

## What the RCA Does to Serve its Members

“What do I receive in return for my membership dues, and for associating myself with this organization?” It is natural for any dues-paying member of an organization to ask this question. Naturally, given the wide spectrum of specialties and needs of RCA members, different members receive different benefits.

### **RCA Membership Provides Accreditation and Recognition by Peers**

All members, however, receive one overarching benefit. Like membership in the American Bar Association for a lawyer and membership in the American Medical Association for a physician, RCA membership conveys accreditation by one’s peer professional group. Being an RCA member tells the community that this rabbi is not a solo practitioner who functions on his own, but a professional who:

- is recognized and respected by his peers
- can be relied upon to follow the accepted and customary practices, expectations and standards of his peers
- will be held accountable for serious infractions, God forbid, by his colleagues, whose standards he has accepted upon himself in joining their ranks.

This is why so many synagogues served by RCA rabbis expect their rabbi to be a member of the RCA. For them, an important rabbinic credential is the fact of his RCA membership, with the above-mentioned benefits to the synagogue and community. Put differently, having a better shot at securing and keeping a rabbinic position is not just a matter of having access to a listing of available positions. It is also a function of having RCA membership in and of itself. This is also why many yeshivot and rabbinic training seminaries attach such importance to having the RCA recognize the semicha they grant their graduates.

This fundamental benefit of membership is conferred by virtue of being accepted as a member, and by continuing to be a member in good standing.

Other benefits of membership flow from specific activities, policies, programs, and services that the RCA provides, as detailed below:

### **Collegiality**

First and foremost, membership in the RCA confers the benefit of chavrusa, or collegiality. There is inestimable value and importance in sensing and benefiting from being in a sacred partnership with like-minded and dedicated chaverim, all committed to Torah and mitzvot on the highest level, while sharing similar personal and professional concerns, challenges, and opportunities as we strive to work for the good of *Klal Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael*. This is especially important, given the often scattered and lonely nature of rabbinic life.

The RCA fosters collegiality in various ways. Regular emails including informational updates covering RCA news, developments in the Jewish and rabbinic world, new rabbinic resources, sermon material, etc., are sent to all members, and mailed or faxed periodically to those without email. Various active Rabbinic Discussion forums, hosted on Google Groups, allow chaverim to enrich their thinking about the full spectrum of issues of concern to rabbis by sharing ideas, challenges, questions, solutions, as well as halachic and other source material directly with one another. The RCA’s annual convention brings together rabbanim from around the world, as well.

### **Torah Education and Professional Enrichment**

Continued Torah learning is essential to the life and success of today’s Rav. Under the umbrella of its Rabbi Steven M. Dworken Continuing Rabbinic Education Program, the RCA provides a wide variety of Torah education opportunities. Members’ *she’elot le’halachah* can be discussed with or referred to our affiliated Beth Din of America, and its *Av Beth Din*, its *Segan Av Beth Din*, and its *Menahel*.

A constantly expanding section of our website, [www.rabbis.org/resources/resources.cfm](http://www.rabbis.org/resources/resources.cfm), provides a wealth of material, including written and audio shiurim on innumerable Torah topics including major presentations from decades of RCA conventions and entire courses with a panoply of outstanding rabbinic and lay

presenters; shiurim, derashot and stories relating to every parasha and Yom Tov; halachic discussions and forms; a special section with material by and about Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik; pastoral resources regarding all major life cycle events; ideas for community programming; leadership information; links to yeshiva, professional and other Jewish organizations and much, much more.

Members receive a subscription to the world-renowned Torah journal of the RCA, Tradition. They also have access, at [www.TraditionOnLine.org/archives](http://www.TraditionOnLine.org/archives), to the complete online archives of more than 50 years of Tradition articles. This includes the original text of the many seminal articles which Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik published in Tradition. Members receive each volume of Yeshiva University's renowned Torah U'Madah Journal, as well.

### **Conventions and Conferences**

The RCA Annual Convention brings together chaverim from major as well as scattered communities, and even from abroad, to deepen personal relationships, while hearing shiurim and presentations from outstanding rabbis and professionals, and attending interactive workshops on the full spectrum of rabbinic concerns and priorities. From time to time, regional conferences are held, as well, servicing nearby members in the U.S. in the four major regions of the United States and Canada.

### **Committees and National Leadership Opportunities**

The many committees of the RCA utilize the leadership talents, skills, experience, and specialized knowledge of its members. These function most efficiently to overcome geographical distances, using conference calls, emails, and the Web. By participating in a committee, RCA members have the opportunity to take on regional and national leadership roles in areas of their choosing, often in association with other well known Jewish communal leadership organizations.

### **Placement Services**

The Joint Placement Committee of the RCA, The Orthodox Union, and Yeshiva University (and staffed by the latter) is the major placement service bringing together Orthodox synagogues and Orthodox rabbis, to respond to and fill their mutual need for effective rabbinic leadership. Synagogues and communities around the world turn to this committee to assist them in filling all kinds of rabbinic positions on various levels. To be considered for placement by the committee, a rabbi must first be (or be about to become) a member in good standing of the RCA (unless he is a musmach of RIETS already.)

Similarly, Orthodox rabbis who wish to be considered for military chaplaincy positions must be sponsored by a rabbinic agency, and the RCA fulfills that role for its members, as a Sponsoring Organization for chaplaincy affairs recognized by the US Armed Forces.

### **Contract Services**

The RCA provides support, guidance, and, where requested, intercession, on behalf of its members involved in contract negotiations, lay-rabbinic relationships, and associated support services. These services are provided by the RCA via the Director of Rabbinic Services.

### **Financial Services**

Members are entitled to enroll in the RCA Pension Plan, a full service, professionally run, program with many benefits that accrue throughout a rabbinic career. These include guidance in arranging congregational participation, full plan portability, high quality investment advice and options, and regular reporting procedures. Most critically, it allows one's parsonage benefit to continue even in retirement.

### **Beth Din Services**

The RCA is proud to maintain a close affiliation and working relationship with the Beth Din of America, sharing facilities, services, and much more. Members of the RCA have direct access to the Beth Din, to benefit from its essential work in Gittin, *dinei Torah*, issuing Jewish identification papers when needed, personal status services, handling of *Sheelot u-Teshuvot*, prenuptial agreement and agunah work, as well as its partnerships with leading Batei Din around the country and throughout the world.

### **Geirut Services**

Regional Batei Din l'Giyur (Regional Conversion Courts) exist throughout the United States to assist members shepherd suitable candidates through the conversion process. From providing reading materials, halachic guidance, and breadth of experience, to providing a standardized yet flexible overall structure and process – including the final *ma'asei giyur*, and beyond– the GPS (Geirus Policies and Standards) system assists interested rabbanim in all phases of the conversion process. The Israeli Chief Rabbinate recognizes the validity of conversions done under GPS, ensuring converts and their descendants of their acceptance by the State of Israel. At the same time, chaverim of the RCA are free to perform geirus independently, but in doing so they need to understand that the organization will not necessarily endorse such geirus if requested. And if they do perform independent geirus they are precluded from functioning within the GPS system as a dayyan, so as to avoid confusion.

### **Publications**

The RCA publishes various journals and books. These include the Torah journals Tradition and Hadarom (in Hebrew), a rabbi's "Lifestyle Madrich," with essential tefillot, forms, and standard procedures for special occasions; the widely-used RCA Ketubah and wedding kits (in first and second marriage formats), a Halachic Health Care Proxy (in case of catastrophic illness or death.) Members also receive online access to the RCA Membership Registry. This is a great tool for locating fellow Orthodox rabbis around the world.

It also sponsors the RCA Artsroll Siddur. The first edition has been existence for 25 years and is a standard siddur widely used. The revised edition, due out shortly under the imprimatur of the RCA Press, will incorporate many special new features, commentaries, and improvements, and thus sure to enhance the prayer experience of its users, as well as the effectiveness of the members of the RCA who utilize it in their Avodas ha-Kodesh.

### **Public Affairs**

As a member of the RCA, a rabbi can benefit from its past and future public policy pronouncements and resolutions, and from its affiliation with sister organizations, such as the OU's Institute for Public Affairs. Using one's membership in a recognized national leadership policy-making body adds weight and informed opinion to a rabbi's pronouncements and public positions.

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