



TO: Candidate for Admission to The Rabbinical Assembly

FROM: Max Arad  
Director of Member Development and Engagement

Thank you for your inquiry into membership. Enclosed you will find:

1. Membership packet
  - a. Overview of the process
  - b. Membership Requirements
  - c. Membership Standards and Required Core Competencies
  - d. Essay requirements
  - e. Personal Interview
  - f. Code of Rabbinic Conduct
  - g. Placement Policies
2. Application for Membership
3. Two recommendation forms

Please return all documents, letters, application and essay via email to [marad@rabbinicalassembly.org](mailto:marad@rabbinicalassembly.org). Please also email copies of your degrees and ordination.

In order to interview with this year's cycle, we need to receive all the documents no later than three months before our annual convention.

There is a non-refundable application fee of \$100 made payable to the Rabbinical Assembly and mailed to the RA office.

Please understand that neither receipt of an application nor an invitation for the interview assures acceptance into the Rabbinical Assembly. While an applicant's file is pending, a candidate may not in any way represent that s/he is, or already has become, a member of the Rabbinical Assembly. Each candidate will be notified in writing of the Membership Committee's recommendation to the Executive Council of the Rabbinical Assembly. If the candidate is not recommended, we will not provide the reasons for this decision.

## OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

There are five steps to the application process:

1. The application and required written material are submitted.
2. If approved by the Application Subcommittee of the Membership Committee, the candidate is invited for a personal interview with the Membership Committee.
3. If the Membership Committee recommends that the candidate be accepted into the Rabbinical Assembly, the candidate's name is presented to the Executive Council of the Rabbinical Assembly for its input and comments. With the approval of the Executive Council, a candidate's name is circulated to the entire membership of the Rabbinical Assembly for comments and reactions. The deliberations of the Membership Committee and the Executive Council are confidential and will not be shared with the candidates.
4. Based upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee, and comments from the general membership, the Executive Council may make a recommendation for admission to the general membership at the next Rabbinical Assembly Convention.
5. As a final step, the Membership Committee presents the candidate's name for approval at the annual convention where a vote is taken at a business session.
6. Once approved at convention, the candidate becomes a full member of the Rabbinical Assembly. The candidate will be notified electronically of his/her acceptance into the Rabbinical Assembly.

## MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

**DOCUMENTS:** The application process must be completed within 3 years from the date of the original inquiry. All of the following are due three months in advance of our annual convention for this year's cycle at the office of Max Arad. All documents must be submitted by email.

1. A professional resume
2. \$100 application fee (payable by check)
3. Proof of rabbinic ordination
4. Official transcript(s) or other official documentation of rabbinic course work
5. Proof of a Bachelors Degree or higher (copy of diploma or official transcript)
6. Letter on institutional stationery from an officer of the congregation or organization detailing the terms of employment and documenting at least three years of consecutive rabbinical service in one position. (May be two years at the time of application, with confirmation that the candidate will still be in this position at the time of the interview.)
7. Letters of recommendation from two members of the Rabbinical Assembly who are familiar with the candidate's work during the last three years. The candidate is responsible for securing the letters that follow the guidelines on page 5.
8. A letter of recommendation from the president of the local region of the Rabbinical Assembly. The candidate is responsible for securing this letter that follows the guidelines on page 5.
9. The Acknowledgement Form confirming that a candidate for membership in the Rabbinical Assembly:
  - a. Is bound by the Code of Professional Conduct from the time of application

- b. Understands that seeking a USCJ (United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism) pulpit while an applicant for membership is a violation of the Placement Code and jeopardizes the candidate's application for membership.
  - c. Understands that if a candidate becomes a member of the RA, the rabbi is only granted two years' work experience credit. Therefore a new member of the RA admitted through the Membership Committee is eligible only for an "A", "B", or an assistantship pulpit at the time of admission (see attached Placement Policies). An appeal for "life experience credit" is not considered.
  - d. Understands that applying, writing the essay, or appearing before the Membership Committee is no guarantee for acceptance into membership.
  - e. Agrees that if elected to membership in the RA, they must immediately resign from any other denominational rabbinical association. A hard copy of the resignation letter must be sent to the Rabbinical Assembly office to be placed in the applicant's file.
  - f. Understands that content of the discussion of the Membership Committee is confidential and will not be available to the candidate.
10. A 5-10 page essay demonstrating that the candidate meets the standards for membership and core required competencies outlined below.
11. All paperwork, the essay and all documents must be submitted no later than 3 months in advance of the RA Annual Convention at which time all information will be reviewed by the Rabbinical Assembly Membership Committee. The Committee may then invite the candidate for a personal interview. These interviews take place only once a year and in New York at the offices of the RA. An invitation to interview does not guarantee admission into the Rabbinical Assembly. The purpose of the interview is for the candidate to demonstrate in person that s/he meets the standards for membership and the core competencies outline below.

## **DEMONSTRATION OF MEMBERSHIP STANDARDS & CORE COMPETENCIES**

- 1. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate both familiarity and current commitment to the institutions and programs of the Conservative Movement.
- 2. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate that s/he is conversant with classic Jewish texts in the original language.
- 3. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate compatibility with the ideology of the Conservative Movement.
- 4. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate compatibility with the halakhic methodology of the Conservative Movement.
- 5. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate compatibility with the religious practices of the institutions of the Conservative Movement.
- 6. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate familiarity with the core texts of the Conservative Movement. The candidate should reference at least two of the following in both the essay and at the interview:

- a. *Tradition and Change*, by Mordecai Waxman, Burning Book Press, 1958
  - b. *Conservative Judaism: The New Century*, by Neil Gillman, Behrman House Publishing, 1993
  - c. The essays in the *Etz Hayyim Humash and Commentary*, Published by the RA/USCJ
  - d. *The Sacred Cluster*, by Ismar Schorsch, see [www.jtsa.edu/aboutcj](http://www.jtsa.edu/aboutcj)
7. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate competence as a working rabbi.
  8. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate employability as a rabbi.
  9. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate interpersonal skills.
  10. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate integrity and moral character.
  11. In person and in writing, the candidate must demonstrate that s/he will make a positive contribution to the Rabbinical Assembly and Conservative Movement.

## THE ESSAY

Submit a short essay (between 5-10 pages) that demonstrates the core competencies and standards for membership outlined above by answering the following questions:

1. Outline your own theology and briefly describe your current patterns of observance. Describe one book, one article or author/teacher that best depicts/reflects your religious practice and outlook as a Conservative rabbi today.
2. Trace the development of your rabbinate, including pertinent autobiographical data as well as influencing factors and/or individuals. Describe your three most important accomplishments as a rabbi.
3. How does the halakhic process work for you personally and professionally? Give an example from your personal and professional experience of a halakhic decision which involved a real-life situation.
4. What is your definition of Conservative Judaism? Demonstrate familiarity with the history and philosophy of the Conservative Movement.
5. The Conservative Movement is currently undergoing great changes. What is your vision for the future of the Movement?
6. State your reasons for wishing to join the Rabbinical Assembly at this time.

## THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

At the personal interview, a candidate is asked to deliver a five minute דבר תורה on the week's פרשת השבוע which demonstrates Hebrew proficiency, knowledge of traditional commentaries and integration of modern biblical scholarship with traditional text.

At the personal interview, the candidate must demonstrate thoroughly that s/he meets the membership standards and core competencies outlined above and is personally compatible with the RA membership.

The candidate should expect follow up questions to the דבר תורה and essay. Because of the interpersonal nature of the interview, the presentation by the candidate and the interactions at the interview are the critical heart of the application process.

## **NEXT STEPS OF THE APPLICATION PROCESS**

1. After the personal interview, the Membership Committee will determine whether or not the candidate has met the standards and competencies for admission. The judgment of the Membership Committee is not reviewable. The candidate will be informed of the Committee's decision electronically.
2. With the approval of the Executive Council, a candidate's name is circulated to the entire membership of the Rabbinical Assembly for comments and reactions. These comments remain confidential.
3. The recommendation of the Membership Committee and any comments by the general membership are sent to the Executive Council for its review at an upcoming meeting. If the Executive Council accepts the recommendation of the Membership Committee, it will present the name of the candidate for approval by the general membership of The Rabbinical Assembly at its next Convention.
4. The deliberations of the Membership Committee and Executive Council are confidential and will not be shared with the candidate. Formal election to membership is held at a business session at the annual Convention. Once approved at convention, the candidate becomes a full member of the Rabbinical Assembly.
5. Candidates can expect to receive notification electronically:
  - a. Following receipt of application materials;
  - b. Following the conclusion of the personal interview with the Membership Committee (if applicable);
  - c. Following the decision of the Executive Council at end (if applicable);
  - d. Following the RA Convention at the conclusion of the process (if applicable).

## **GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A LETTER OF REFERENCE FOR A CANDIDATE FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY**

1. Number of years you know the candidate.
2. Describe the context/nature of the relationship.
3. Describe candidate's personal involvement in the Conservative Movement.
4. Describe what you believe to be the candidate's personal level of observance and why you think it fits within or does not fit within the boundaries of the Conservative Movement.
5. Speak to the candidate's character.
6. Describe a situation in which you saw the candidate in the role of rabbi and tell us what it demonstrates about the candidate's rabbinic leadership.
7. List three rabbinic strengths of the candidate.
8. List three areas in which the candidate needs further study, growth or experience.
9. What contribution do you think the candidate can make to the Conservative Movement?



**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Full Hebrew Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Personal Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Present position \_\_\_\_\_ Dates \_\_\_\_\_

Organization and Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Work phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Email \_\_\_\_\_

**PREVIOUS POSITIONS**

1. Position \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Organization and Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Position \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Organization and Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Position \_\_\_\_\_ From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

Organization and Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## EDUCATION

Please indicate source and date of your rabbinical ordination: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Undergraduate Institution \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate Institution \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_\_\_\_

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following (at least two) members of the Rabbinical Assembly who have worked with you in the last three years to recommend your admission:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

If you are currently a member of a denominational rabbinical group(s), please indicate:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been dismissed or suspended or withdrawn from any academic institution or place of employment?

yes       no

Have you ever been arrested or have a criminal record?  yes       no

If you have answered these questions affirmatively, explain fully on a separate sheet.

## AGREEMENT

I agree to abide by the administrative directives, placement policies and standards of the Rabbinical Assembly as published in the RA Code of Conduct. I observe יום טוב, כשרות, שבת, and daily davening according to the standards of the Conservative rabbinate. My practice, both personal and professional, conforms to the decisions of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement.

I certify that the information given by me on this application and all supplementary pages is complete and accurate. I have been provided the standards of membership in the RA and I acknowledge and agree that the determination of whether or not I have satisfied the standards of membership in the Rabbinical Assembly is left to the judgment of the membership process and the Executive Council of the Rabbinical Assembly and is not reviewable.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I understand and accept the following limitations and expectations that apply to all candidates applying for membership to the Rabbinical Assembly.

- a) I understand that I am bound by the Code of Professional Conduct upon application.
- b) I understand that seeking a USCJ pulpit while applying for membership is a violation of the Placement Code and jeopardizes the candidate's application for membership.
- c) I understand that if a candidate becomes a member of the RA, the rabbi is only granted two years work experience credit. Therefore a new member of the RA admitted through the Membership Committee is eligible for an "A", "B", or an assistantship pulpit at the time of admission. An appeal for "life experience credit" is not considered.
- d) I understand that applying, writing the essay or appearing before the Membership Committee is no assurance for acceptance into membership.
- e) I agree that if elected to membership in the RA, I must immediately resign from any other denominational rabbinical association. A copy of the letter must be sent to The Rabbinical Assembly office to be placed in the applicant's file.
- f) I understand that a decision for or against admission remains confidential within the Membership Committee and the Executive Council and will not be available for review by the candidate.

Please sign below to acknowledge.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_