

Sir,

*Permit the children of the stock of Abraham to approach you with the most cordial affection and esteem for your person and merits — and to join with our fellow citizens in welcoming you to NewPort.*

*With pleasure we reflect on those days — those days of difficulty, and danger, when the God of Israel, who delivered David from the peril of the sword, — shielded Your head in the day of battle: — and we rejoice to think, that the same Spirit, who rested in the Bosom of the greatly beloved Daniel enabling him to preside over the Provinces of the Babylonish Empire, rests and ever will rest, upon you, enabling you to discharge the arduous duties of Chief Magistrate in these States.*

*Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free Citizens, we now with a deep sense of gratitude to the Almighty disposer of all events behold a Government, erected by the Majesty of the People — a Government, which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance — but generously affording to all Liberty of conscience, and immunities of Citizenship: — deeming every one, of whatever Nation, tongue, or language equal parts of the great governmental Machine: — This so ample and extensive Federal Union whose basis is Philanthropy, Mutual confidence and Public Virtue, we cannot but acknowledge to be the work of the Great God, who ruleth in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, doing whatever seemeth him good.*

*For all these Blessings of civil and religious liberty which we enjoy under an equal benign administration, we desire to send up our thanks to the Ancient of Days, the great preserver of Men — beseeching him, that the Angel who conducted our forefathers through the wilderness into the promised Land, may graciously conduct you through all the difficulties and dangers of this mortal life: — And, when, like Joshua full of days and full of honour, you are gathered to your Fathers, may you be admitted into the Heavenly Paradise to partake of the water of life, and the tree of immortality.*

*Done and Signed by order of the Hebrew Congregation in NewPort, Rhode Island.  
August 17th 1790*

*Moses Seixas* Warden

## LETTER FROM MOSES SEIXAS TO GEORGE WASHINGTON – 1790

### SOURCE

This letter was written by Moses Mendes Seixas and he read it aloud when George Washington visited Newport Rhode Island in August of 1790.

### BACKGROUND

Emma came from a very important Jewish family whose roots stretched back to the 1700s. Her uncle Moses Seixas, leader of the Jewish congregation of Newport, Rhode Island, wrote a public letter to President George Washington upon his visit in August of 1790. Washington liked the letter so much, he quoted important phrases about religious freedom back to the Jewish community. What was most important in these letters was how they promoted liberty of conscience to all, regardless of religion or belief systems.

### GUIDING QUESTIONS

*As you read the source consider how it informs these questions:*

- How is America different for the Jewish community?
- How does the presence of Jews and other minorities help shape American ideals?
- Emma never wrote specifically about this letter, so we cannot know for certain whether she knew about it. However, it seems possible that if a family had an ancestor who met and corresponded with a president, that story might travel down to the generations. Assuming Emma knew about this, how might this inform her American identity and her Jewish identity?

### HISTORICAL NOTES

*Definitions of terms used in the source.*

***“Deprived as we heretofore have been of the invaluable rights of free citizens,”***: Seixas is referring to the fact that the United States is unique, and the first among countries to grant Jews citizenship and full rights. In many places in Europe, Jews were tolerated only under certain conditions or circumstances.