



## RIMONIM LITURGY PROJECT

*Pomegranates are both multitudes and single. Inside one enveloping, leathery skin, there are many clusters of individual juicy seeds inside their own communities, separated by thin, papery membranes. To me, the pomegranate is a perfect symbol of Jewish identity, culture and belief. Although we exist as one fruit, gathered inside a single skin, we are wildly different from each other, have our own distinct communities and have many different ways of being Jews.*

### **Rimonim Liturgy Project**

#### WHY

Over the past few years, I have been increasingly writing work that is being used in progressive Jewish synagogues and other Jewish spaces nationally, especially my poem “V’ahavta” and “Tai” my Yom Kippur sermon on joy and the work of social justice from last year, but also other writing on racism, inclusion, and many other issues, and I’ve had many invitations to create work for ritual use, including from the spiritual leadership team at my own synagogue, Kehilla Community Synagogue in Piedmont, CA. I have been feeling increasingly called to make this a full blown, intentional project: to write new Jewish liturgy, both adaptations of traditional text and brand-new pieces, that respond to the changing needs of our communities.

#### WHAT

I am imagining liturgy that is rooted in global diasporic Jewish cultures, fully integrates Jews of Color, Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews into the center of Jewish practice, not the margins, is joyous and radical and richly blends the depth of meaning we find in words repeated for thousands of years with the spiritual, moral and political needs of this moment, in which we either dismantle

the systemic injustices that drive the destruction of our ecosystem or we watch our world crumble away. I envision creating new liturgy that reflects:

- Joy-driven practice.
- A full integration of the lives and experiences of Indigenous Jews and Jews of Color of all backgrounds.
- A deep commitment to fundamental social transformation in keeping with our deeply held principles of justice.
- Diaspora-centered Judaism that is rooted in global Jewish cultures, and explicitly replaces Zionist content in our liturgy.
- Acknowledgement and accountability to Indigenous peoples on whose land non-Indigenous Jews are settlers. This includes knowledge of and relationship building with indigenous people where each partner community is located.
- Ecological consciousness and accountability to local and global ecosystems.
- Recognizes the crisis and opportunity of climate change and our shifting relationships with land, water, fire, air, food, and the other living things with whom we share the planet.
- 

Rimonim, working with my own Palabrera Press, will publish a book of liturgical writings, and each partner organization will receive a fixed number, (yet to be determined) of free copies, and a discount on additional copies. I will retain rights to the work and receive royalties from sales. Our intention is that the work circulate widely and freely, but that if any use of it generates income, that income be shared with me.

We hope that a second phase of Rimonim will be setting selected liturgy to music, with an eventual CD. In the interim, individual songs could be made available for download on our website.

## HOW

We will create a network of partner organizations, all of whom will be deeply consulted about their liturgical needs, and will support my work through direct financial contribution, endorsements and labor to promote a major crowdfunding campaign, and if available, skilled labor in support of grant writing. I will engage in three main activities:

- Research on Jewish liturgy and on the experiences and desires of Jews whose voices are not currently represented in our liturgies.
- Facilitating conversations (in person or virtually) with groups of people from partner organizations and others, to draw out people's needs and longings in relationship to their Jewish liturgy.
- Write poetry, prose, translations and commentaries on Jewish liturgy.

Our initial budget is for \$40,000 a year for two years. This will pay for research time, writing time, group facilitation time, books and other study materials, and some travel to work in person with selected partners.

For each year of the project, we anticipate raising \$15,000 from direct partner contributions, \$20,000 from foundation grants, and \$15,000 from crowdfunding. In order to launch the project, we will need partner contributions as soon as possible. We are asking each partner to contribute \$500-\$3000.