

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Shevat, 5727
Brooklyn, N. Y.

Chaplain Joel D. Covitz
Office of the Chaplain
Ft. Bragg, N. C.

Greeting and Blessings:

I am in receipt of your letter. I was very gratified to note your desire to promote among the Jewish servicemen under your care the ideals and practices of Judaism according to the Torah-true interpretation. Actually no other true interpretation is possible. Needless to say that in your case, as the spiritual monitor and guide of the Jewish young men in the Camp, every degree of fortified conviction and personal advancement in this area is multiplied many times as it is reflected in those who look up to you for guidance and influence.

I had occasion to emphasize also the fact that however responsive Jews are to good influence and to the truth, especially when it is given to them sincerely and truthfully, Jewish servicemen are even more responsive because of the stability of the atmosphere in which they live, where they are by circumstances sheltered from contacts and temptations so prevalent civilian life.

Moreover, the very military training they receive impresses upon them the importance of compliance and a response to the call of duty. This should provide immediately food for thought and logical inference, namely if an order of a human commanding officer must be obeyed and carried out without question, how much more readily and willingly should a commandment of G-d be fulfilled. Indeed Jews are called the "hosts of G-d," having been enlisted in the service of G-d ever since we were freed from human bondage and received the Torah and Mitzvoth at Mt. Sinai, as we read in this week's Sidra. It is noteworthy that the expression the "hosts of G-d" is mentioned for the first and only time in connection with the departure from Egypt, on the way to receive the Torah.

A person in military service can readily understand that when he receives an order of a superior officer, he cannot delay its execution until such time as he will be able to weigh it in his mind and see if he too approves of it, especially if such an order comes directly from the Commander-in-Chief, for any such delay could endanger the whole army. Certainly, the attitude towards a command of G-d could not be in any lesser degree, and no Jew can be so reckless as to wait until

Chaplain Joel D. Covitz

he has sufficient time and inclination to study the Divine commandments. It is for this reason that the Torah was received with the unanimous declaration by all our people - Na'aseh v'Nishma.

And as in the illustration, here too a Jew cannot say this is my own personal affair, and mind your own business, because all Jews form one body and are mutually responsible for one another, so that the actions of one Jew have a very important bearing upon the well-being of another.

I have referred your letter and request to our Chabad Youth Organization, which also has a special department for Jewish servicemen and chaplains. You will no doubt hear from them, and I am confident that they will also be glad to offer you every possible help in your work. You may have also heard that representatives of this organization have a program of visiting military training camps to make direct contact with Jewish chaplains and servicemen. But, of course, this can be done only by a prearrangement.

In the meantime, in answer to your request, I gave instructions to my office to send you the Tanya, both in the original as well as in the English translation.

I wish you Hatzlocho in your work, and may it be effective in a growing measure, in accordance with the principle of our Sages Maalin b'Kodesh - all things of holiness should be on the ascendancy.

Hoping to hear good news from you,

With blessing,