



PREFACE

— THE WORD OF GOD THROUGH THE WOMAN-PROPHET HULDAH —



IN 2 KGS 22:15-20,¹HULDAH DECLARED
to the king's messengers:

So says YHWH, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, “So says YHWH, I am going to bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants—all the words of the scroll that the king of Judah has read. Because they have abandoned me and have offered incense to other gods, because they have provoked me to anger with all of their handiwork, therefore, my fury will burn against this place, and it will not be quenched.” But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of YHWH, so shall you say to him, “So says YHWH, the God of Israel, regarding the words that you have heard, because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before YHWH, when you heard what I spoke against this place, and against



its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and because you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I for my part have heard you, says YHWH. Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you shall be gathered to your graves in peace; your eyes shall not see all the calamity that I will bring on this place.”

— AN UNTOLD NUMBER OF FEMALE PROPHETS —

Perhaps you have never heard of the woman-prophet Huldah. Perhaps you did not know that there were any female prophets in the Bible. Perhaps you could name Miriam and Deborah, but there are so many more. There is the woman with whom Isaiah fathered a child—with no mention of matrimony in the biblical text. There is the mysterious No'adiah, who not only faced down Nehemiah, but also won over all of the remaining prophets in Jerusalem to her position. Nehemiah was terrified of them. There is a community of women-prophets in Ezekiel who have the power of life and death, preserving the lives of those whom Ezekiel said would die in the name of the LORD and killing those he said would live in God's name. There are untold numbers of female prophets hiding in the masculine grammar and androcentric focus of the Hebrew scriptures. There are women-prophets in the communities around biblical Israel, existing for hundreds of years and even a thousand years before the Israelite and Judean prophets recorded their messages. The rabbinic and Christian fathers analyzed and found more women in the scriptures who function as prophets than the biblical authors identify. Both rabbinic and Christian fathers identify Hannah and Abigail as prophets. The rabbis also add Sarah, Rahab, Rachel, and Esther. Because of their interpretative work, I add Rebekah, the women who guard the wilderness sanctuary (and their guild descendants), Lemuel's queen-mother who composed Proverbs 31, and the musical mourning guild of Jeremiah 9. All of these female prophets have an intimate connection with the God of Israel; they express that connection by singing, dancing, drumming, speaking with and for God, waging war, performing miracles, exercising statecraft, and giving birth. Each of them is a daughter of Miriam, the mother of all women-prophets.