

Draft of minutes of **January 14, 2015** meeting of RCA Executive Committee meeting

At a **regular meeting** of the Executive Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America on **Wednesday, January 14, 2015**, held in the RCA office and by conference call, President Leonard Matanky in the chair, and Reuven Tradburks acting on behalf of the secretary, the following items were decided:

- **Minutes** of meeting of December 10, 2014 were approved unanimously.
- Leonard Matanky reported on the **status of two lawsuits** initiated in Washington against a number of organizations including the RCA as a result of Barry Freundel's alleged misconduct.
- Leonard Matanky reported that Artsroll decided not to publish the **RCA siddur**. A contract terminating that relationship is being completed. Talks are being held with Koren.
- Leonard Matanky's nomination of Steve Burg and Shmuel Silber to serve as co-chairmen of the **2015 Convention** Committee passed unanimously.
- Leonard Matanky's nomination of Daniel Alter (chairman), Nevo Zuckerman, Elli Fischer, Ben Kelsen to serve on a **Resolutions Review Committee** to make a recommendation about how best to run the 2015 RCA Resolutions process passed unanimously, with Daniel Alter encouraged to add two more chaverim to the Committee who were not involved in last year's Resolutions process.
- After some discussion, the following **RCA Principles**, to be used by the Membership Committee to vet applicants for membership, passed unanimously. (The Semicha Standards Committee will reconsider the phrasing of the bracketed sentences in item 3.):

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 infinitely varied Creation.

- A motion by the Semicha Standards Committee to approve **Ohr Somayach Tanenbaum Educational Center (Monsey, NY)** passed unanimously. Motions to approve Kollel Tiferet Menachem/West Coast Rabbinical Seminary (Los Angeles, CA) and Yeshivat Chabad Lubavitch (Tzfat, Israel) were deferred pending further investigation.
- A motion by the Membership Committee to approve **Oren Duvdevani, Joshua Flug, Nechemya Shimon Fried, David Gabelle, David Hellman, Yoel Klahr, Yehuda Kovacs, Michael Langer, David Laufer, Chaim Shlomo Levovitz, Anthony Manning, Levi Mostofsky, and Daniel Sumner** as new members passed unanimously.

Additional Matters discussed:

- Michael Zylberman reported on the satisfactory operation of an **interim GPS Beit Din le'Giyyur in Washington, DC.**
- **Tradition** editor Shalom Carmy reported:
 - Fundraising, spearheaded by Yamin Levi, has created a Tradition budget surplus.
 - The opening of the Tradition archives created a sharp upturn in website visits.
 - After rising after Carmy became editor, subscriptions have since declined due to website problems relating to subscription and renewal and due to problems facing all intellectual journals and even newspapers in Internet age.
 - Need to find ways to improve product and its promotion.
 - Congregational rabbinate underrepresented on Tradition editorial board as older colleagues withdraw. Need to make editorial board more representative and able so to bring in new ideas.
 - Areas for development and for pertinent input from RCA include:
 - Seeking new authors, particularly RCA chaverim with literary and intellectual facility who can be developed to accommodate their work to Tradition's needs rather than expect Tradition to accommodate their projects. This will increase variety and number of articles, hopefully decreasing length of articles as well.
 - Recommendations on future symposia, books to be reviewed, etc.
 - New occasional feature: short exemplary essays in parshanut ha-mikra.
 - Encourage use of Tradition as a teaching tool, while encouraging lay people to subscribe.