



QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

A Resource for “The President and the *Hazzan*”

1. Why do you think Seixas’ letter did not request freedom of conscience for all people of the Abrahamic Faiths (i.e., in addition to the Christian majority, Jews and Muslims) but instead presumed that these rights would be part of the U.S. government—even before the Constitution was signed and the First Amendment was created?

Do you think Seixas was influenced by the treatment of Jewish people in Europe and/or in the newly independent, soon-to-be United States?

2. Why do you imagine George Washington decided to respond? Why do you think he specifically repeated some of the ideas and language used by Seixas?
3. What do you think George Washington meant by the idea of toleration?
4. From his letter, can you make the case that Washington supported tolerance for all? Alternatively, can you make the case that Washington supported full liberty and equal treatment as citizens for all as something beyond tolerance?
5. From his letter, can you tell what Washington thought of tolerance? What do you think of tolerance? Is it different from respect?