

COLUMBUS JEWISH FOUNDATION ROBINS CENTER FOR PHILANTHROPY

1175 COLLEGE AVENUE | COLUMBUS, OHIO 43209 | TEL 614.338.2365 | FAX 614.338.2361
EMAIL cjfdn@tcjf.org | WEBSITE www.columbusjewishfoundation.org

May 2, 2018

Col. Brett Sylvia, Chief of Staff 101st Airborne Division (Assault) – Deployed
Col. Mark Faria, Chief of Staff, 101st Airborn Division (Assault) – Rear

Dear Colonels:

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Jews could not serve as chaplains in the U.S. armed forces. When the war commenced in 1861, Jews enlisted in both the Union and Confederate armies. The Northern Congress adopted a bill in July of 1861 that permitted each regiment's commander, on a vote of his field officers, to appoint a regimental chaplain so long as he was "a regularly ordained minister of some Christian denomination."

The American Jewish press let its readership know that Congress had limited the chaplaincy to those who were Christians. It argued for equal treatment for Judaism before the law. This initiative by the Jewish press irritated a handful of Christian organizations, including the YMCA, which resolved to lobby Congress against the appointment of Jewish chaplains. To counter their efforts, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites, one of the earliest Jewish communal defense agencies, recruited the Reverend Arnold Fischel to lobby President Abraham Lincoln to reverse the chaplaincy law.

On December 11, 1861, Reverend Fischel met with President Lincoln to press the case for Jewish chaplains. Fischel explained to Lincoln that he came to "contend for the principle of religious liberty, for the constitutional rights of the Jewish community, and for the welfare of the Jewish volunteers." According to Fischel, Lincoln asked questions about the chaplaincy issues, "fully admitted the justice of my remarks . . . and agreed that something ought to be done to meet this case."

As reported in the *Chapters in American Jewish History*, which is compiled by the American Jewish Historical Society, Lincoln promised to submit a new law to Congress "broad enough to cover what is desired by you on behalf of the Israelites."

Lincoln kept his word. On July 17, 1862, Congress adopted Lincoln's amendments to the chaplaincy law. In historian Bertram Korn's opinion, "Because there were Jews in the land who cherished the equality granted them in the Constitution, the practice of that equality was assured, not only for Jews, but for all minority religious groups."

Now we are re-engaged in a similar battle, testing whether such broad-minded principles can long endure. The Military Religious Freedom Foundation is in the vanguard of the battle, providing leadership and support for Jewish lay leaders for the Fort Campbell Jewish community, namely Jeanette Mize and family.

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Volunteers Jeanette Mize and family allegedly were fired without cause, effectively ending Friday night Shabbat services at Fort Campbell for Jewish soldiers and their families.

Shockingly, the two ranking chaplains at Fort Campbell refused to support the Mize family's attempts to celebrate Passover on March 30, allegedly because it conflicted with Good Friday observances and to save money.

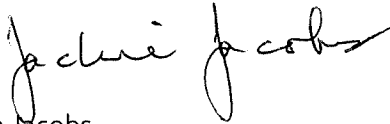
In so doing, Army Col. John Murphy, the 101st Airborne's division chaplain and his staff discriminated against Jewish soldiers at Fort Campbell. (Why would a Jewish soldier and his/her family go to a Passover on a date other than Passover? Do Christians celebrate Easter on a date that is not Easter?)

As noted in the *Military Times* on April 28, 2018, Mize contends that one of the Fort Campbell chaplains never attended a Jewish worship service; she was informed that such attendance "would compromise his religion to attend."

I join Mikey Weinstein and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation in pressing for a fair and just investigation to ensure that legal and DoD/Army regulatory violations get rectified.

As was asked of President Lincoln 157 years ago, we ask of you -- in the name of religious liberty, for the constitutional rights of the Jewish community, and for the welfare of Jewish volunteers.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jackie Jacobs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jackie Jacobs
Chief Executive Officer