

At a special meeting of the Executive Committee of the Rabbinical Council of America, held by conference call, on **Thursday, August 15, 2013**, President Leonard Matanky sitting in the chair and acting on behalf of the secretary, the following items were decided:

- A motion that the **RCA Rabbinic Discussion Forum, hosted on Google Groups, shall be governed by the following terms** passed (18 in favor, 9 opposed, and 1 abstaining):

Vision for the Forum

The Forum should be a “big tent” where a breadth of views can be held and where all chaverim – who of course have a chezkat kashrut because they are RCA chaverim – can explore ideas. It should not be a place to judge, enforce, or pressure others, nor should it be a soapbox to (attempt to) impose one’s vision of Torah upon others.

Insufficient safety on the Forum produces the present reality; i.e., many chaverim have stopped reading or participating in the forum because of the strident tone of some posts. They deem listserv as a place that is “unsafe.” As a result, the listserv has ceased to be for many a place to share ideas and information, to seek counsel and to support the rabbinate.

Overall tone of posts

- 1) Posts should begin with “I’m trying to understand,” “I’m dealing with x,” “I’ve been considering the Rambam’s opinion on y.”
- 2) Posts with statements of emotion (e.g., “vehemently object,” “deplore,” “incensed,” “at a loss of words,” “strenuously object,”) should be prohibited as they do not add to the exchange of ideas and can potentially be intimidating. No matter how passionately you may disagree with someone else, you should simply write, “I disagree because...”

Discussion of individuals

- 3) Individual people (whether RCA members or not) and their statements should never be the subject of posts of the listserv – only ideas or issues; e.g., “an issue has arisen as of late and I’m interested in exploring the different perspectives on this issue.”
- 4) Protesting an individual chaver’s behavior should not be posted on the forum, even if the behavior was public, but it should be directed to a suitable RCA committee.

RCA institutional matters

- 5) Discussion of standards for RCA membership should not be posted on the Forum, but should be directed to RCA Semicha Standards Committee (Rabbi Binyamin Blau, chair) or RCA Membership Committee (Rabbi Elazar Muskin, chair)
- 6) Discussion of proposed or existing RCA statements, initiatives, etc., should be permitted. Forum participants should understand, however, that such “direct democracy” will but rarely receive a direct reply from elected RCA leadership. Formal requests for changes in RCA governance, policy, initiatives, committees, etc., should be directed to RCA’s elected officials (Executive Board and officers) or, in some cases, a suitable ombudsman or committee.
- 7) At the same time, RCA leadership will, at their discretion, sometimes step back and poll chaverim or open certain proposed initiatives, statements and/or

press releases for Forum discussion. This will give the membership direct input into the running the RCA, for the RCA's own good, since the full membership often has good suggestions or valid criticisms that can only be discovered on the Forum or through similar means.

Non-RCA matters

8) A chaver may announce an opinion or idea for a project entirely independent of the RCA and seek support for it among chaverim but must direct interested chaverim to contact him only offline to "sign up".

- A motion that the RCA should **establish**, as soon as possible and with the assistance of the President, **a second Forum**, hosted on Google Groups, to continue to discuss broader issues and governed by the current rules of the Rabbinic Discussion Forum passed (17 in favor, 7 opposed, and 2 abstaining).
- A motion to establish the new Forum within 30 days did not pass (4 in favor, 7 opposed, and 2 abstaining).