

Gelberman, Joseph, Rabbi

^{ceased}
Born Nagyvárad, 1912

Because I Became
an AMERICAN

by

CPL. JOSEPH GELBERMAN
CHAPLAIN'S ASSISTANT, U. S. ARMY

FORMER
RABBI OF THE NEW LIGHT TEMPLE
OF NEW YORK CITY

In Appreciation
To my Commander-in-Chief,
The President of the United States
of America

1943

CPL. JOSEPH GELBERMAN
CHAPLAIN'S ASSISTANT
HQ. 13TH REGIMENT BIRTC
CAMP ROBINSON, ARKANSAS

June 11, 1943

Franklin D. Roosevelt
President of the United States,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

I am enclosing a pamphlet which I am about to publish and I hope you do not think me presumptuous for having dedicated it to you.

My purpose in writing it is two fold: first, I want to let everyone know how I appreciate living in America and having the honor of being a member of the United States Army; second, I wish to express the feeling of all members of my native country, Hungary, and our gratitude for having allowed us to come to this land and finding such a haven of refuge.

We also highly appreciate the attitude you have taken toward Hungary in not considering it an enemy alien.

As a rabbi I wish to thank you for your broad humanity, understanding and effort in behalf of all the persecuted people all over the world.

Yours very truly,

JOSEPH GELBERMAN,
Chaplain's Assistant (Cpl.)

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The White House
WASHINGTON

June 15, 1943

My dear Corporal Gelberman:

This acknowledges, with thanks, your letter of June eleventh, and the enclosed pamphlet, which you were good enough to send the President. These papers are being made available to him and you may be sure that the feeling of gratitude which you so generously express will touch the President in an appreciative way.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Grace G. Tully,
Private Secretary.

Corporal Joseph Gelberman
Chaplain's Assistant
Hq. 13th Regt. BIRTC
Camp Robinson, Arkansas

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Because I Became an American,



CPL. JOSEPH GELBERMAN

"I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag and to defend it against all enemies . . ."

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APPROVED BY THE
PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE
CAMP HEADQUARTERS
CAMP JOSEPH T. ROBINSON, ARKANSAS

Capt. Walter E. Hussman

INTRODUCTION

The Chaplain, as religious leader in the army, deals directly with the problem of morale and is in a favored position to test the spirit of the men in his command. In this war not only our native sons, but, to a far greater extent, our adopted ones are proving the magnificence of the American Dream. The men who have come to us recently from foreign lands had made our cause their own even before they fled their native countries. In the Army of the United States they are teaching us, the home-born, the real meaning of a passion for liberty and freedom for a world in the agony of transition. America has been and will continue to be enriched by them. It is to be hoped that we will take full advantage of the spiritual treasures they bring us.

Rabbi Gelberman, Technician 5th Grade, after his basic training was completed, was assigned as Chaplain's Assistant at Camp Robinson. He has been serving wholeheartedly and efficiently as this Chaplain's aid in the exacting work of the Chaplain's Corps. His enlistment as a private, although Ministers of Religion are exempt from the draft, is typical of the spirit of our new citizens in general as manifested by the thousands who have come to Camp Robinson for their basic training. This Chaplain is happy to have the opportunity of paying tribute to the self-sacrifice of these many men. It is a spirit of self-sacrifice shared by all true Americans regardless of origin, and a spirit which will finally win victory and freedom not only for our own country but for the entire world.

MAURICE A. HIRSCHBERG,
Chaplain AUS.

Camp Robinson, Ark.
June 10, 1943.

GOD BLESS AMERICA

Almighty God, God of providence, guardian of our lives, we pray Thee with piety and humility, to bless us with Thy infinite mercy. We pray Thee that this war and all future wars shall forever disappear from the earth, and in their stead forgiveness, mercy, love and understanding shall creep into our hearts.

Bless the living and the dead. Bless those who sacrificed their lives for our sake and for all posterity. May their glorious deeds forever be a reminder of our sacred duties, that their death shall not have been in vain.

Bless the United States of America and bless our beloved President who guides its destiny. Help us to preserve democracy, that its lofty ideals may prevail throughout all the lands. Help us liberate the enslaved peoples of the earth, that in liberty, fraternity and equality we may be more closely united in bonds of love and good-fellowship. "May the time not be distant when America's Big Idea of one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all . . . shall be stretched to read . . . **One earth indivisible, with liberty and justice for all mankind . . .**"

In this spirit, we beseech Thee O Lord, to bless us and keep us, now and forever, AMEN.

UNITED WE STAND

The First Sermon, Delivered as Chaplain's Assistant, April 11, at the Chapel at Camp Robinson, Arkansas

Chaplain Hirschberg, My Friends:

I shall begin my short address with the ancient prayer of our forefathers: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who hath preserved me alive; sustained me and brought me to enjoy this very happy day of my life." This prayer I offer God for having blessed me with the honor of becoming an American, and with the privilege of serving in the Armed Forces of the United States.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank our beloved Chaplain, for it has been through his efforts that I now have the honor of addressing you as Chaplain's Assistant; and also, to thank the community of Little Rock, and especially the Jewish Welfare Board for their untiring efforts in the behalf of all the soldiers.

It is with a feeling of great joy, and at the same time of humility, that I find myself in the pulpit of an army chapel which is dedicated to the service of God, with its doors open to all who would worship Him according to the dictates of their hearts.

My friends, just a short while ago I finished my basic training. Now I can tell you truthfully that when I enlisted I never dreamt what basic training meant. Knowing that "basic" means "fundamental," I surmised that it consisted of such routine matters as handling a gun, learning to march, and similar rudimentary training. The countless hours spent on K.P. and as "Sanitation Engineer," however, have made a lasting impression on me; nevertheless, I do not regret one moment of it. I feel it was all a part of the program of converting me from a civilian to a soldier—one of Uncle Sam's most loyal ones, I hope. Having lived through some of Europe's horrors and after having experienced along with you the righteous indignation caused by the attack on Pearl Harbor, I consider any so-called hardships that we have gone through, or which we may experience in the future, as a small sacrifice for us as Americans and as Jews to make in the defense of our beloved and glorious country.

I would like to relate to you an experience that illustrates the true feeling of good fellowship and democracy existing in the American Army. I was with the first group activating the new area of this camp. As many of you remember, being there was no bed of roses. We had only the barest necessities. There were no recreational facilities and no chapels, but there was plenty of mud. The theaters, recreational buildings, and chapels were completed only recently. I am reminded of one particular night. The wind howled like a

prowling beast around the unfinished hutments. We were trying to keep warm by coaxing the dying embers in the coal stoves. Everything was hushed and somber. A soldier pushed open the door of my hutment. After shaking the rain from himself, he stood in the middle of the floor and asked me if I were a minister. His face showed all the marks of mental anguish, and it seemed to me that he had been crying. With a heavy heart he told me his story. He had just received a telegram that his wife was critically ill. He had applied for an emergency furlough, but the Red Cross had not yet verified it. He was suffering from extreme anxiety. There were no chaplains available at the new area, and learning that I was a minister he had come to me for spiritual comfort. I knew him as a member of the Catholic faith, and told him that I was a minister of the Jewish faith. That made no difference to him. He knelt and prayed according to the Catholic religion while I stood over him and prayed in Hebrew to our common God for the deliverance of the wife of my brother-in-arms. I am delighted to tell you that as the soldier left he walked with lighter footsteps, as though a weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

In spite of the fact that I was both mentally and physically exhausted from the day's work, I went to bed with a smile on my face and great joy in my heart. Before I fell asleep I offered thanks to God for having given me the privilege of witnessing the true feeling of brotherhood and fel-

lowship that exists in this country. On that night I knew that as long as such a spirit exists among people, as long as such a spirit exists in this country, God shall be with us and there can be but one end to this war: Victory for the United Nations, for the ideal of Democracy.

My friends, "there was a dream that men could one day speak the thoughts of their own choosing . . . There was a hope that men could one day stroll through the streets evenings, unafraid . . . There was a prayer that each could speak to his own God in his own church . . . That dream, that hope, that prayer, became America. Great strength, youthful enterprise, hard work made it so. Now that same America is the dream, the hope, the prayer of the world. Our freedom, its dream, our strength, its hope, our swift race against time, its prayer. We must not fail the world now. We must not fail to share our freedom afterwards.

. . . Keep singing, keep working, and fight for America . . ."

And then we may hope, we may be sure that "He who maketh peace in heaven, will make this peace on earth, an everlasting peace."

In conclusion, my friends, I wish to affirm that my endeavors shall be dedicated always to the perpetuation of the lofty ideals of the American Creed:

"I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people, whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed, a democracy in a republic; a sovereign nation of many sovereign states, a perfect Union, one and inseparable, established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes.

"I therefore believe that it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag and to defend it against all enemies . . ." AMEN.



RADIO INTERVIEW

Cpl. Buice: Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen. This is your camp reporter with personalized news from Camp Robinson. Today we have as our guest, a soldier who has travelled many miles. In fact, he has crossed the Atlantic Ocean, leaving his home and family in Hungary, where he was district Rabbi in the county of Budapest, and since 1939 until his enlistment in the United States Army in 1943, was Rabbi of the New Light Temple in New York City. Ladies and Gentlemen, this is Pvt. Joseph Gelberman, stationed here at Camp Robinson.

Pvt. Gelberman, would you please tell us something about yourself. First, when did you arrive in the United States?

Pvt. Gelberman: It was August 15th 1939. I shall never forget that beautiful bright morning when I saw the Statue of Liberty. I stood at attention for a long time facing the Statue and while the storm clouds gathered far across the sea I swore allegiance to the land that's free. I raised my voice in a solemn prayer: "God Bless America . . ."

Cpl. Buice: I understand being an ordained rabbi you were not drafted. Why did you volunteer?

Pvt. Gelberman: I volunteered to the army because I became an American, though I was not a citizen yet. I consider this war a holy war, for we fight for freedom, for liberty and for God's World to come. I consider it an honor and a privilege to be a member of the United States Army.

Cpl. Buice: Tell us Private Gelberman, how do you like army life?

Pvt. Gelberman: To be truthful when I first enlisted I never dreamed what army life meant. It wasn't easy. But having lived through some of the horrors in Europe and after having experienced the righteous indignation of Pearl Harbor I consider any so called hardship that I have gone through or shall experience in the future, are but the least that I can do as an American and as a religious leader in the defense of my beloved adopted country. At the present I'm assigned as Chaplain's Assistant and am very happy indeed to have as my superior one of the finest rabbis I ever met: Chaplain Hirshberg.

Cpl. Buice: What do you think about your native country, Hungary, being at war with the United States?

Pvt. Gelberman: I am glad you asked this question, Corporal. Hungary is not at war with the United States. It was the Germans who forced them to declare war. The Hungarians hate war. The Hungarians hate Hitlerism and always hated dictatorship, and we loyal Americans of Hungarian descent will fight to the last drop of our blood for victory, we Hungarians of all faiths stand and fight united with our fellow Americans for the Victory of the United Nations.

Cpl. Buice: Private Gelberman, what is your opinion about the postwar problems?

Pvt. Gelberman: Our first effort must be to win this titanic struggle in which we are now engaged. There is no magic key to the problems of the world. There has probably never been a time when so many people all over the world are looking for guidance and are themselves eager to make their contributions to the building of the new world. A rebirth of faith and a moral and religious purpose is required to activate our political and economic system. We must carry over into our daily lives the

religious principle which motivated the builders of this country.

I believe that in a new-birth of all the Nations in a New-World built on the principles of the Four Freedoms, we shall have an everlasting peace for all mankind all over the world.

Cpl. Buice: Thank you Private Gelberman for being with us today, and I'm sure with all of us working together with faith and sincerity our post-war problems will be solved.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you have just heard Pvt. Joseph Gelberman, a Rabbi refugee, formerly a citizen of Hungary, now a soldier in the United States Army, serving as Chaplain's assistant here at Camp Robinson. This is Cpl. Bob Buice speaking from the Public Relations Office, inviting you to tune in tomorrow at this same time for more news of your men in uniform.

CPL. RABBI JOSEPH GELBERMAN



Born in Nagyecséd (Hungary) in 1912.

Received his Rabbinical degree in Budapest in 1935.

Until 1939 he served as rabbi the community of Domsod and later as district-rabbi of Tass-Domsod, County of Budapest.

In 1938 on the occasion of his election as district-rabbi a volume of his sermons were issued by the Ladies Auxiliary of the community Tass-Domsod with the title: TRUTH AND PEACE.

In 1939 (August) he came to America and became the Executive Director of the Academy of Jewish Studies and Trades.

In 1940 he founded, with Rev. Dr. George Lanyi, the American-Hungarian Jewish Congregation—The New Light Temple of New York.

In 1941 co-founder and co-editor of the New Light Journal, the only American-Hungarian Jewish Journal in America.

In 1943 (February) he volunteered as a private in the U. S. Army.

In 1943 (March) he was assigned as Chaplain's Assistant at Camp Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas.

In 1943 (May) he was promoted to Technician 5th Grade (Cpl.)



Gelberman, Joseph, Rabbi

Born Nagyecséd, 1912



Rabbi Joseph Gelberman
az "Israel Center of Hillcrest
Manor" lelkésze