



To: Candidate for Admission to The Rabbinical Assembly

From: Max Arad

Director of Operations & Membership, on behalf of the Rabbinical Assembly
Membership Committee

Thank you for your inquiry into our Rabbinical Assembly (our RA for short). Rabbis ordained at non-movement seminaries have enriched the Conservative/Masorti Movement throughout its history. We are looking forward to exploring how your wisdom can be woven into the tapestry of our RA. Our sages teach in Pirkei Avot, “aseh lekha rav”, make for yourself a teacher. Through this process, may you continue your journey of sacred work, staying grounded in our traditions of both study and relationships, remaining devoted to those who are your students and humble to learn from teachers of all forms. If you have questions or concerns while working on this application, please feel free to contact [Max Arad](#) in the RA office. We look forward to hearing from you.

In this application packet you will find:

1. Overview of the process
2. Application Requirements
3. Membership Standards and Required Core Competencies
4. Essay requirements
5. Personal interview information
6. Guidelines for recommendation letters
7. Membership Agreement

Please return all requested documents via email or a cloud storage link (e.g. Google Drive, Dropbox) to rdulitz@rabbinicalassembly.org.

The Membership Committee has a yearly cycle. In order to interview for a given year's cycle, we need to receive all the documents no later than November 1st.

There is a non-refundable application fee of \$100 made payable to the Rabbinical Assembly and mailed to the RA office or paid via [credit card online](#) (select General Fund).

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 themselves as a member or a pending member of the Rabbinical Assembly. Each candidate will be notified in writing of the Membership Committee's recommendation to the Board of Trustees of the Rabbinical Assembly and final acceptance.

Overview of the Process

Below are the steps of the application process, with no opportunity to appeal any decisions by the Membership Committee:

1. Initial screening with Max Arad (or other RA staff member as necessary).
2. Application and required written material submitted by November 1st to be part of that year's application cycle.
3. Upon review of the application, additional materials may be requested. When the material submitted is complete, the Rabbinical Assembly staff will consult with the Membership Committee chair to determine next steps. The Membership Committee will invite suitable candidates for a personal interview with the committee.
4. If the Membership Committee recommends that the candidate be accepted into the Rabbinical Assembly, the candidate's name will be presented to the Board of Trustees of the Rabbinical Assembly for its input and comments. With the approval of the Board, 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 Board of Trustees are confidential and will not be shared with the candidates. In some cases, applicants may be asked to reapply after meeting conditions stipulated in writing from the Membership Committee.
5. Based upon the recommendation of the Membership Committee, and comments from the general membership, the Board of Trustees may make a recommendation for admission to the general membership at the next Rabbinical Assembly annual meeting (held in March).
6. As a final step, the Membership Committee presents the candidate's name for approval at the Annual Meeting where an up-down approval vote is taken at a business session.
7. Once approved at the Annual Meeting, the candidate becomes a full member of the Rabbinical Assembly. The candidate will be notified electronically of their acceptance into the Rabbinical Assembly.

Application Requirements

Rabbis ordained from an approved rabbinical program with at least three years in the field are eligible to apply for membership. Additional requirements are outlined below.

The application process must be completed within 3 years from the date of the original inquiry. In order to be processed in a given year's cycle, all of the following materials must be submitted via email or a cloud storage link by November 1st to membership@rabbinicalassembly.org.

1. [Basic Application Form](#)
2. A professional resume
3. \$100 application fee (payable by check or [online](#))
4. Proof of rabbinic ordination
5. Official transcript(s) or other official documentation of rabbinic course work
6. Proof of a Masters Degree or higher (copy of diploma or official transcript)
7. Letters of recommendation from two employers on institutional stationary, one of which must be written by candidate's current supervisor, 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). Additional guidelines for the letters can be found on page 6. Letters should be sent from the references directly to membership@rabbinicalassembly.org.
 - a. For those engaged in freelance or entrepreneurial rabbinical work and unable to provide such a letter, please write a letter demonstrating consistency of freelance or entrepreneurial work over at least a three year period (up to the present) with an explanation of how you decided on the path of your rabbinate to date. What influences contributed to those decisions?
 - i. Please provide two reference letters from a client or constituent (of a class, life cycle event, or service) that affirms the work you do.
8. Letters of recommendation from three members of the Rabbinical Assembly who are familiar with the candidate's work during the last three years. At least one of the members must work in the geographic vicinity of the candidate. The candidate is responsible for securing the letters that follow the guidelines on page 6. Letters should be sent from the references directly to membership@rabbinicalassembly.org.
9. The Acknowledgement Form confirming that a candidate for membership in the Rabbinical Assembly is bound by certain responsibilities without conferring any benefits of membership:
 - a. Is bound by the RA 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 [Eligibility for Congregational Rabbinic Search](#) and jeopardizes the candidate's application for membership.
 - c. Understands that submitting an application or appearing before the Membership Committee is not a guarantee of acceptance into membership.
 - d. Agrees that if approved for membership in our RA, they must immediately resign from any other denominational rabbinical association. An electronic copy of the resignation letter must be sent to Max Arad (marad@rabbinicalassembly.org) to be placed in the applicant's file.
 - e. 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 by November 1st 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 via Zoom. An invitation to interview does not guarantee admission into the Rabbinical Assembly. The purpose of the interview is for the candidate to demonstrate that they meet the standards for membership and the core competencies outlined below.

Demonstration Of Membership Standards & Core Competencies

Through the interview, their essay, and references, the candidate must demonstrate a compatibility and capability with the [knowledge, skills, beliefs and practices](#) along the broad spectrum of diversity within the Conservative/Masorti movement's rabbinate:

- Familiarity and current commitment to the institutions and programs of the Conservative Movement.
- Conversant with classic Jewish texts in the original language and can use texts to teach Torah.
- Compatibility with the ideology of the Conservative Movement.
- Compatibility with the halakhic methodology of the Conservative Movement.
- Compatibility with the religious practices and ideals of the institutions of the Conservative Movement.
- Familiarity with the core texts of the Conservative Movement. The candidate should reference at least two of the following in the essay:
 - Material on Tefilla from Mahzor or Siddur Lev Shalem.
 - Articles from [Masorti Journal](#) or [Exploring Judaism](#) (with at least one additional source)
 - Modern Conservative Judaism: Evolving Thought and Practice (JPS Anthologies of Jewish Thought) by Elliot Dorff. JPS, 2018.
 - The essays in the Etz Hayyim Humash and Commentary, RA/USCJ, 2001.
 - Conservative Judaism: The New Century, by Neil Gillman, Behrman House Publishing, 1993.
 - The Sacred Cluster, by Ismar Schorsch, see [Here](#).
- Competence as a working rabbi.
- Employability as a rabbi.
- Interpersonal skills suitable for their rabbinate.
- Integrity and moral character.
- Will make a positive contribution to the Rabbinical Assembly and Conservative Movement.

- Professional skills - normative qualifications for the modern rabbinate including but not limited to training in pastoral care, boundaries/ethics, management and executive skills, and the like.

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. This can be in one larger essay or smaller essays addressing these questions in 1-2 pages per question:

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 rabbinical studies and rabbinate, including pertinent autobiographical data as well as influencing actors and/or individuals. Describe your three most important accomplishments as a rabbi. State your reasons for wishing to join the Rabbinical Assembly at this time.
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. Address the term *Mara d'Atra* and how it informs your rabbinate.
4. What is your definition of Conservative Judaism? Demonstrate familiarity with the history and philosophy of the Conservative Movement. Address your theology in this or other sections.
5. The Conservative Movement is currently undergoing great changes. What is your vision for the future of the Movement?
6. Our movement affirms the importance of a deep connection to the Land and State of Israel. Please describe the role of *Ahavat Yisrael* and Zionism in your personal Jewish identity and rabbinic leadership.
7. Address your understanding of the term *Klal Yisrael* and its application in your rabbinate.

The Personal Interview

The Personal Interview will be a Zoom meeting with the Membership Committee of the Rabbinical Assembly. At the personal interview, a candidate is asked to deliver a five minute drash/text study, using text in the original language, which demonstrates Hebrew proficiency, knowledge of traditional commentaries, and integration of modern scholarship with traditional text. This serves to demonstrate both knowledge and rabbinic style.

At the personal interview, the candidate must demonstrate thoroughly that they meet the membership standards and core competencies outlined above and are personally compatible with membership in the Rabbinical Assembly.

The candidate should expect follow up questions to the drash, references, 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.

Guidelines For Writing A Letter Of Reference For A Candidate For Membership In The Rabbinical Assembly (Employer)

1. Number of years and in what capacity you have supervised the candidate.
2. Describe the candidate's primary responsibilities in this role.
3. Comment on the candidates's professional integrity, ethical conduct and adherence to appropriate boundaries.
4. Comment on any concerns related to professional behavior, conduct, or disciplinary matters that would be relevant to the candidate's fitness for rabbinic leadership?
5. Describe the candidate's ability to engage with individuals in pastoral or sensitive situations, including moments of vulnerability, crisis or conflict.
6. Comment on the candidate's leadership and organizational skills, including ability to work with staff and lay leadership, communication, conflict management and reliability and follow-through.
7. Describe the candidate's judgment and decision-making, particularly in situations requiring discretion, sensitivity or balancing competing concerns.
8. List three professional strengths of the candidate.
9. List three areas in which the candidate needs further study, growth or experience.

Guidelines For Writing A Letter Of Reference For A Candidate For Membership In The Rabbinical Assembly (RA Member)

1. Number of years you know the candidate.
2. Describe the context/nature of the relationship.
3. Describe the 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 and suitability to be a member of the Rabbinical Assembly.
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?
10. Describe the candidate's commitment to Klal Yisrael.

Please review the agreements below for your information. To sign and submit them, please complete the [application form at this link](#).

Agreement

I agree to abide by the administrative directives, policies and standards of the Rabbinical Assembly as published in the [RA Code of Conduct](#) or any subsequent similar Membership Requirement. 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. All material under my name is my own work and has not been drafted by others including any AI program (grammar and spelling checks are fine). 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 Board of Trustees of the Rabbinical Assembly and is not reviewable.

Acknowledgment

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 is prohibited.
- c) I understand that applying, writing the essay or appearing before the Membership Committee is no assurance for acceptance into membership.
- d) 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.
- e) 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 or appeal by the candidate.