

How We Became an American Family

a memoir

M E Y E R L E V I N

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A Tribute to Joseph Litvin

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ON Sunday, October 31, 1982, we said farewell to a great and lovable human being. More than a hundred cars and four times as many people formed a funeral procession, the likes of which the Raphael-Sacks funeral home said was the “first” in their history.

What kind of a man was Joe Litvin who could touch the hearts of so many? What kind of man goes through life earning the love and respect of all those he touched? How could a man, who belonged to the world, go through life and not have even one enemy? Those who knew Joe know that. Those of our B’nai B’rith Chaim Weizmann lodge who didn’t have the pleasure of listening to Joe speak missed so much, for Joe was very ill the last four years.

Before any one of us began to realize how important the State of Israel was to us and how important it was that we help, Joe had an uphill struggle and, strange as it may seem, a lot of opposition to the sale of Israel bonds. But Joe could talk and move us to tears when it concerned Israel. His love for Israel was infectious. He was a great teacher. He taught us to love our new little homeland. The Israel Bond Program

came into being in Philadelphia. We thank you, and Israel thanks you, Joe Litvin.

That he was a student of the Bible and our ancient history was soon recognized by Rabbi Reuben J. Magil when he joined the congregation of Temple Beth Zion–Beth Israel. How they loved to hear him speak! All his life, he collected love, like rich men accumulate money. But his riches were richer by far. He never lost an ounce, and it compounded daily through his lifetime.

I loved my brother-in-law from the day when I was seventeen, and he married my sister, Celia, in 1929. For fifty-three years, he was the best friend I had in the world. After Celia died, when he married Esther, he gave us another sister to love.

It was Esther's great love for him that sustained him in his grief. When he lost Celia, his first love, it was Esther's unselfish love and care that helped him through four years of agony, an ordeal no one should have to go through. Dear Esther, we, the family, can only repay you with love.

My son Arnold said, "If only the world was made up of all Uncle Joes."

What more can I say? He said it all.