



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

PURSuing TRUTH · DEFENDING LIBERTY SINCE 1844

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Hillsdale College Hosts Lecture by Rabbi Meir Soloveichik

Soloveichik spoke on 'George Washington's Letters to the Jews and the Covenantal Nature of America.'

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College hosted Rabbi Meir Soloveichik on Feb. 10 for a lecture titled “George Washington’s Letters to the Jews and the Covenantal Nature of America.”

“Rabbi Soloveichik highlights the link between the founding principle of religious liberty and the Jewish covenantal tradition — a link most have not considered,” said David Whalen, associate vice president for curriculum. “It was an honor to have the rabbi of America’s oldest Jewish congregation with us to discuss this special relationship between the Jewish tradition and America’s heritage of freedom.”

According to Soloveichik, Washington rightly saw America as a covenantal nation, whose people had pledged themselves to each other in the presence of God around specific ideas.

“Covenantal societies represent conscious new beginnings,” Soloveichik said. “They are founded on an idea, dedicated to a proposition. That’s why we have ideas everywhere.”

According to Soloveichik, this covenantal understanding of America allowed it to include different sorts of people and regard them all as equal — the basis of religious liberty in America.

“Washington is saying, ‘For us, toleration is insufficient,’” Soloveichik said. “He’s saying, ‘In Europe, you may be tolerated, but here, everyone is equal. You are not here because we are allowing you. You are here because you deserve to be as much as us.’”

Soloveichik said that like the Jews, Americans must be intentional about passing down the belief that unite us as a people.

“One of the central lessons of the Hebrew Bible is you have to make sure that your covenantal beliefs are passed down from generation to generation,” Soloveichik said. “It may be hard to escape from tyranny. It is harder still to build and sustain adults transmitting to the next generation the story of the origin of liberty.”

Meir Soloveichik is rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel (the oldest Jewish congregation in the United States), a senior scholar at Tikvah, and director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University. He was recently appointed by the president of the United States to the Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty and served as vice chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. His podcasts and lectures can be found at MeirSoloveichik.com.

For a photo from the lecture, click [here](#). For photos of Hillsdale College, click [here](#). For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, Imprimis, with a circulation of more than 7.5 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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