



Joseph Brownspigel

**RELIGIOUS COURT FORMED:** Meeting at the headquarters of Rabbinical Council of America are, from left, Gustav Stern, Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, former council president, and Rabbi Charles Weinberg, council president. They announced formation of Beth Din, a court to counsel Jews in problems of marriage and family relationships.

## Religious Marriage Court Here Is Set Up by Orthodox Rabbis

By GEORGE DUGAN

A religious court, or Beth Din, has been formed here by the Orthodox rabbinate of this country to guide and counsel Jews having problems in marriage, divorce and family relationships.

The establishment of the court was announced yesterday at the headquarters of the Rabbinical Council of America, 84 Fifth Avenue. The Council represents 785 rabbis serving 1,000,000 Jews in the United States and Canada.

The court will function largely in advance of the civil authorities. Its major responsibility will be in the fields of guidance and counseling in relation to Orthodox Jewish law. It will seek to preserve marriage ties.

Heretofore such guidance has been the responsibility of individual rabbis. The new court will draw on consultants in civil law, sociology, psychiatry and religion. Fees will be charged only to families able to pay.

The Beth Din will sit in a special "courtroom" at the council's Fifth Avenue offices and will be convened as often as necessary. It is hoped that more courts can be established in Chicago, Los Angeles and Baltimore in the near future.

The Orthodox Beth Din is similar to a marriage court set

up early in 1959 by the leaders of Conservative Judaism. Both courts will serve couples from all three branches of Judaism: Reform, Conservative and Orthodox.

Rabbi Emanuel Rackman, former president of the council and spiritual leader of Congregation Shaaray Tefila, Far Rockaway, Queens, is the court's first president.

Gustav Stern, a philanthropist whose support made the court possible, is chairman of the board of directors and Rabbi Bernard Tversky of New York is its secretary-treasurer.

Rabbi Benjamin Bak of Baltimore will serve as executive head or coordinator. The chief consultants will include Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchek of Boston, a prominent Talmudic scholar, and Dr. Samuel Belkin, president of Yeshiva University.

Jewish law requires a couple to obtain a divorce from a court composed of three rabbis if either partner wishes to marry someone else. The sole ground for a writ of "get," or divorce, under Jewish law is mutual consent.

The new court, Rabbi Rackman said, will consist of three rabbis in rotation from a panel of eight or nine.