SOLOVEITCHIK, Rabbi Joseph

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OBITUARIES

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik; scholar, leading authority on Orthodox Judaism

Associated Press

BROOKLINE, Mass. — Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, 90, an influential scholar who became a leading authority on Orthodox Judaism and helped ordain some 2,000 rabbis, died Thursday at his home.

His death was announced by Yeshiva University in New York, where he taught for more than 40 years at the school's theological seminary.

"I don't think there was any rabbi, certainly in our century, who has had a greater impact upon Orthodox Judaism in America," said Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, dean of the seminary.

Known affectionately as the "Rav," a Hebrew name for teacher, the Polish-born Soloveitchik devoted his life to promoting Judaism's oral tradition of interpreting law, known as the Talmud.

In fact, he insisted on keeping within the confines of this tradition and was reluctant to publish essays.

The purpose of Jewish law, he said, was to make men "aware of the Divine" and how it offered possibilities for atonement and forgiveness.

He was also famous for his teaching style.

"It was electric," Charlop said, describing how Soloveitchik had the ability to take material that he taught for decades and present it in a fresh light.

"The man was absolutely creative at every moment," Charlop said.

Yeshiva University described Soloveitchik as "equally at home in the works of Shakespeare, Kant, and the laws of nature, as with the deep-welled springs of Jewish tradition and learning."

Soloveitchik leaves a son, two daughters, a brother and two sisters.

The funeral service will be held tomorrow at the Maimonides School in Brookline, which he founded in 1937 as the first Hebrew day school in New England.