

New Rabbis Called Hope Of Orthodox

By CHARLES AUSTIN

Seventy-seven young rabbis sat before one of their faith's most revered scholars yesterday for a convocation marking their entry into the Orthodox rabbinate after several years of rigorous religious studies at Yeshiva University.

The newly ordained rabbis represent what university officials say is their best hope for the advance of Orthodox Judaism, quality education that does not reject modern methods, and a staunch commitment to the intensive study of Torah, the Jewish scriptures.

They also represent an Orthodox rabbinate that is increasingly American-born and prepared to relate ancient tradition to modern society. Previous generations of Orthodox rabbis were generally born abroad or studied under rabbis educated in other lands.

"We have reproduced ourselves in the United States," said Rabbi Israel Miller, senior vice president of Yeshiva University, as the convocation began. Forty years ago, Rabbi Miller said in an interview, the rabbinical program did not include courses in such things as psychology, social action, or the practical problems of contemporary congregations.

Laying On of Hands

The program at Yeshiva University's Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in Washington Heights is the nation's largest and most formal preparation for semikhah, the Hebrew for "laying on of hands," the means by which Moses consecrated his successors as religious leaders. Semikhahs are held only every three years at Yeshiva.

Present at the convocation was Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the chief rabbi of Boston and one of the foremost interpreters of Orthodoxy in the United States. A teacher at the Isaac Elchanan Seminary for 42 years, the octogenarian rabbi is the spiritual mentor of most of the school's 1,600 graduates and is revered as the personification of Orthodox spirituality and scholarship. Last week the rabbinic education program at Yeshiva University was renamed the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Center of Rabbinic Studies in his honor.

Known as "the rav," or "the rabbi's rabbi," he monitored the religious training given the men hon-



Rabbi Gary Menchel at Yeshiva University with his 2-year-old daughter, Ellisheva, and 4-year-old son after ordination into the Orthodox rabbinate. He has entered the growing field of Orthodox Jewish education.

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men for ordination than any sage in Jewish history.

At the same time, the rabbinical graduates — musmakim in Hebrew — are men who have already obtained bachelor's degrees, and in many cases master's degrees, in a variety of fields before starting the two- or three-year course of rabbinic study.

Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University's theological seminary, told the graduates they had a special responsibility to non-observant Jews and said, "love of Torah must be matched with an equal love for your fellow Jews."

The Jewish community is not well served by Orthodox Jews who keep themselves separate from other Jews, Rabbi Lamm said. "We are such a close circle, we may get to

quent clashes between Moses and the people he led out of slavery in Egypt, the seminary president said: "I think Moses didn't really like his Jews. They were ungrateful, stubborn, slow to learn."

"But," Rabbi Lamm continued, "he loved them enough to risk all for them."

Teaching the Torah to nonobservant Jews should be a special task for the new graduates, Rabbi Lamm concluded. Some will serve synagogues, but others will enter the growing field of Orthodox Jewish education.

Founded School in Minneapolis

Among the latter is Rabbi Gary Menchel, 26 years old, who last fall founded Maimonides High School in Minneapolis, the first Jewish high

serious scholarship."

"We must study the whole edge of mankind," said Rabbi Robert Woolf of Adas Center in Long Island City, before the semikhah. At the time the young rabbis feel about undergirding commitment to Judaism through serious study of the scriptures and Jewish law.

"Orthodoxy gives sanctity and holiness to small things," Rabbi Woolf said. "We live in a secular culture, but it teaches about things that are permanent and sanctified."

The two-hour convocation presented the school's first Chaim ("Tree of Life") Award to Joseph S. Gruss, a Polish-born financier who has endowed