



הסתדרות הרבנים דאמריקה
THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA

Introduction to the Rabbinical Council of America

What is the RCA?

A membership organization of Orthodox rabbis, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) was founded 80 years ago, in 1935. Since then, it has played important roles in Jewish life in the United States and around the Jewish world.

The RCA's overarching purpose is to further devotion to God, His people, His Torah, and its precepts and values. To that end, it supports and promotes the personal, financial, and professional welfare and development of its member rabbis, as individuals and as a whole. It fosters collegiality among its members and guides them. It expresses to Jewish and general society the outlook of traditional Jewish law and thought regarding contemporary issues. It encourages productive citizenship among Jews, champions their rights everywhere, and firmly supports the State of Israel. It oversees a \$60 million pension plan which offers a valuable parsonage tax benefit to participants who pay US taxes.

Core RCA Principles

- 1) We affirm that God's revelation at Sinai created an eternal covenantal relationship with the Jewish nation as a chosen people which obligates all Jews in all generations to lives of complete observance of the commandments.
- 2) We affirm that God gave the Torah to Moses, who in turn gave it to the Jewish people. The laws of the Torah are immutable and apply in all generations.
- 3) We are heirs to and participants in a millennia-old halachic process which is founded upon an unbroken chain of tradition from Sinai and continues until today, and which incorporates the Bible, the Talmud, Jewish law codes, responsa literature, and other authoritative works. This process greatly emphasizes tradition and precedent while also sanctioning the adaptation and application of Jewish law to new circumstances and evolving realities. Halachah includes internal mechanisms which uniquely guide its responsible development by acknowledged halachic authorities and which create and thereby sanction multiple views on many issues. In accordance with the principle of "These and those are the words of the living God" (Eruvin 13b), we affirm that each such view deserves respect and consideration.
- 4) We are passionately committed to the ongoing flourishing of the State of Israel, seeing its establishment and continued existence as historic, Divine expressions of national dignity, sovereignty, and redemption.
- 5) We seek to maximize the involvement in Jewish life of all Jews, including young and old, groups with diverse customs due to their countries of origin, as well as those with greater knowledge of Judaism and those who are novices. We affirm the essential uniqueness of each sex and the halachic distinctions between them. We also foster, in light of the many positive changes in the lives of Orthodox Jewish

women over the past century, a diversity of halachically and communally appropriate opportunities for women's lay and professional involvement in Orthodox Jewish life.

6) We embrace our mandate to interact with, and to effect positive changes in, all of human society, in keeping with the view of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (in "Confrontation") that Jews must "stand shoulder to shoulder with civilized society... and members of other faith communities, ... committed to the general welfare and progress of mankind determined to participate in every civic, scientific, and political enterprise[, as we] feel obligated to enrich society with our creative talents and to be constructive and useful citizens."

7) As proud, loyal citizens of the United States, Canada, and elsewhere, we urge the Jewish communities we lead to comply with all non-discriminatory civil legislation, in fulfillment of the Talmudic dictate of *dina de'malchuta dina* (secular law has the force of halachic obligation).

8) We believe that in addition to the ongoing study of Torah which is central to all Jews' religious lives, Jews must pursue knowledge of the universe and humanity, including the natural, social, and applied sciences, humanities, and higher culture. Such knowledge is part of an integrated quest to know God, the unified Source of knowledge about His varied Creation.

Institutional Affiliations

The RCA values its many associations with other organizations. Among these, it maintains a close working relationship with the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America ([OU](#)), serving as its rabbinic arm. Its close ties to Yeshiva University and its affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary ([RIETS](#)), as well as the [Hebrew Theological Seminary](#) (Chicago), extend back to the RCA's founding. The RCA proudly hosts and works closely with the [Beth Din of America](#), and advocates for use the joint BDA/RCA [Halachic Prenuptial Agreement](#). It enjoys a strong relationship with the Chief Rabbinate of Israel. Its voice at the [Conference of Presidents](#) of Major Jewish Organizations is heard clearly. It works together with the Catholic Church and other religious groups through the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC). Through its activity on the [JWB Jewish Chaplains Council](#), its chaplaincy endorsements are recognized by the United States Armed Forces.

Who Belongs to the RCA

Musmachim of dozens of yeshivot, the 1000 members of the RCA can be found in 18 countries around the world. Members serve as congregational rabbis; mechanchim; military, prison, and health care chaplains; community organizational professionals; academicians; kashruth and beit din professionals, and more. The many members living in Israel are organized as the RCA's Israel Region.

Joining the RCA

Formal requirements for becoming a member of the RCA are at www.rabbis.org/joinRCA.cfm. RCA membership is subject to ongoing adherence to the RCA's [Constitution](#) which allows for suspension of membership under certain extreme circumstances.

Membership Dues

Annual dues are \$500; if paid early, \$425. First year post-ordination members pay \$150/year, and residents of Israel pay \$125/year to receive full membership benefits. Israeli residents can avail themselves of Israel regional membership with limited benefits, at NIS 100/year. **As a matter of policy and practice, no applicant or member is turned away for lack of ability to pay full dues; upon request, special arrangements are made in such cases.**