

Dedication Program

of the

Jewish Community Council

Hebrew School

Bangor, Maine

Sunday Evening

December 4, 1960

Kislev 15, 5721

PROGRAM

- Welcome* JUSTICE ABRAHAM M. RUDMAN
- Invocation* RABBI HENRY J. ISAACS
- Hatikvah*
- Remarks* ALBERT H. FRIEDMAN, *President*

GREETINGS

- CARL DELANO *Mayor of the City of Bangor*
- HAROLD POTTER *President New England Section J. W. B.*
- FRANCIS FINNEGAN *President United Fund*
Musical Selections—Center Choral Group
- RABBI A. H. FREEDMAN
- BEN ZION WILMER *Principal Hebrew School*
- MILTON LINCOLN *Executive Director J. C. C.*
Musical Selections—Center Choral Group
- Presentation of Key* DR. JOSEPH G. ORNSTEIN,
Chairman Building Committee
- Acceptance of Key* ALBERT H. FRIEDMAN, *President*
- Dedication Address* RABBI THEODORE ADAMS
- Closing Remarks* JUSTICE ABRAHAM M. RUDMAN
- National Anthem*

A reception will be held immediately following the program in our new building with the Center Women's League as hostesses.

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Today we are dedicating a Community Building. Realizing the need, the money was raised by this Community to give our children adequate school facilities. The Center Building can now be used more efficiently and the new wing is designed to fit in with any future expansion.

A building, however, is only of value if it is used. In the Jewish tradition, knowledge is not only for children but it is even more important for the adult to study and learn. The Center stands ready to provide facilities and teachers, both for formal and informal classes.

It is my hope that both buildings will be used to such an extent that we will be forced, in the near future, to consider further expansion.

JOSEPH G. ORNSTEIN, D.D.S.

Chairman, Building Committee

I am very happy to extend to you tonight my personal greetings and those of the members of our Hebrew School Committee. I know that you rejoice with me on this Dedication Night. This evening brings to completion a project that has fired the imagination of our community; the Dedication of our beautiful Hebrew School.

The Jewish Community of Bangor has taken great pride in the achievement of providing 53 years of Jewish education for our children. Many institutions and buildings have served in the past as the home of our Hebrew School. Tonight, after these many years, a permanent structure, modern and beautiful, is dedicated; dedicated to the children of the present and the children of the future.

MAX STRIAR, *Chairman*

Hebrew School Committee

It is with deep joy that I extend my heart-felt greetings to all, on the occasion of this "Dedication Ceremony" of our new Hebrew School Building.

As we look back on the history of the Bangor Jewish Community Council, we can take great pride in the accomplishments which were made. We take satisfaction in our many contributions to the Jewish Community. We have maintained a diversified program of children and youth activities. We have worked together and contributed much in the past years to a life of Torah-true Judaism. Today we all stand firm and proud as we take part in the dedication of this beautiful new Hebrew School. With this ceremony, we stand as a symbol of hope and faith to all who use this facility.

This has been accomplished through your understanding and support.

I wish to thank all on the Building and Dedication Committees who have given unceasingly of their time, their energy and their efforts to make this occasion a success.

With the help of this united community, the Jewish Community Council will continue to fulfill its task to inspire our Youth to grow into manhood and womanhood with full and complete realization of their potential as Human Beings, as Citizens, and as Jews in a Democracy.

Albert H. Friedman
President

Historical Background

Three basic institutions form the foundations of an established Jewish religious community wherever in the world that community may be. These institutions are the synagogue, the cemetery, and the Hebrew School.

This evening the Jewish community of Bangor is celebrating the 53rd year of community sponsored Jewish education. For fifty-three years there has been a sufficiently cohesive group of Jews in Bangor not only to maintain such a school, but also to change the methods and physical surroundings of the school in keeping with the developments in modern educational methods as well as in relation to the community's growth and needs.

The first real settlement of Jews in Bangor was formally established on July 20, 1849, as the congregation Ahawas Achim and was duly chartered by the City of Bangor. The first thoughts of the congregation were concerned with making plans for two essentials of communal living — the synagogue and the cemetery. The cemetery which was purchased was located on Webster Avenue, then outside the city limits. Subsequently, plans were made to employ a spiritual leader, evidently one of their members well versed in religious education and trained by an orthodox teacher and rabbi. He was to act in part as a teacher. Thus it is evident that though the community was small, provision was made to educate the young in the language and religious teachings of their people.

This first group soon left Bangor and from 1865 to 1875 a second group settled in this city. They resumed some of the community activities previously started, and from 1874 to 1901 Congregation Ahawas Achim functioned again as the religious organization of Bangor's Jewish Community.

During these years the third and present community was establishing its roots.

It is well to note, that though formal Hebrew education began in Bangor 53 years ago, the first Jewish children to learn Hebrew in Bangor were taught over a century ago.

As the number of children in the group increased the problems they met in bridging the gap between their secular education and their religious teaching became more of a community problem. When there were few young people each family assumed the responsibility for its children's education in learning Hebrew and studying the Torah. Elder members of the community were frequently available as teachers. The existing community had no facilities for Hebrew education, as we have pointed out, and the newer members of the community of necessity had to provide their own. By the end of the nineteenth century there were enough Jews to support a synagogue, which was erected on Center St. The synagogue did not immediately support a professional rabbi; therefore, the more educated men of the community acted as lay preachers and officiated when services were needed. The children continued to be taught Hebrew by private teachers until 1906 when the Beth Israel Synagogue employed a professional rabbi who also taught Hebrew.

In 1907 the first attempt was made to organize a Hebrew School on a community basis and available for all the youngsters in the town. For the first time the Talmud Torah was an autonomous institution separate from the synagogue. Little is known of the details of the circumstances leading up to the founding of the school, but it is likely that by 1907 the number of young people had grown considerably and private instruction was no longer economically feasible or expedient. Permission was granted the Jewish community by the city authorities to use the York St. School (now the Ward 1 polling place), after the afternoon session, for Hebrew school classes. The following persons comprised the school board: Joseph Byer, president; Philip Hillson, treasurer; Morris Golden, secretary; Israel Ratchkovsky, Simon Kominsky, and Robert Cooper.

The following year the school moved to a private house on Carr St. The front part of the house was used for the school and the teacher lived in the rear. This arrangement lasted until 1913 when the Beth Israel Synagogue was completed and Hebrew classes were held in the vestry of the synagogue.

The visit of Jacob Schiff to Bangor in 1913 stimulated interest in the community to modernize the Cheder. Mr. Schiff emphasized to the leaders of the community that a modern Hebrew School was essential, and his suggestion led to raising enough money that year to employ a more progressive teacher.

This Hebrew School situation was further improved in 1920 when the school moved to the Hebrew Institute Hall on State St. The close physical association with the synagogue was ended and the new school more closely resembled that of a secular institution.

Even more important was the hiring in 1927 of two of the first graduates of the newly established Hebrew Teachers College in Boston. Although in many respects the subject matter remained the same, there was improvement in the method of presentation. The teachers could speak English and they emphasized the history of the Jewish people as well as their religion and customs.

In 1938 the Liss Memorial Building was given to the Jewish community of Bangor to be used as a community center and Hebrew School. Teaching methods have changed radically since the early days, and the curriculum has been made much more attractive. Today the values of American Jewish life are emphasized. The students, besides learning to read Hebrew and to understand the content of what they read, are by their study of Jewish history and tradition helped to interpret and understand many seeming paradoxes which confront them as American Jews.

Children begin Talmud Torah at the age of seven and follow through the six-year program. Besides giving each child a reading knowledge of Hebrew, the program includes the reading and discussion of the Pentateuch and the early prophets, and carries the study of Jewish history up to modern times. Jewish customs, traditions and religious observances are also an important part of the curriculum. Not only do the children learn the significance and routine of important religious services, they have the opportunity actually to carry out and participate in the services. Sabbath services are held every Saturday morning at the school. The members of this Junior Congregation are Hebrew School students and it is they who conduct the services.

The staff of the Hebrew School now consists of three persons, a principal-teacher and two teachers. Under their able guidance the curriculum, based on the curriculum of the Bureau of Jewish Education of Boston, is constantly being improved and expanded in accordance with advances in educational thinking and the needs and interests of the community.

The growth and unification of our community was emphasized in 1949 by the formation of the Jewish Community Council, a merger of the Hebrew School, Community Center and Federation. Here under one administrative body, a Board of Directors elected by the community, rests the responsibility of continuing, expanding and perfecting the Jewish education of our children, providing a total Center program and coordinating the fund raising efforts of our community.

The decade of the 1950's saw us begin the task of implementing the survey and self study undertaken in 1950-51. Hundreds of interviews and many hours were spent in this program. The final recommendations laid the foundation for an expanded program of services to our community and stimulated community planning for the future.

Those who gave of their time and effort to bring this study to a successful conclusion soon found a general theme arising. The community asked that planning go forward to enlarge the facilities of the present Center and Hebrew School.

Enrollment in the Hebrew School had, over the years, increased taxing to the utmost the available classroom space. An analysis of population statistics indicated that our Hebrew School would maintain an enrollment of 90 to 100 children, plus a large Sunday class, for many years to come. This awareness of the need for additional space set off a chain of events. First an Endowment Committee was established and then a Building Committee.

This committee, under the chairmanship of Dr. Joseph G. Ornstein, set out to determine the scope of our expansion needs within the framework of an over-all master building plan. The Board of Directors, at a meeting held in August of 1959, authorized the Building Committee to procure preliminary sketches and cost estimates for a building to house our Hebrew School. Thus was the step taken to complete the first unit of the Master Building Plan.

In November of 1959 the first Capital Funds Campaign was launched, under the chairmanship of Albert H. Friedman. Success was soon evident. Our community responded to the needs of our children for adequate classrooms and Center facilities. Within a period of six weeks, Mr. Friedman announced to a special meeting of the Board of Directors, that the goal had been reached. On a drizzly but memorable day in April of 1960, ground was broken for our new Hebrew School.

The Jewish Community of Bangor is rightfully proud of its achievements. Today we have a new beautiful and modern Hebrew School. The Liss Memorial Building can now be used to its fullest extent for the cultural and social activities of our ever growing Youth and Adult population.

This is not the end of the story; merely another chapter in the development of a dynamic Jewish Community.

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JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
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JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
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JOSEPH G. ORNSTEIN, D.D.S.	MORRIS D. RUBIN
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CHAIRMEN OF HEBREW SCHOOL COMMITTEE
1949-1960

HENRY SEGAL	DR. JAMES SIEGEL
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JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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