

## **Proposal for Congregation Rodeph Shalom**

*Helping IMPJ and IRAC win the hearts and minds of Israelis through promoting pluralistic Judaism and democracy on local, municipal levels*

### **In the name of Judaism, we will defend democracy**

The situation in Israel at present is dire with the question mark hanging above the state of democracy becoming more threatening every day.

Today, members of the new government threaten to override Israel's core values with an insidious racism, extremism, and discrimination. A barrage of coalition agreements form a powerful storm that endangers IRAC's legal achievements which secured Israel as a Jewish and democratic homeland. A legal revolution, if allowed to pass, will block attempts to challenge in courts the extreme initiatives of the government and will gravely harm Israel's democratic nature, leaving the rights of Reform Jews, women, LGBTQ and Arabs unprotected.

Due to the anti-Reform views of the new government and its ministers, the Israeli Reform Movement stands to lose more than \$1.5 million in government funding. These programs provide critical support for rabbis and congregational activities, educational and humanitarian programs, and assistance to new immigrants, including many from Ukraine and Russia – as well as the legal and public advocacy work of the Israel Religious Action Center.

IMPJ and IRAC are the only religious organizations to officially join the demonstrations. We are there every week, opening with a meaningful Havdala ceremonies and then marching together with our signs that state: "In the name of Judaism we will defend democracy". As hundreds of thousands of Israelis march along with us, the presence of Reform Judaism has an opportunity to grow and become visible to more and more Israelis – those who see us out there in the streets join us and share our signs.

Despite the challenges of this time, we see this as a positive opportunity to win over the hearts and minds of Israelis in order to foster pluralistic, democratic Judaism not only in the streets but on local levels as well – strengthening the partnerships of Reform congregations with their local and regional municipalities.

Since a large part of the ongoing struggle with democracy is the disproportionate allocation of funds by the government of Israel to Orthodox causes, with bare recognition of other streams of Judaism, we are approaching this problem from the channel through which these funds are received – Israel's municipalities in each city, town and region. We can make a stand for equality and pluralism through just allocation of funds, and through this effect policy change, and enable an increase in visibility and pluralistic activity throughout Israel.

We seek the special support of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in providing funding for mobilizing our congregations to promote issues of pluralism and to increase partnerships with municipal services for services that support Reform Jewish values. Through training programs, the IMPJ will empower congregational staff and lay leaders to understand how to navigate municipal services to enhance their



partnerships with local politicians and agencies, how to combat towards funding of pluralistic streams of Judaism in their towns, and how to secure such public funding towards their programming.

Congregation Rodeph Shalom's support will go towards:

- Providing training on how to promote pluralistic activities on a local level, including legal counsel services
- Staffing for the Israel Religious Action Center to ensure long-term support for congregational outreach in securing public funding for pluralistic activities from municipal funding, fighting discrimination in allocation of funds, and identifying key resources for partnerships in their municipalities.

As part of our vital mission to secure a Jewish and democratic state of Israel, we would deeply appreciate a special contribution from Congregation Rodef Shalom of \$20,000 to support our efforts. As municipalities gear up for new elections in two years, our efforts on the ground will be critical to shift local resources and align them stronger with our congregational programs, leaders, members, volunteers, and more.

The overall budget for these activities totals \$200,000 and includes additional activities such as PR campaigns, events and speakers, and social media training, and draws from other generous donations as well. A full budget can be provided on request.