

news

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

AMSTERDAM AVENUE AND 186TH STREET, NEW YORK 33, N. Y.

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9/14/19

NOTE TO EDITORS

We take pleasure in enclosing this revised
biographical sketch of Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik,
Professor of Talmud and Jewish Philosophy at Yeshiva
University, whose name has been prominently mentioned
among those under consideration to succeed the late
Dr. Isaac Herzog as Israel's Chief Rabbi.

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Biographical Sketch

RABBI DR. JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

Professor of Talmud and Jewish Philosophy, Yeshiva University

Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik is considered by the Jewish community the foremost authority on Halacha (Jewish Law) and one of the truly great Jewish teachers, scholars and thinkers of our time.

A member of the Ordination Board of Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, he is empowered with the high duty of granting Semicha -- (traditional rabbinical ordination) -- to seminarians who have completed the program of rigorous studies in all facets of Jewish learning, tradition and law.

As Professor of Talmud and Jewish Philosophy at the Seminary and at the university's Bernard Revel Graduate School, his lectures and courses in a variety of disciplines are regarded as guidelines of 20th Century traditional Jewish life.

Born 55 years ago in Brisk, Lithuania, he is the scion of a noted rabbinical family going back several centuries. The son of the late Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik, who also served as Professor of Talmud at the university, he succeeded his distinguished father in the post he now occupies. Recipient of the Ph.D. degree from the University of Berlin in 1930, he came to this country in the middle 1930s.

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A measure of the high regard in which his teachings are held by traditional Jewry is displayed each winter. It is Rabbi Soloveitchik's custom to deliver a public "shiur" (discourse in some facet of Jewish law) each year on the anniversary of the death of his father, who passed away some fifteen years ago. Overflow audiences made up of seminarians, faculty members, leading rabbis and prominent lay Orthodox leaders crowd into the university's Lamport Auditorium to listen to the three- and four-hour lectures that are considered classics in the interpretations of Jewish law.

He serves on the supervisory committee of Yeshiva University's National Institute of Mental Health Project. Under a five-year NIMH grant, given in 1957, the project is to devise a curriculum for the teaching of mental health principles to rabbis as guide in their pastoral and community work.

In 1959, he was appointed by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ezra Taft Benson to serve as the Jewish religious authority on the advisory committee to help implement the Humane Slaughter law. He was proposed for the position by bodies representing all shades of Jewish religious thought.

Insight into Rabbi Soloveitchik's recognition of the impetus of modern life was the paper he delivered June 30, 1959, at the 23rd Annual Convention of the Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox).

"Judaism," he declared, "encourages man to be G-d's partner in all creation. That is why Judaism has never had any difficulty in permitting intensive medical research to eliminate disease, and astronomical investigation to ascertain the natural laws of the spheres."

While endorsing all manner of scientific research, Rabbi Soloveitchik cautioned that "every new discovery should only make man more humble . . . each time we add to the vistas of our knowledge, we increase by geometric proportions the extent of the unknown."

A long-time resident of Roxbury, Mass., a suburb of Boston, he is founder and head of the Maimonides Hebrew School there, and is identified with many religious, educational and philanthropic undertakings in Greater Boston. He commutes regularly each week to fulfill his duties at Yeshiva University.

Rabbi Soloveitchik is chairman of the Halacha Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America -- a position considered of great importance in Jewish spiritual life, is a member of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, and is honorary chairman of the Religious Zionists of America.

He and his wife, Dr. Tonia Soloveitchik, live at 34 Hutchings Street, Roxbury, Mass. Mrs. Soloveitchik, holds the Ph.d. degree from the University of Jena, Germany.

Yeshiva University, America's oldest and largest university under Jewish auspices, comprises 17 schools and divisions located at six teaching centers in New York City. More than 4,500 young men and women are pursuing courses in Jewish studies and liberal arts and sciences leading to undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees and diplomas.

The university's Main Center is located at Amsterdam Avenue and 186th Street, Manhattan.

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August, 1959