

## **Meeting Summary for Executive Committee Meeting, Mon. Nov. 4, 2024**

### **Quick recap**

The meeting focused on the challenges faced by our people in Israel, and the importance of perseverance and unity in the face of adversity. The discussion also centered around new initiatives, such as assistance for RCA members looking to make Aliyah, and the emotional toll of living in Israel amidst ongoing conflicts. Lastly, the group discussed potential changes to the organization's dues policies, the progress of various initiatives, and the ongoing work on missions to Eretz Israel.

### **Next steps**

Rabbi Penner to implement changes to dues policies, including introducing nominal membership fee for members in Israel and simplifying financial hardship discounts.

Rabbi Penner to work on improving communication about dues payments and creating an online portal for members to check their account status.

Rabbi Penner to roll out new services and initiatives for RCA members, including pro bono contract negotiators, discounts with service providers, and continuing education sessions.

Rabbi Penner to continue outreach efforts to RCA membership and encourage submission of Mazel Tovs for the weekly email.

Rabbi Penner to finalize details for the 2025 RCA convention, tentatively scheduled for May 19-21.

Rabbi Penner to explore establishing a halacha hotline and mental health support line for RCA members.

### **Summary**

#### **Addressing Challenges and Unity in Eretz**

Zvi also highlighted the ongoing work of the organization and the role of its members in addressing local needs and issues. Menachem shared his recent experience in Eretz Israel and introduced Jay Weinstein and Reuven Tradburks, who were set to discuss their respective roles and updates.

#### **RCA Aliyah Initiative and Support**

Menachem discussed the importance of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) supporting its members in Israel, highlighting the significant number of members living there and the RCA's responsibility to ensure they can continue to play meaningful roles. Jay presented a new initiative called RCA Aliyah, which aims to provide resources and support to RCA members interested in making Aliyah. The initiative includes creating a group of RCA mentors in Israel, a Hebrew Habura, a Zoom series with special guests, a Rabbi body for new Aliyah members, a dedicated RCA desk, and a list of rabbinic volunteer opportunities. Menachem emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong presence in the United States while also supporting members in Israel. Rabbi Leff suggested exploring opportunities for maintaining a livelihood in Israel for American rabbis, which Jay agreed to discuss further.

### **Emotional Support and Israel Mission**

Reuven Tradburks discussed the emotional toll of living in Israel amidst ongoing conflicts and the exhaustion felt by many. He mentioned the difficulties faced by the community, including the number of young widows and orphans, and the uncertainty surrounding future attacks. Reuven also shared his efforts to maintain connections with the new chief rabbis and the various programs they organize for members. Menachem then raised the idea of missions to Israel, emphasizing the ongoing need for emotional support and the potential for smaller, more intimate groups to provide this. He also clarified that financial assistance for such a trip would be limited.

### **RCA Proposal for Conversion Standards**

Menachem discussed a proposal regarding the involvement of RCA members in conversions outside the GPS network. The proposal aimed to create a clear distinction between the GPS standards and individual conversions, and to prevent confusion. Menachem clarified that the RCA does not insist on members not being involved in conversions, but rather seeks to establish a unified standard. The proposal also addressed the issue of RCA members sharing their membership for various purposes, and the potential for enforcing the requirement for explicit disclaimers on conversions. The final decision on the proposal was not made during the meeting, but the group agreed to consider the feedback and suggestions provided.

### **Dues Policy Changes and Simplification**

Menachem discussed potential changes to the organization's dues policies. The first proposal was to remove the current discount for first-year members, as it hasn't proven effective in recruitment. The second proposal was to introduce a nominal membership fee of \$100 a year for members in Eretz Israel, as the organization plans to increase services for them. The third proposal was to simplify the financial hardship process by introducing a standard discounted rate of \$250 for all members, regardless of their financial situation. The group seemed to agree with these proposals, with no significant objections raised.

### **RCA Membership Dues and Policies**

Menachem led a discussion on the RCA's membership dues and payment policies. The group considered implementing a \$250 membership fee, with discounts for those who have been members for a long time. They also discussed the possibility of a monthly direct bank withdrawal for dues. The team agreed to create a policy for removing members who fail to respond to dues invoices for two consecutive years. The RCA is also in the process of updating its website to improve member access and payment options. Menachem encouraged members to share their thoughts on the proposed policies and models for managing membership dues.

## **Progress and Future Initiatives Discussed**

Menachem discussed the progress of various initiatives, including the creation of a team of pro bono negotiators for rabbis, the introduction of advertising in the weekly email, and the negotiation of discounts with several companies. He also mentioned the upcoming continuing education session on the use of AI for rabbis, the development of a new interface for the emails, and the planning of the convention. Menachem expressed gratitude for the support received and encouraged members to send in their own Mazel Tovs. He also mentioned ongoing work on missions to Eretz Israel, a halacha hotline, and a potential mental health line for rabbis. Lastly, he thanked everyone for their time and expressed hope for future meetings.