

Zohara Hieronimus, *Kabbalistic Teachings of the Female Prophets: The Seven Holy Women of Ancient Israel*, (2008) Inner Traditions.

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Review by David Ovason

Kabbalistic Teachings of the Female Prophets is a unique book. I mean this quite literally, for I know nothing quite like this work, either in the Cabalistic tradition or in the wider magical tradition. The work reveals, in a strikingly original voice, the stories of what Zohara Hieronimus calls the seven holy women of ancient Israel, viewed as prophetesses. and as transmitters of the presence of God. In one sense, as it deals primarily with women and the genius of womanhood, this is an intensely feminist book: however, the scope of history, the humility of the writing, and the spiritual insights offered, carry the work well beyond the usual limits of feminism, and indeed, transforms the feminine into the Universal. This universality is born of the nature of the book itself, which seeks to reveal the roles of the seven holy women as what we might loosely term, spiritual archetypes. Each of the seven has a family role and personal destiny; each of the seven is portrayed against the larger destiny of the history of Israel; each of the seven is revealed as an archetype of morality and spirituality. As if this progression were not enough, each prophetess is then linked, by their specific virtues, with one of the sephiroth, rising from Malkuth to Chesed. In such a way, the individual lives are merged (without any discernible loss in individuality) into a group-soul dynamic, representative of pathways in Cabala, as though one might trace, in the linear structures of the individual leaf, the pattern of the full-grown tree. By means of this identification, the feminine archetypes are transformed into cosmic archetypes, and linked with what must be the most profound arcane machine given to Mankind - the *Etz Chayim*, or Tree of Life. This progression, from the mystery of the familiar every-day world, to the greater cosmic Tree, where our own conceiving is almost benumbed in face of the Mystery, is portrayed in simple terms and in simple words. This linguistic simplicity is welcome to a general reader unversed in the deeper scholarship of Jewish thought and polemics.

The prophet Nostradamus had been born into a recently "Christianized" family, for his grandfather, Pierre, had been forcibly converted round about 1455. However, it is evident from his writings that during Nostradamus' childhood, and then, in later years when he could undertake things out of his own responsibility, Nostradamus continued to study the Torah and Cabala. I mention Nostradamus mainly because one of his more

remarkable prophecies [quatrain X.18] was woven around the story of Esther, and her dealings with Haman -a great enemy of the Jewish people. It was Nostradamus who, with his infuriating hints and guesses, first made the story of Esther come alive, for me. However, at the time when I laboured to understand quatrain X.18, I did not know that Esther had herself been a prophetess. Now, Zohara Hieronimus' account of Esther, precisely as a prophetess, has conjured her in my mind to a new life, on a higher level of being.