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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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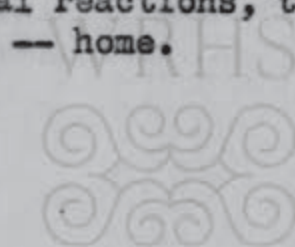
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Letters which I receive from soldiers, 1942.

614
LETTERS WHICH I RECEIVE FROM SOLDIERS

What do they reveal about the inner life of our men in service,
their spiritual reactions, their thoughts of war and
peace, and -- home.



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, December 27, 1942

My sermon of this morning was written by other hands, by the hands of soldiers.

I have frequently asked my self during the last year or so: What are our boys thinking of -- the boys who left their homes and have gone to the camps. What is going through their minds? What are they thinking of in this new world in which they find themselves, and I have very carefully and with great interest scanned the letters. Many of these men have written to men, many of them -- hundreds of them. Their letters have been very revealing, in many ways very heartening. Some of the things of which soldiers are thinking I will speak this morning, rather let them speak through me.

In the first place, there are first reactions of the men who leave their own civilian lives and schools and jobs and professions and enter this new world, utterly different from the world from which they come. Surprisingly enough, one finds very little complaint in these letters. If one does find any complaint it has to do largely with such things as the dull routine, the monotony of a soldier's life before he sees active service, which is actually very important training to which the men are subjected. For some of them, it is a hard achievement. But by and large, one feels that the government has done a good job in looking after the needs of the men and in trying to ease their transition from civilian to military life. One soldier writes:

"The change from civilian life to that of a soldier is a great one and many readjustments are necessary. Many times, too many times in fact, when those readjustments are unpleasant, we are prone to overlook the basic reasons why we are here, and see only the rules, regulations and minor discomforts which are now part of our daily life.

"Your letter was very timely and it refocused in my mind the high aims for which we are fighting. And this time I won't lose sight of those aims again, come what may...."

These discomforts are eased for many of the men by a good sense of humor. So I find in our of the letters of the boys to me, after his induction into the Army:

"As for the meals, the cutlery is like Jenssen, the napery like France's finest, the meat like the Tavern, fish like New Orleans' finest, rolls and bread like Damons', pastry like McNally Doyles' and coffee like Crosby's so I can't complain, and besides the mess sergeant is standing directly over my shoulder." -- like the Jewish boy who wrote from the German prison about the wonderful treatment he was getting and who signed himself -- Osser.

Another note one meets from many of these letters is this -- how utterly grateful they are for the slightest attention paid to them, how hungry they are to hear from home, every letter from home, every token, every gift of the least value is to them a link with home and all that home stands for. Our Temple sent to our boys in service -- over three hundred of them a Chanukah box -- things which we believed ~~we~~ of soldiers would like to receive. And from the host of letters you would think we sent a million dollars to each one. One of the boys wrote this:

"Dear Joy Spreaders:

The other day you performed a miracle! Yes, an illusion on a par with the wizardry of Merlin. Let me explain my statement. Picture a soldier boy returning from a twenty-mile hike, having toted a fifty pound pack all morning and afternoon in a sweltering heat. It's not a pretty portrait, is it? Well, to continue, the first pleasant noise of the day was the always welcome, 'Mail Call'. That was the signal for many sets of blistered feet to hobble at top speed. On return to the barracks this doughboy opened a newly received bundle; and then it happened. Where, a moment before, gloom had surrounded a wary heart, a cheery & feeling now emanated. As you have probably opined, that service man was myself and that bundle, that joy-producing element, was your Chanukah gift. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your miracle...--"

Every one of our boys who goes into the service receives as a token from us, ~~a thoughtful member of our~~ a thoughtful member of our that receptacle a little silver Mezuzah, the gift of our congregation. The Mezuzah is

which we we have been told to place on the doorposts of our homes which contains the "Sh'ma" and the prayer "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy might". We sent it to each boy not as a charm or amulet -- simply as a token, a reminder of his faith, and that little gift has had an amazing response from them. To me it has been the first indication how really the roots of deep/religious loyalty can go. We are not ver hopeful of our young people when they are at home. Sometimes we wonder what is going on in their hearts and in their minds. Something like this happens -- a war -- and you get this reaction:

" It made me feel wonderful and honored to receive the Mezuzah you so kindly sent me.

It will be a constant reminder of the fact that I'm proud to be an America Jew fighting to give to the world a bit of the freedom I have always cherished and enjoyed..."

Another boy who is in a parachute division writes this: "The Mezuzah is part of my jumping equipment -- I never jump without it."

We sent one to a boy in the South Sea Islands and he list it and he wrote: "I would be very glad to receive one of the gold Mezuzahs from my Temple. I had one on the way here but lost it, and it sure did break my heartto lose such a lovely gift...."

And another more able to express himself more beautifully and more poetically writes: "Did you ever have the odd feeling of shivers traversing the length of your spine? Did a certain something seem to rise in your throat and sort o'choke you? Has a mist ever clouded your vision due to a spontaneous presence of tears in your eyes? Well, that is exactly what happened to me when I received the grand gift from The Temple. 'Tis mighty difficult to explain how gratified I was to know that even though I had left my Jewish Community and was now a minority member of quite a varied group, there could still be a tie that could 'bring my spirits home.'

I shall always wear the 'Mezuzah' and feel proud to let others know that I, too, have a religious faith of which I am not ashamed...."

A question that I have frequently asked myself is -- Do the men who go to service really know what it is all about -- what they are fighting for? Are they just responding to the call of duty because their country summoned them? Are they thinking in a mechanical way about their service? Do they really understand what is going on in this historical struggle. And are they looking ahead, beyond? Judging by their letters -- most decidedly do they know, and most decidedly are they thinking ahead! This is a from a letter from a boy who joined the Marines because it appeared the hardest service.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my five months of training. True, at times, the going has been pretty rough and hard, and ratings come very slowly (which is certainly different from the Army), but all in all, I'm quite happy here. If I had the decision and choice to make again, my answer would be the same. No, I'm no lover of fighting and warfare, but we've a job to do now, our way of life is at stake and no sacrifice can be too much now!

"We move out tomorrow destination unknown. But we have the assurance that our assignment will be "active" duty. Everything is in readiness..." -- He moved out to Guadalcanal and was wounded in service. He knew what it was all about. There was a job to be done. Our way of life was at stake and he was prepared to do his share.

There is another one from another boy: "I want to thank you most sincerely for the comfort that The Temple has provided to my mother since the passing of my dear father just a little over a year ago...

"So far everything here has gone rather well for me and I can say that I have no complaints to make which are even worth mentioning, as I know there are thousands of boys who are a lot worse off than I can possibly be. My only hope is that when this is all over, the job will be done once and for all, in order that those who follow will not have to take time out to do it all over again..." They all want to do this thing once and for all so that those who follow will not have to take time out of their lives to do the same thing again. He, too, is

reaching out for a more peaceful kind of world, a world in which a young man has a chance.

Here is another: "The men that I've had the privilege of meeting are all splendid, devoted to one purpose, and that is the assurance that that for which we're fighting to preserve is the foundation that will endure.

"I believe men know the various reasons behind this war, and know that there must be but one result. To lose one's life is a small price to pay, if the knowledge that happiness will be left for their families and friends. Weak men, therein find courage, and strong men therefrom inspire others.

"To attain that security, I join with others, who by their sincerity, and their hopes, pray that soon, men will beat their swords into plowshares and such things as ambition, the right to think and the right to live will be assured and as evident as the air we breathe."

Here is another letter: "We all know that sacrifices are to be made on the front, whether it is the home front or battlefield. However, after the toil is finished and the last shot has echoed, this time it will be a better world since we have our old errors to base progress upon..." -- A better world, a more enduring world, a nobler world -- that is what they are reaching out for.

Here is a boy who is persuaded, eager to have the rising generation know more training in the prophetic dream, ~~in~~ school. He writes: "May I make a request, ask a favor that will mean much to me and, perhaps, to other soldiers? The Temple Sunday School has an excellent opportunity to implement the teachings of Judaism and directing the religious message toward specific goals. Let the students be given a grasp of the moral issues involved in this war. But more, let them understand the prophetic dream of peace, of a real brotherhood that affords equality for all nations, peoples and races. Let them learn what each must sacrifice to aid in the realization of a People's Century..."

Yes, our men know what they are fighting for.

What about their inner life? What are the spiritual stabilities of their lives? Do soldiers have time to think about spiritual things, about God, and destiny and worth and things of the spirit? It is remarkable what those letters reveal. Please remember that these letters were not solicited, were not asked to express themselves about these things. It is spontaneous sentiment expressed by friends to a former teacher and Rabbi.

"In my case the demands of a full schedule of flight training preclude attendance at Temple. Your remembrances, and the welcome Bulletin, bear a reassuring message, therefore, that we are still very much a part of The Temple and of your community, and that the fellowship and spiritual values of Judaism remain with us wherever war may take us.

"This reassurance is heartening, for our religion, our faith in God are unfailing wellsprings of the courage to fight for that just world which Judaism has envisioned through the centuries -- and whoever among us has been thoughtlessly neglectful or flippantly disregarding heretofore, is now keenly aware of his remission."

I find this note almost a confession running through many of them. We took religion lightly when we were at home. We neglected it at times. But here, it is all here. Another boy in a Naval Hospital writes: "It is hard for me to describe the feeling that took hold of me when I received the Chanukah gift from the Temple today. Somehow, it made me realize how strong religion can give us a feeling of security in a war-torn world.

"The contents were not the things which flooded my being with a rich feeling, but the thought that my people had remembered me on this day while I was so far from home.

"It was a feeling which was partly filled with embarrassment. Embarrassment due to the fact that heretofore I have not been overly religious, but now with everything so different from my past life, my faith in God is like a torch in a

world darkened by so many unanswerable questions...

"In surroundings such as this U. S. Naval Hospital, one is suddenly awakened to the full realization of the strength of religion and the part it plays in allaying some of the pains that medicines can hardly touch...."

And here is a letter that came to me with over-powering emotional feeling. This man writes: "I believe if a survey were taken of the attitude of the man in service today -- especially of those men near or already in actual combat -- one would find a terrific tendency towards religion. In other words, in the so-called hour of danger, the average fellow sort of looks skyward and prays a little more than perhaps he did as every-day John Smith -- or in our case as every-day Joe Goldberg. Well, I think that it might help a little if during services every Sunday, a short prayer might be said for those fellows over there -- Jew and gentile alike -- not just a mention in the final benediction -- but something extra." He asks for prayer for the men in service -- a little extra prayer for the Jewish and non-Jewish boys. This request will surely be granted. We shall from now on say a little extra prayer for the men in service. And strangely enough, this request comes from a boy from whom I never expected this.

And here is another that startled me: "It was with profound respect that I received a personal letter from you. I am on active duty far overseas and cannot properly type a reply. You will have to decipher my miserable handwriting...I am stationed on a tropical island in the Southwest Pacific and thus mail delivery is spasmodic.

"For a long time my father and I have attended your Sunday Morning Services. Many of them are indelibly recorded in my memory and I shall remember you for them.

"I feel as all of us do that the tyranny and bestial treatment which we as a group have received from the enemy is despicable. My small part in the affair is to help squarely knock off the fangs for the Nazi viper. Life as a slave is not worth living.

"May I digress a moment to tell you of my interest in studying for the Rabbinate. During our crossing, lacking an ordained Rabbi, I stepped in and led services on the ship for the Jewish boys. Later on, with the ready help of the Chief Chaplain, I helped arrange for High Holy Holidays on the island. All this set me to pondering the future possibilities of becoming a Rabbi myself.

"What puzzles me and thus causes hesitation is the inner need I feel for spiritual guidance. Have I the abiding faith of my fathers? Have I the inner stamina and endurance to face a world full of prejudices and fight for what I feel has a right to live? I am only a soldier now of Uncle Sam's great Army, but once I was a confident young teacher, having just graduated from a small University.

"Could you help with a little advice on my small problem? Should I study for the Rabbinate?...."

In the Southwest Pacific, on a tropical island in the midst of war, a young Jewish soldier is thinking not only of God but of the possibility of dedicating his life as a minister of God.

What are these men thinking about God? Here, again, I find confession in their letters, and return. They write that they thought they could get along without a God but having looked around and seen what has come to the world, the collapse of civilization, they are returning. Here is a letter: "This letter is, I shamefacedly say, the first formal contact I have made with you and The Temple in a goodly number of years. But I have often thought of you and, thanks to your teachings, Gid is always in my heart. It has been so since my confirmation in 1933. Perhaps confession is good for the soul; and if so, mine will be greatly benefited by the following. Not that I have committed any transgression. But I must say that for a good, long while I firmly believed that a man's life -- any and every kind of man -- could be one of irreproachability if he but follow the dictates of the Ten Commandments and his conscience; and thus believing, there grew in me a sort of anti-regimentation-

of-religion feeling. This was blasted out from under me by the realization of the cause for the present violent course of human events -- brought about through too many people who had begun by thinking as I had and then gradually distorted their conceptions of what was right until barbarism resulted....

"I imagine almost everyone with whom you come into contact has some request to make of you; here is mine: a request for knowledge. The masters and their associated brains of the United Nations are today engrossed in the task of forming their plans for a peace designed to please all in the post-war world. But I believe their plans are all concerned with economy, vengeance and retribution...

"What is being or will be done to return the minds of millions of soldiers to normalcy -- to make them believe in a Merciful God once again -- to make their spirits do a complete about-face from ruthlessness, which they have been and are being taught -- to mercy and lovingkindness -- to be at peace once again in body and spirit? As one who will know, I ask you. I can't tell you how much it would gratify me and many like me to know that next-door to the World Peace Congress will be a World Religious Congress, formulating the real peace...

"Let me thank you from the heart for the prayer which I wear around my neck. I am sure it will stand me in good stead..."

There it is -- a young man who thought he could get along without God -- all that was necessary ^{was} to follow his own conscience, then all that passed out from under him when he realized what a similar idea had done to all the world. So he wants men to return to a merciful God.

There is another letter. "After a few weeks in the Army you begin to think more about God. I believe every soldier in this Army becomes more religious conscious after being in a short while.

"In civilian life I was not too religious, I always had believed and had faith in our God but I was not orthodox such as my grandfather whom you may remember: Since receiving your gift I feel even closer to God, and pray to him nightly. In fact I close my prayers with a saying of yours: 'Bless this world with thy most

gracious gift of Peace."

"Thanks loads for the gift and may God bless you and our congregation as he I am sure.
has in the past...." This young soldier will do honor to the memory of his grandfather/

After they turn to religion and to God, they turn also to Judaism -- the religious of their people: One boy writes: "Strange, that in this ever-changing civilization -- a civilization wherein religion is seemingly becoming less and less a part of world politics, there is always that certain inherent feeling which reminds us that we are still members of the Hebrew faith -- the faith which has withstood centuries of strife and storm and shall emerge from this crisis stronger than ever..."

Here is a letter which comes also from somewhere in the Pacific. This boy writes me: "We have a lovely Temple out in the woods which we built ourselves, with a lovely pulpit which wild flowers grow around. For our roof we have the sky and stars above and when there is a full moon here and it shines in on us, words just cannot paint a picture of it. One has to be here to receive the picture and just how it brings a lump in your throat, and your heart just makes you feel good..."

There it is -- building a synagogue in the jungle -- wild flowers all around the altar and the stars over head. That is how it was built very often. Jacob altar built his/in the wilderness. The children of Israel lived in the wilderness for 40 years. Yes, this picture does bring a lump to our throats. Our soldier boys building synagogues.

It is nice to hear from them. Frequently we ~~know~~ Rabbis doubt whether we have accomplished anything with our young people. There is really no way of measuring our success or our failure. In spirutual things we can not measure gain. It is in years like these when letters come in many years after our young people have left our schools which tell us that we have not failed altogether.

Here is a boy who writes: "Through these dark days my heart is still with The Temple." Another boy writes: "The Temple was instrumental and played an important part in my intellectual development -- much more so than the public schools -- and I've always had a strong affection for it on that account.."

another boy writes: "The Jewish community of Iowa City, small as it is, has really taken the cadets to its heart, and through the Hillel Foundation, is providing many good times for us. The Jewish cadets attend services every Sunday at the Foundation.

"It's not much like The Temple, but serves as a good substitute. One doesn't really appreciate The Temple until he is away for a while."

And finally, I was interested to learn from the letters how our boys were adjusting themselves with non-Jewish men in the service -- in the Army, the Navy, the Air Corps. What about Anti-Semitism? What is their reaction^{to}/it? It depends a good deal on where they happen to be. Oneyuung man writes: "I would like to tell you something that I believe is vitally important to dispel harmful rumors which, I understand, have been finding their way back to our homes. I am happy to be able to say that not once in the eight months that I have been in the service have I encountered any anti-Semitism in any form. It has been my experience that my shipmates are engaged in too numerous occupations and endeavours to think of Jewish Americans Catholic Americans, or Protestant Americans as anything but good Americans working for a common cause. We have a job to do and we are going to do it to the best of our collective abilities."

Another boy, also in the Navy encounters a somewhat different experience: "The Navy, believe me, is grand. I am sure it is far superior to any other branch of the service. There is a little anti-Semitism which I find it best to overlook. Perhaps that is the wrong attitude but I find, for example, in the case of my two room-mates (Catholics) -- they let a few things slip the first week or so, not realizing I was one of God's chosen people, but after they found out via some hints on my part that I was Jewish and seeing that I wasn't a bad sort of guy -- they may have changed their minds just a wee bit about Jews etc...and if we would multiply that by the thousands and thousands of similar circumstances that could very possibly happen along similar lines -- some good might come out of it! Of course the gentile has a stock answer to the fact that there does exist a Jewish friend of his who isn't half bad -- "You're different -- but the rest of you -- well -- -- !!!" Anyhow, I

(1)

HARD ADJUSTMENT

The change from civilian life to that of a soldier is a great one and many readjustments are necessary. Many times, too many times in fact, when those readjustments are unpleasant, we are prone to overlook the basic reasons why we are here, and see only the rules, regulations and minor discomforts which are now part of our daily life.

Your letter was very timely and it re-focused in my mind the high aims for which we are fighting. And this time I won't lose sight of those aims again, come what may.....

Donald D. Newman

Good Humor

As for the meals, the cutlery is like Jenssen, the napery like France's finest, the meat like the Tavern, fish like New Orleans finest, rolls and bread like Damons', pastry like McNally Doyles', and coffee like Crosbys' so I can't complain, and besides the mess sergeant is standing directly over my shoulder...

Bud Meisel

① - Others wrote sermon for me - Solcheis -
1) Sharp break - new life - new discipline - new fare - but easy
surprisingly little complaint - Thursday - venture
Good job -

① Hungry to hear from Home - Appreciation of Gift Isatked for slightest return
- Link with Home - and all that stands for - hope to return
Dear "Joy Spreaders": - Chanukah Gift - Million Dollars

The other day you performed a miracle! Yes, an illusion on a par with the wizardry of Merlin. Let me explain my statement. Picture a soldier boy returning from a twenty-mile hike, having toted a fifty pound pack all morning and afternoon in a sweltering heat. It's not a pretty portrait, is it? Well, to continue, the first pleasant noise of the day was the always welcome, "Mail Call". That was the signal for many sets of blistered feet to hobble at top speed. On return to the barracks this doughboy opened a newly received bundle; and then it happened. Where, a moment before, gloom had surrounded a weary heart, a cheery feeling now emanated. As you have probably opined, that service man was myself and that bundle, that joy-producing element, was your Chanukah gift. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your miracle ...-

Wallace M. Rich



Each boy - 25¢ - given by a thorpe member - - bxl - not a (3)
charm or amulet - Token - a Reminder of Faith -
MEZUZAH
Amazing Response - First indication - how Deep were Roots - Rel. sent
went - and J. loyalty -

It made me feel wonderful and honored to receive the Mezuzah you so kindly sent me.

It will be a constant reminder of the fact that I'm proud to be an American Jew fighting to give to the world a bit of the freedoms I have always cherished and enjoyed....

Alan R. Klein

another boy - in Parachute Division -

~~I receive The Temple Bulletin regularly and enjoy it tremendously.~~ The Mezuzah is a part of my jumping equipment -- I never jump without it.....

Albert S. Kronheim

Taken as
chance

From South Sea Islands - lost it -

I would be very glad to receive one of the gold Mezuzah from my Temple. I had one ~~me~~ on the way here but lost it, and it sure did break my heart to lose such a lovely thing....

Elmer Heller

Another - who expresses himself more fully & poetically -

Did you ever have the odd feeling of shivers traversing the length of your spine? Did a certain something seem to rise in your throat and sort o' choke you? Has a mist ever clouded your vision due to a spontaneous presence of tears in your eyes? Well, that is exactly what happened to me when I received the grand gift from The Temple. 'Tis mighty difficult to explain how gratified I was to know that even though I had left my Jewish Community and was now a minority member of quite a varied group, there could still be a tie that could "bring my spirits home".

I shall always wear the "Mezuzah" and feel proud to let others know that I, too, have a religious faith of which I am not ashamed....

Merle W. Marx

1) Do they know what it is all about - A - just respond to call
Must decidedly - they do - What is involved - what they hope
for

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

Eager for rising generations to know - prophetic dream - People's Century

5) May I make a request, ask a favor that will mean much to me and, perhaps, to other soldiers? The Temple Sunday School has an excellent opportunity to implement the teachings of Judaism and directing the religious message toward specific goals. Let the students be given a grasp of the moral issues involved in this war. But more, let them understand the prophetic dream of peace, of a real brotherhood that affords equality for all nations, peoples and races. Let them learn what each must sacrifice to aid in the realization of a People's Century...

Robert Koblitz

Wounded

1) I have thoroughly enjoyed my five months of training. True, at times, the going has been pretty rough and hard, and ratings come very slowly (which is certainly different from the Army), but all in all, I'm quite happy here. If I had the decision and choice to make again, my answer would be the same. No, I'm no lover of fighting and warfare, but we've a job to do now, our way of life is at stake and no sacrifice can be too much now!

We move out tomorrow, destination unknown. But we have the assurance that our assignment will be "active" duty. Everything is in readiness....

Wounded - Gradacac

Leonard Wolen

2) I want to thank you most sincerely for the comfort that The Temple has provided to my mother since the passing of my dear father just a little over a year ago....

So far everything here has gone rather well for me and I can say that I have no complaints to make which are even worth mentioning, as I know there are thousands of boys who are a lot worse off than I can possibly be. My only hope is that when this is all over, the job will be done once and for all, in order that those who follow will not have to take time out to do it all over again...

Decent World - "once & for all" - Martin W. Rose - Interfere with careers

The men that I've had the privilege of meeting are all splendid, devoted to one purpose, and that is the assurance that that for which we're fighting to preserve is the foundation that will endure.

3) I believe men know the various reasons behind this war, and know that there must be but one result. To lose one's life is a small price to pay, if the knowledge that happiness will be left for their families and friends. Weak men, therein find courage, and strong men therefrom inspire others.

To attain that security, I join with others, who by their sincerity, and their hopes, pray that soon, men will beat their swords into plowshares and such things as ambition, the right to think and the right to live will be assured and as evident as the air we breathe.....

Robert Meisel

A better world

4) We all know that sacrifices are to be made on the front, whether it is the home front or battlefield. However, after the toil is finished and the last shot has echoed, this time it will be a better world since we have our old errors to base progress upon....

Ted Lepon

What abt. their inner life? Are their sp. stabilites?

(5)

MORE RELIGIOUS

While on the subject of the boys across seas and in distant lands, I am going to make a suggestion to The Temple and more directly to Rabbi Silver and Rabbi Harris and I do hope the spirit and idea behind the suggestion is understood. It's this:

(3) I believe if a survey were taken of the attitude of the man in service today - especially of those men near or already in actual combat --one would find a terrific tendency towards religion. In other words, in the so-called hour of danger, the average fellow sort of looks skyward and prays a little more than perhaps he did as every-day John Smith -- or in our case as every-day Joe Goldberg. Well, I think that it might help a little if during services every Sunday a short prayer might be said for those fellows over there -- Jew and gentile alike -- not just a mention in the final benediction -- but something extra....

Asks for Prayer - will be prayed -
No Atheists in Fox-Robes
Howard J. Klivans

(1) In my case the demands of a full schedule of flight training preclude attendance at Temple. Your remembrances, and the welcome Bulletin, bear a reassuring message, therefore, that we are still very much a part of The Temple and of your community, and that the fellowship and spiritual values of Judaism remain with us wherever war may take us.

This reassurance is heartening, for our religion, our faith in God are unfailing wellsprings of the courage to fight for that just world which Judaism has envisioned through the centuries -- and whoever among us has been thoughtlessly neglectful or flippantly disregarding heretofore, is now keenly aware of his remission....

Jim Goulder - A confession

I'm unable to tell you what it is like here because of censorship rulings. I can tell you however that it's very "rugged" and very cold.

What are a few inconveniences as long as we have the privilege of taking a part in keeping what we already have?.....

About thirty men from all units stationed at this outpost meet every first and third Friday of the month for services. We have no chaplain but that isn't necessary to bring us together....

Don D. Newman

It is something like that that makes one pause and consider and realize what we are fighting for. In normal life there was a tendency to deviate from religion, but today when so many of us are walking in the shadow of death, we realize more than ever what religion is and that realization makes better men of all of us....

Robert Kronheim

In a Naval Hospital -

(2) It is hard for me to describe the feeling that took hold of me when I received the Chanukah gift from the Temple today. Somehow, it made me realize how strong religion can give us a feeling of security in a war-torn world.

The contents were not the things which flooded my being with a rich feeling, but the thought that my people had remembered me on this day while I was so far from home.

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It was a feeling which was partly filled with embarrassment. Embarrassment due to the fact that heretofore I have not been overly religious, but now with everything so different from my past life, my faith in God is like a torch in a world darkened by so many & unanswerable questions....

In surroundings such as this U. S. Naval Hospital, one is suddenly awakened to the full realization of the strength of religion and the part it plays in allaying some of the pains that medicines can hardly touch....

Edward B. Kaufman

It was with profound respect that I received a personal letter from you. I am on active duty far overseas and cannot properly type a reply. You will have to decipher my miserable handwriting.....~~The letter was dated Sept. 1st and it just arrived (Oct. 18).~~ I am stationed on a tropical island in the Southwest Pacific and thus mail delivery is spasmodic.

For a long time my father and I have attended your Sunday Morning Services. Many of them are indelibly recorded in my memory and I shall remember you for them.

4

I feel as all of us do that the tyranny and bestial treatment which we as a group have received from the enemy is despicable. My small part in the affair is to help squarely knock off the fangs for the Nazi viper. Life as a slave is not worth living.

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Could you help with a little advice on my small problem? Should I study for the Rabbinate?....

Marvin R. Koller

- Leads him to wish to become a Minister of God -
- Such visions have in past come to men

What do they think about God?

Here, again, I find ^{GOD} Confession & Return - Get along
without God - Collapse of Civilization - Return

I hope this finds you well and happy.

This letter is, I shamefacedly say, the first formal contact I have made with you and the Temple in a goodly number of years. But I have often thought of you and, thanks to your teachings, God is always in my heart. It has been so since my confirmation in 1933. Perhaps confession is good for the soul; and if so, mine will be greatly benefited by the following. Not that I have committed any transgression. But I must say that for a good, long while I firmly believed that a man's life -- any and every kind of man -- could be one of irreproachability and even religious satisfaction if he but follow the dictates of the Ten Commandments and his own conscience; and thus believing, there grew in ~~me~~ me a sort of anti-regimentation-of-religion feeling. This was blasted out from under me by the realization of the cause for the present violent course of human events -- brought about through too many people who had begun by thinking as I had and then gradually distorted their conceptions of what was right until barbarism resulted....

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What is being or will be done to return the minds of millions of soldiers to normalcy -- to make them believe in a Merciful God once again -- to make their spirits do a complete about-face from ruthlessness, which they have been and are being taught -- to mercy and lovingkindness -- to be at peace once again in body and spirit? As one who will know, I ask you. I can't tell you how much it would gratify me and many like ~~me~~ me to know that next-door to the World Peace Congress will be a World Religious Congress, formulating the real peace...

Let me thank you from the heart for the prayer which I wear around my neck. I am sure it will stand me in good stead.....

Charles Waldman

Yesterday in the mail I received a gift that means more to me than anything I own. It was a sterling silver mezuzah; a gift from "My Temple".

After a few weeks in the Army you begin to think more about God. I believe every soldier in this Army becomes more religious conscious after being in a short while.

In civilian life I was not too religious, I always had believed and had faith in our God but I was not orthodox such as my grandfather, whom you may remember: (Moses Bloomfield). Since receiving your gift I feel even closer to God, and pray to him nightly. In fact I close my prayers with a saying of yours: "Bless this world with thy most gracious gift of Peace."

Thanks loads for the gift and may God bless you and our congregation as He has in the past....

Robert Horovitz

I felt humbled before that prayer -
He will do more to his grandfather

As they turn to Babylon - Sudamun - End

JUDAISM

Strange, thou, in this ever-changing civilization -- a civilization wherein religion is seemingly becoming less and less a part of world politics, there is always that certain inherent feeling which reminds us that we are still members of the Hebrew faith -- the faith which has withstood centuries of strife and storm and shall emerge from this crisis stronger than ever....

Merle Marx



68

SYNAGOGUE

We have a lovely Temple out in the woods which we built ourselves, with a lovely pulpit which wild flowers grow around. For our roof we have the sky and stars above and when there is a full moon here and shines in on us, words just cannot paint a picture of it. One has to be here to receive the picture and just how it brings a lump in your throat, and your heart just makes you feel good.....

Elmer Heller

Joseph built his Altar
Children of Israel - in Wilderness
Just your picture but a lump to my
throat



~~We, son~~ Appreciate Temple

THE TEMPLE

19

The Jewish community of Iowa City, small as it is, has really taken the cadets to its heart, and through the Hillen Foundation, ~~led by Rabbi Kirtzer,~~ is providing many good times for us. The Jewish cadets (all ten of us) attend services every Sunday at the Foundation.

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The Temple was instrumental and played an important part in my intellectual development -- much more so than the public schools -- and I've always had a strong affection for it on that account.....

Robert Aronson

Through these dark days my heart is still with The Temple....

Sydney C. Bailys

- We doubt whether we are accomplishing
anything.



10

ANTI-SEMITISM

My life in the U.S. Army as a Jew has been extremely interesting. I've found the soldier who knows he's fighting a war for Jewish profiteers as well as the Buddy who understands that there are good Jews, bad Jews, etc. Being at a Camp which has drawn most of its personnel from this poor, uneducated Southland, I've run into quite a bit of prejudice. Most of it seems to exist simply because there are so few Jews here, that the average boy knows us only from not-too-complimentary heresay. There appears also to be strong feeling -- some jealousy I suppose -- against the Jewish tradesman who comes into a rural community and in a year is the richest man in town. On the whole I've seen much more anti-Semitic feeling down here.

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I try to "keep my mouth shut" when a remark is made under circumstances which don't seem to make answering advisable or worthwhile. But at other times, I jump right in and thoroughly enjoy "taking a swing" at every lie and distortion which comes up. Almost invariably these latter sessions have ended with better understanding and friendship, for which I'm naturally glad. In my barracks not only do all the men know I'm Jewish but feel free to ask me questions or challenge me about my religion. This is better than worrying about remarks behind my back, isn't it?

Most of my friends -- almost all in fact -- are Gentiles. But they are fine men and good friends, so I wouldn't ask for more. Army life has been so simple that it's dull. Every soldier has his pet complaint, you know -- and that's mine...

Bob Goldhamer

Navy
1 I would like to tell you something that I believe is vitally important to dispell harmful rumors which, I understand, have been finding their way back to our homes. I am happy to be able to say that not once in the eight months that I have been in the service have I encountered any anti-Semitism in any form. It has been my experience that my shipmates are engaged in too numerous occupations and endeavours to think of Jewish Americans, Catholic Americans, or Protestant Americans as anything but good Americans working for a common cause. We have a job to do and we are going to do it to the best of our collective abilities....

Alvin Haas

Navy - a little man
2 The Navy, believe me, is grand. I am sure it is far superior to any other branch of the service. There is a little anti-Semitism which I find it best to overlook. Perhaps that is the wrong attitude but I find, for example, in the case of my two roommates (Catholics) - they let a few things slip the first week or so (not realizing I was one of God's chosen people) but after they found out via some hints on my part that I was Jewish and seeing that I wasn't a bad sort of guy -- they may have changed their minds just a wee bit about Jews etc... and if we would multiply that by the thousands and thousands of similar circumstances that could very possibly happen along similar lines -- some good might come out of it! Of course the gentile has a stock answer to the fact that there does exist a Jewish friend of his who isn't half bad -- "You're different -- but the rest of you -- well -- -- !!!" Anyhow, I find it best to overlook the little unpleasant things as we've much too much else to think about....

Howard Klivans

(11)

JEWS HAVE SPECIAL STAKE

I think it is of initial importance that the Jewish people, both in and out of the armed service, realize that they have a special stake in this war, not merely because our people have been singled out by the enemy for extra persecution and oppression, but also, because by relative standards, we have benefitted so greatly from the fundamentals of the American system, which are now imperiled. The relative benefits have been accepted without question, and it would be as immoral as it would be unwise not to accept the concomitant obligations with equal grace....

Herbert Buckman Jr.

Decidedly - we have a special stake
Survival - Our ideals



BACK US UP

There is one fact that I do want made clear and known. Through my work in the medical department I have come into contact with many men. There exists among them a fierce determination to spare nothing to get this war over as soon as possible. They class their lives as expendable for the happiness of our future generations. Please tell all that remain at home -- If we are willing to make the supreme sacrifice, let the people in the states cooperate to their utmost to give us the essentials and supplies so that we, who have a definite job to do may do it as efficiently, expeditiously and completely as possible....

Elmoe R. Goldurs

Caring them - all right

Great Teaching process

Better men - Stronger Faith - by the same

9 ducky

WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR

May I make a request, ask a favor that will mean much to me and, perhaps, to other soldiers? The Temple Sunday School has an excellent opportunity to implement the teachings of Judaism and directing the religious message toward specific goals. Let the students be given a grasp of the moral issues involved in this war. But more, let them understand the prophetic dream of peace, of a real brotherhood that affords equality for all nations, peoples and races. Let them learn what each must sacrifice to aid in the realization of a People's Century...

Robert Koblitz

I have thoroughly enjoyed my five months of training. True, at times, the going has been pretty rough and hard, and ratings come very slowly (which is certainly different from the Army), but all in all, I'm quite happy here. If I had the decision and choice to make again, my answer would be the same. No, I'm no lover of fighting and warfare, but we've a job to do now, our way of life is at stake and no sacrifice can be too much now!

We move out tomorrow, destination unknown. But we have the assurance that our assignment will be "active" duty. Everything is in readiness....

Leonard Wolen

I want to thank you most sincerely for the comfort that The Temple has provided to my mother since the passing of my dear father just a little over a year ago....

So far everything here has gone rather well for me and I can say that I have no complaints to make which are even worth mentioning, as I know there are thousands of boys who are a lot worse off than I can possibly be. My only hope is that when this is all over, the job will be done once and for all, in order that those who follow will not have to take time out to do it all over again....

Martin W. Rose

The men that I've had the privilege of meeting are all splendid, devoted to one purpose, and that is the assurance that that for which we're fighting to preserve is the foundation that will endure.

I believe men know the various reasons behind this war, and know that there must be but one result. To lose one's life is a small price to pay, if the knowledge that happiness will be left for their families and friends. Weak men, therein find courage, and strong men therefrom inspire others.

To attain that security, I join with others, who by their sincerity, and their hopes, pray that soon, men will beat their swords into plowshares and such things as ambition, the right to think and the right to live will be assured and as evident as the air we breathe.....

Robert Meisel

We all know that sacrifices are to be made on the front, whether it is the home front or battlefield. However, after the toil is finished and the last shot has echoed, this time it will be a better world since we have our old errors to base progress upon....

Ted Lepon

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Howard Klivans

MEZUZAH

It made me feel wonderful and honored to receive the Mezuzah you so kindly sent me.

It will be a constant reminder of the fact that I'm proud to be an American Jew fighting to give to the world a bit of the freedoms I have always cherished and enjoyed....

Alan R. Klein

I receive The Temple Bulletin regularly and enjoy it tremendously. The Mezuzah is a part of my jumping equipment -- I never jump without it.....

Albert S. Kronheim

I would be very glad to receive one of the gold Mezuzah from my Temple. I had one ~~mf~~ on the way here but lost it, and it sure did break my heart to lose such a lovely thing....

Elmer Heller

Did you ever have the odd feeling of shivers traversing the length of your spine? Did a certain something seem to rise in your throat and scrt o' choke you? Has a mist ever clouded your vision due to a spontaneous presence of tears in your eyes? Well, that is exactly what happened to me when I received the grand gift from The Temple. 'Tis mighty difficult to explain how gratified I was to know that even though I had left my Jewish Community and was now a minority member of quite a varied group, there could still be a tie that could "bring my spirits home".

I shall always wear the "Mezuzah" and feel proud to let others know that I, too, have a religious faith of which I am not ashamed....

Merle W. Marx

HARD ADJUSTMENT

The change from civilian life to that of a soldier is a great one and many readjustments are necessary. Many times, too many times in fact, when those readjustments are unpleasant, we are prone to overlook the basic reasons why we are here, and see only the rules, regulations and minor discomforts which are now part of our daily life.

Your letter was very timely and it re-focused in my mind the high aims for which we are fighting. And this time I won't lose sight of those aims again, come what may.....

Donald D. Newman

As for the meals, the cutlery is like Jenssen, the napery like France's finest, the meat like the Tavern, fish like New Orleans finest, rolls and bread like Damons' pastry like McNally Doyles' and coffee like Crosbys' so I can't complain, and besides the mess sergeant is standing directly over my shoulder...

Bud Meisel



MORE RELIGIOUS

While on the subject of the boys across seas and in distant lands, I am going to make a suggestion to The Temple and mire directly to Rabbi Silver and Rabbi Harris and I do hope the spirit and idea behind the suggestion is understood. It's this:

I believe if a survey were taken of the attitude of the man in service today - especially of those men near or already in actual combat --one would find a terrific tendency towards religion. In other worlds, in the so-called hour of danger, the average fellow sort of looks skyward and prays a little more than perhaps he did as every-day John Smith -- or in our case as every-day Joe Goldberg. Well, I think that it might help a little if during services every Sunday a short prayer might be said for those fellows over there -- Jew and gentile alike -- not just a mention in the final benediction -- but something extra....

Howard J. Klivans

In my case the demands of a full schedule of flight training preclude attendance at Temple. Your remembrances, and the welcome Bulletin, bear a reassuring message, therefore, that we are still very much a part of The Temple and of your community, and that the fellowship and spiritual values of Judaism remain with us wherever war may take us.

This reassurance is heartening, for our religion, our faith in God are unfailing wellsprings of the courage to fight for that just world which Judaism has envisioned through the centuries -- and whoever among us has been thoughtlessly neglectful or flippantly disregarding heretofore, is now keenly aware of his remission....

Jim Goulder

I'm unable to tell you what it is like here because of censorship rulings. I can tell you however that it's very "rugged" and very cold.

What are a few inconveniences as long as we have the privilege of taking a part in keeping what we already have?.....

About thirty men from all units stationed at this outpost meet every first and third Friday of the month for services. We have no chaplain but that isn't necessary to bring us together....

Don D. Newman

It is something like that that makes one pause and consider and realize what we are fighting for. In normal life there was a tendency to deviate from religion, but today when so many of us are walking in the shadow of death, we realize more than ever what religion is and that realization makes better men of all of us....

Robert Kronheim

It is hard for me to describe the feeling that took hold of me when I received the Chanukah gift from the Temple today. Somehow, it made me realize how strong religion can give us a feeling of security in a war-torn world.

The contents were not the things which flooded my being with a rich feeling, but the thought that my people had remembered me on this day while I was so far from home.

MORE RELIGIOUS

-2-

It was a feeling which was partly filled with embarrassment. Embarrassment due to the fact that heretofore I have not been overly religious, but now with everything so different from my past life, my faith in God is like a torch in a world darkened by so many ~~i~~ unanswerable questions....

In surroundings such as this U. S. Naval Hospital, one is suddenly awakened to the full realization of the strength of religion and the part it plays in allaying some of the pains that medicine can hardly touch....

Edward B. Kaufman

It was with profound respect that I received a personal letter from you. I am on active duty far overseas and cannot properly type a reply. You will have to decipher my miserable handwriting.....The letter was dated Sept. 1st and it just arrived (Oct. 18). I am stationed on a tropical island in the Southwest Pacific and thus mail delivery is spasmodic.

For a long time my father and I have attended your Sunday Morning Services. Many of them are indelibly recorded in my memory and I shall remember you for them.

I feel as all of us do that the tyranny and bestial treatment which we as a group have received from the enemy is despicable. My small part in the affair is to help squarely knock off the fangs for the Nazi viper. Life as a slave is not worth living.

May I digress a moment to tell you of my interest in studying for the Rabbinate. During our crossing, lacking an ordained Rabbi, I stepped in and led services on the ship for the Jewish boys. Later on, with the ready help of the Chief Chaplain, I helped arrange for High Holy Holidays on the island. All this set me to pondering the future possibilities of becoming a Rabbi myself.

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Elmoe R. Goldurs



APPRECIATION OF GIFT

Dear "Joy Spreaders":

The other day you performed a miracle! Yes, an illusion on a par with the wizardry of Merlin. Let me explain my statement. Picture a soldier boy returning from a twenty-mile hike having toted a fifty pound pack all morning and afternoon in a sweltering heat. It's not a pretty portrait, is it? Well, to continue, the first pleasant noise of the day was the always welcome, "Mail Call". That was the signal for many sets of blistered feet to hobble at top speed. On return to the barracks this doughboy opened a newly received bundle; and then it happened. Where, a moment before, gloom had surrounded a weary heart, a cheery feeling now emanated. As you have probably opined, that service man was myself and that bundle, that joy-producing element, was your Chanukah gift. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your miracle ...*

Wallace M. Rich



THE TEMPLE

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