

# JEWISH GIs OF WWII

1 x 60 HD



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*Jewish GIs of WWII* tells the profound and unique story of the 550,000 Jewish men and women who served in World War II. Jewish men fought in every branch of service and in every theater of war. They were held as POWs and awarded honors for merit and valor. Thousands were wounded and 11,000 were killed in action. Ten thousand Jewish women joined as well, disregarding their parents' warnings that the military "was no life for a nice Jewish girl."

In the midst of it all, they fought a second, more private battle, against anti-Semitism within the ranks. They endured slurs and even violence from their fellow servicemen, and often felt forced to prove their courage and patriotism. All the while, they observed their religion far from home. Jewish men and women sought solace in their faith and celebrated holidays overseas, even on the frontlines. Some went without rations for days to keep kosher, and many carried a small prayer book with them on every mission. Jewish Americans earned their citizenship by shedding blood and, for the first time, their nation embraced them as true Americans.

Jewish service men were among the first to reach the concentration camps liberated by American troops. Many spoke Yiddish and were able to offer the survivors their first words of comfort, explaining to them that after years of suffering, they were finally free. Rabbi chaplains said prayers for the dead and held services, honoring the survivors as the bravest heroes of the war. Many Jewish servicemen stayed on to help care for the survivors, locate relatives, fight for their rights and even smuggle thousands of them to Palestine.

In their return home and in the wake of the Holocaust, America's Jewish community was now the largest in the world. With their new responsibility as international leaders, many American Jews became full participants in postwar culture and politics, fighting for social change. They would demand equality at home, join the battle for civil rights and fight for the creation of a Jewish state.

These brave men and women fought for their nation and their people, for America and for Jews worldwide. Like all Americans, they fought against fascism, but they also waged a more personal fight—to save their brethren in Europe.

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## CREDITS

*Producer and Director:* Lisa Ades

*Writer:* Maia Harris

*Producer:* Amanda Bonavita

*Image:* National Museum of American Jewish Military History

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