

An Introduction to The Rabbinical Council of America

What is the RCA?

The Rabbinical Council of America was founded in 1935 and has been in existence for more than 70 years. During that time it has played many roles in Jewish life, not just in the United States, but around the Jewish world.

The RCA has two defining missions. The first is to represent the best interests of the Orthodox rabbinate, by helping its member rabbis with their personal and professional needs. The second mission is to be an effective vehicle to clarify, project, and promote Torah Judaism throughout the Jewish community and beyond.

The Torah Hashkafah of the RCA

The RCA is and aspires to be an inclusive and cooperative organization, partnering with the full spectrum of Jewish life. It affirms the unity of all of Klal Yisrael. It works to strengthen the centrality of Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael in Jewish life. It stands for the benefit and value of participating in modernity, while advocating the responsibility of every Jew for the well being of the larger society in which he lives. In a fundamental sense the RCA's hashkafah closely follows the personality and teachings of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, even as it welcomes and embraces the teachings and *talmidim* of other great teachers and yeshivot in the Torah world.

Institutional Affiliations

The RCA has many important linkages and associations. It is, for instance, the rabbinic arm of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, with jurisdiction in the determination of all questions of halacha affecting the OU, while enjoying a close working relationship with that important synagogue and communal body. It also enjoys exceptionally close ties to Yeshiva University and its affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS.) Special relationships are also in existence with a variety of yeshivot around the US, and Israel. The RCA is pleased and proud to host and be affiliated with the Beth Din of America. An exceptionally close relationship has historically characterized our relationship to the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and its various organs.

Who Belongs to the RCA

The more than 900 members of the RCA can be found functioning as rabbis in 18 countries around the world. They are musmachim of every major Orthodox yeshiva and Torah institution. The list of approved semichah granting institutions currently contains more than 25 yeshivot, and is growing. Moreover, members are not just congregational rabbis, but fill other functions as well, including Chinuch/Education on all levels, military

chaplaincy, prison chaplaincy, health care chaplaincy, community organizational professionals, and academicians. There is a substantial group of members living in Israel. Affiliate membership is available to those who suitable semicha who work in non-rabbinic fields.

Requirements of Membership

To become a member of the RCA, one must have received semicha Yoreh Yoreh from an institution recognized by the RCA. Alternatively, one must have two private Yoreh Yoreh *semichas* from recognized masmichim. Lists of approved institutions and masmichim are available at www.rabbis.org/joinRCA.cfm. Other requirements include character references from three rabbis known to the leadership of the RCA. The names of all applicants are shared with the membership of the RCA for comment, prior to final approval of the applicant by the Executive Committee of the RCA.

Continued membership in the RCA is subject to adherence to the provisions of the RCA's Constitution, which allow for suspension of membership under certain rare and extreme circumstances.

Membership Dues

Annual dues are US\$450.00. With an early payment option, it is \$375.00. First year post-ordination members and residents of Israel pay \$125 to receive full membership benefits. Israeli residents can avail themselves of Israel regional membership with limited benefits, at NIS 100 per annum. As a matter of policy, no member is turned away for lack of ability to pay full dues, so that upon request special arrangements can be made.