

FOREWORD

Let justice well up like water, righteousness like an unfailing stream.

—Amos 5:24

IN THIS ERA marked by unprecedented challenges and transformative social change, *tikkun olam*—repair of the world, a keystone value of Reform Judaism—serves as a guiding beacon, illuminating our path forward. Since its inception, Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) has been positioned at the intersection of faith and justice, working tirelessly both locally and globally on challenges to ourselves and others, to our societies, and to our shared planet.

Our Torah has always been a source of wisdom and ethical guidance, urging us to stand up for those who are marginalized and to advocate for systemic change. In it we find women expressing their feelings and yearnings to the Divine. We are no different today. Through the spoken word, prayers from the heart, music, and other forms of artistic expression, we create a direct connection with our Higher Power.

WRJ (formerly National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, NFTS) has consistently encouraged the writing and sharing of personal prayers. In 1948 NFTS published our first collection of women's writings. The current WRJ Covenant series began in 1993 with *Covenant of the Heart* and was followed by *Covenant of the Soul* (2000), *A Gift of Prayer* (2001), *Covenant of the Spirit* (2005), *Covenant of the Generations* (2013), and now this volume, *Covenant of Justice*. Additionally, in 2007, WRJ published *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*. This groundbreaking commentary brought the voices of women into conversation with our ancient text, inviting all to encounter Torah from new perspectives. This body of work speaks to the ongoing interest in creative liturgy and in the acknowledgment of women's voices in the holy dialogues of our people.

IN OUR JOURNEYS as WRJ leaders, we have been profoundly inspired by the impact of grassroots advocacy, education, and action. Since its inception, WRJ has had the ability to mobilize communities to create societal change, which has deeply influenced our leadership.

For more than one hundred years, WRJ has propelled the Reform Movement forward by crafting and implementing resolutions on issues of social change. This work is often done in collaboration with the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism. By supporting the work of a legislative assistant at the RAC, WRJ coordinates the education and mobilization of women across North America. The inaugural WRJ Social Justice Conference in 2019 expanded this relationship, allowing WRJ to focus on issues of specific interest to women, many of which are illuminated by works in this volume.

Each of us was blessed to work with, learn from, and be inspired by Dr. Jane Evans, *z"l*, the first executive director of WRJ. Jane was deeply committed to human rights, women's rights, civil rights, interfaith relations, and countless other manifestations of justice. Since 2005, WRJ regularly presents the Dr. Jane Evans Pursuit of Justice Award to a humanitarian or an organization whose work reflects WRJ's social justice commitment. As WRJ past presidents, we have been personally honored and moved to meet the recipients, learning about their work and how it reflects the values Jane lived.

Rabbi Marla J. Feldman's career followed brilliantly in Jane's footsteps. This volume, *Covenant of Justice*, was conceived at the close of Marla's exemplary tenure as executive director of WRJ, as a tribute to her lifelong commitment to social justice. In these pages, we hope you will find meditations, stories, and poems that resonate for you on your own personal journey toward repair of the world, *tikkun olam*.

AS A COMMUNITY guided by Torah and enduring belief in its transformative energy, we are empowered to pursue justice and practice compassion. As Rabbi Feldman taught us, "Organized women, inspired by faith, can change the world."

Lynn Magid Lazar, WRJ President, 2009–13

Blair C. Marks, WRJ President, 2013–18

Susan C. Bass, WRJ President 2018–21