

Well-Known Rabbi To Leave Bangor To Live In Israel

By STEVEN STRANG

After 20 years of service, a well known and much respected Bangor rabbi will bid "good-bye" to the community and people who have adopted him as their own to fulfill a personal wish and the dream of many Jewish people—to live in Israel.

Rabbi Avraham H. Freedman, rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel for the past 20 years, has decided that he soon will retire several years early in order to "spend a year or more in Israel.

Period of Crisis

"That country is now in a period of crisis," Rabbi Freedman said, "and I've been wanting to go and see if I can become involved in the life there, if I can be of some service to the people.

"Israel is crying out for people to serve in the social life," he noted. "Any aspect of the Israeli community in which I could be of service I will undertake."

"I was there a year and a half ago," he continued, "and have been wanting to return ever since."

Relaxing in his living room for a moment from a busy schedule, Rabbi Freedman looked back over his 38 years as a rabbi.

Changed Outlook

"There have been several changes in the general outlook of the Jewish community, both in the United States and throughout the world," he said. "These are due in part to a general dislocation. The wars, of course, have profoundly af-

ected the Jewish Community. The loss of a third of the Jewish world population came as a terrifying shock, one from which there will probably never be a total recovery.

"And the creation of a Jewish state... long a dream of the Jewish people... has bolstered our spirits. Both the European tragedy and the creation of the Israeli state have served to unite Jews around the world, particularly the American Jews who have accepted responsibility of refugees and of financial support."

Unreligious Religion

Like the Christian community, Rabbi Freedman indicated, the Jewish people are faced with piety minus true conviction.

"Members of the Jewish community are no more devout or religious now than previously," he asserted. "Attendance to synagogue or church is no proof of religiosity or devotion to religious beliefs."

With a typically common sense view, Rabbi Freedman feels that the so-called rebellion of youth is nothing new.

Always Seeking

"Young people have always been questioning, doubting, seeking," he noted. "What we see in the city ghettos and on campuses is due to the cynicism and frustration which our young people are experiencing. The responsibility can't be laid at the door of the church only; there is a general disquiet throughout the land which calls for radical treatment in the school, churches, and government.

"In student unrest, like in most things, there are shadings of gray rather than just a white and black. That the young

people are unhappy is bad, but that they are seeking is good because the seeking means there's a chance for constructive progress.

"It's important that the young people make their grievances heard," he continued, "and we adults should be the first to admit that things aren't perfect. If young people didn't make these things known, we wouldn't have any change.

"But," he added, "the young have made their point. Now they ought to give their elders a chance to meet their demands and needs."

Civic-Minded

Rabbi Freedman, his wife Hannah, and their two children, David and Kadimah, have long been an integral part of the Bangor as well as the Jewish community. A member of such Jewish organizations as the Rabbinic Council of America, B'nai B'rith, and the Zionist Organization of America, Rabbi Freedman has been active in many civic groups such as the Red Cross and Family and Child Services of Bangor. The 1969 vice-president of the Bangor Rotary Club, Rabbi Freedman also served as a board member of the Cerebral Palsy organization in Penobscot County.

Interesting Career

Born in Russia, Rabbi Freedman has had a varied career as a rabbi, serving in Ottawa, Ontario, for six years following his ordination at Yeshiva University in New York before receiving a call to Dur-

ban, South Africa, in 1937. He served the Jewish community there for 12 years, working also as a part-time chaplain to the South African forces during the war years. In 1949 he returned to the United States where he received a call to Bangor.

"The Jewish people have been dispossessed, disinherited, and spread all over the world," he said. "But we have never given up the hope of returning to the land of our fathers.

Blessed Generation

"We consider ourselves the blessed generation," he continued, "because we have seen the return of the Jewish people to Zion. As much as we'll miss the Bangor area and its people, my wife and I are looking forward to becoming a part of the life in Israel."

When asked to explain the attachment evident among members of the world Jewish community for Israel, Rabbi Freedman smiled and said, "It's like the feeling the Irish have for Ireland, only stronger because our religion and our religious laws are bound up with that land. The land where David reigned, the site of the Temple Solomon built... these are living history to us, linked to us by both emotional and spiritual bonds."

Rabbi Freedman is leaving Bangor to fulfill a personal dream. Yet long after he's gone another dream—the dream of brotherhood—will linger on in the synagogue where he spoke, among the people he knew, and throughout the community which he served so well.



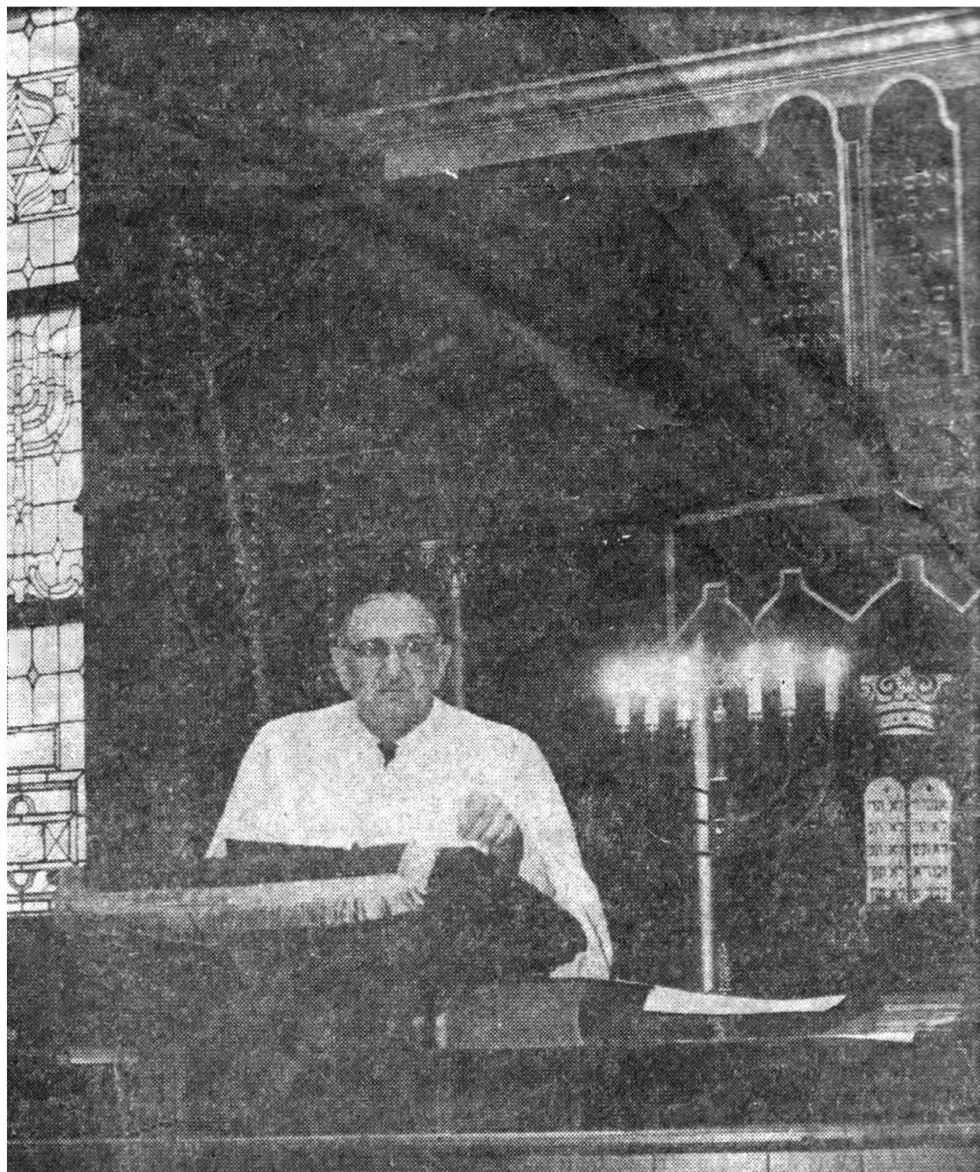
A reading from the Torah



(NEWS Photos by Hall)
Rabbi Freedman and his wife Hannah



Before the message, a time of study



In the synagogue, a characteristic pose