philadelphia, and citizens of  
the State of Pennsylvania, do  
hereby publish and declare, that  
we have formed ourselves into a  
body corporate by the name,  
style and title of Kaal, Kadosh,  
Mickve, Israel, under the articles  
and conditions following, to wit  
...

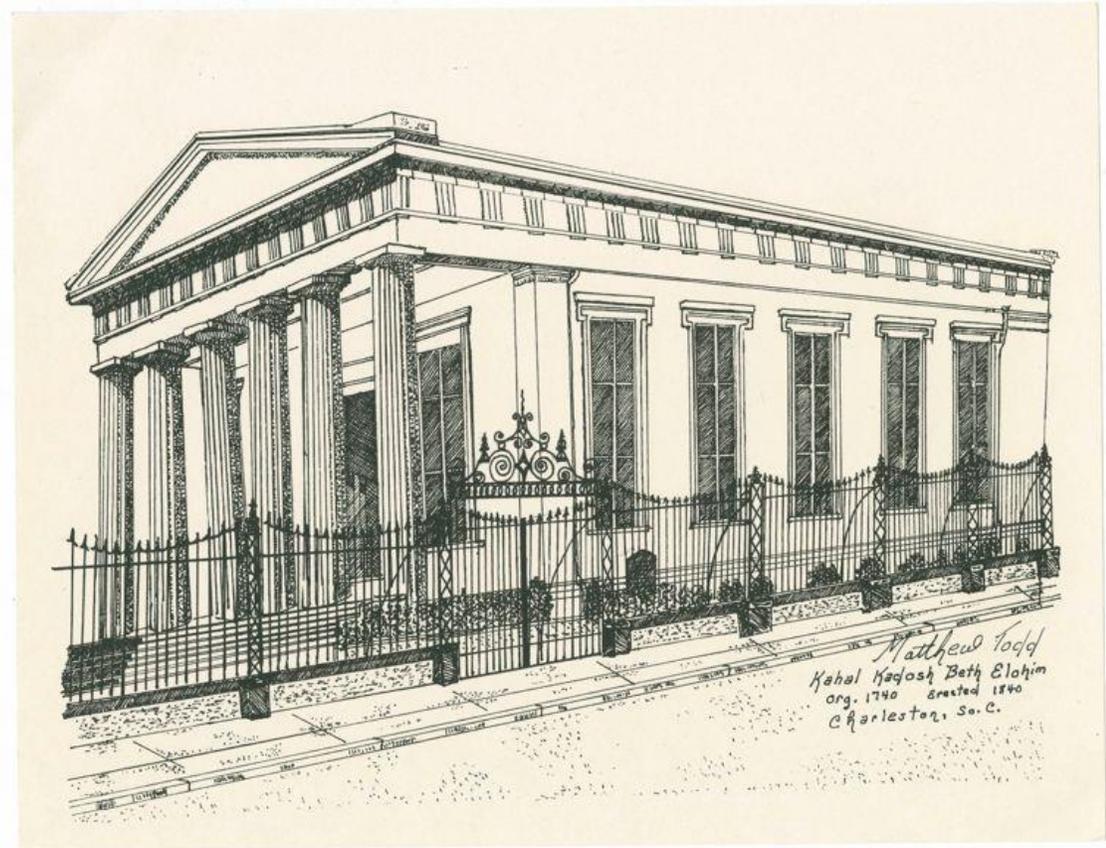
-- Constitution of K.K. Mikveh  
Israel, Philadelphia, 1824



Rule VIII: No person or persons shall be sanctioned to combine for the purpose of erecting any other Synagogue or for uniting in any other unlawful Minyan, within five miles of Charleston; nor shall any person or persons, under the jurisdiction of this Congregation, be permitted, under any pretense whatever to aid, join, or assist at any such unlawful Minyan or Combination.

Rule IX: There shall be one Congregational Burial Ground only, wherein all the deceased members of the Congregation shall be interred.

-- Constitution, Hebrew Congregation of Kaal Kadosh Beth Elohim, Charleston, 1820





Article XXXI: Any Israelite whatsoever, who makes a donation or leaves a legacy of not less than fifty dollars (today, \$1,014) for the benefit of this Society, shall receive every mark of respect, have the right of burial, and be entitled to every religious attention to which members are entitled.

-- Constitution of the Reformed Society of Israelites, Charleston, 1825

Respected Brethren and Friends:

We are deputed a committee from a meeting of Israelites held at Washington hall to announce to you their intention to erect a new Synagogue in this city.

It is our duty, and we must cheerfully comply with it, to acquaint you with the motives which has induced us to take this step. We have a large portion of our brethren who have been educated in the German and Polish minhag, who find it difficult to accustom themselves to what is familiarly called the Portuguese minhag, in consequence of their early impressions and habits. It is also proper to state that the increase of our brethren is so great and in all probability will be much greater in a few years that accommodations, particularly on holiday, cannot be afforded to all. Again, the great increase of New York and the distant situation of the Shul render it necessary to have a new place of worship in a more convenient situation for those residing uptown. These reasons we respectfully trust will be satisfactory to your honorable Board, and will at once show our intention is not capriciously to withdraw ourselves from the ancient and respectable Congregation of Shearith Israel which God may prosper, but is urged by motives of necessity ...

-- Rowland Davies, et. al. to the Parnass and Trustees of the K.K. Shearith Israel, New York, October 6, 1825



The undersigned in behalf of themselves and a number of their brethren, actuated with religious motives, respectfully requests the use of our place of worship and the Sephorim, on the Sabbath mornings during the summer months, in such a way as will no wise interfere with the time now devoted, to the residue of the Congregation.

As it is merely our desire to say the prayers at an early hour on the mornings of Sabbath as well as on other mornings of the week before breakfast observing the same minhog that has always been observed in the congregation, and as the custom which we intend to follow is now and has been practised in Europe and other parts of the globe, among Yehudim; therefore it is earnestly requested the Trustees will promote our undertaking.

-- Committee appointed in behalf of a number of the Congregation to the Trustees and Parnass of the Congregation Shearith Israel, New York, May 1825



WHEREAS it hath pleased the God of our forefathers to gather some of His dispersed people in this city of New York who are taught and used to apply to Him and His Merciful Bounty, and to praise His Holy Name according to the rites of the German and Polish Jews

AND WHEREAS the wise and republican laws of this country are based upon universal toleration giving to every citizen and sojourner the right to worship according to the dictate of his conscience.

AND WHEREAS also the mode of worship in the Established Synagogue of our Beloved Brethren Shearith Israel in this city, is not in accordance with the rites and customs of the said German and Polish Jews.

THEREFORE, we the undersigned bind ourselves under the name of the Congregation B'nai Jeshurun to use our best exertions to support the Synagogue in Elm Street, and to worship therein according to the rites, custom and usages of the German and Polish Jews to be the same as far as practicable without departing from the form and custom now in use by this Congregation.

-- Constitution of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York, 1826

