Preface

Theology is a kaleidoscopic field of study. There are so many interesting angles one might explore that it is almost a pity to make the inevitable choice for any particular specialization. Yet at an early stage of my study of theology at the Kampen Theological University I became intrigued by the Hebrew Bible, or the Old Testament, as it is commonly called in the Christian tradition. The stories fascinated me, their strangeness as well as their down-to-earth soberness. In the course of my studies I became aware of questions regarding women in the Bible, and those regarding feminist exegesis. I also became aware of an often unvoiced presupposition: that the position of women worshipping the God of Israel was worse than that of women worshipping Ishtar, Asherah, or any other goddess. According to this presupposition, women would have been better off worshipping a goddess.

This was the starting point of my dissertation which induced me to study a wide variety of subjects, for studying the position of biblical women is as broad as studying the Bible as a whole. Many people offered their guidance, critique, support and friendship. I am greatly indebted to Prof. J.C. de Moor for his inspiring and professional supervision. I also thank Prof. C. Houtman for his co-supervision and helpful comments and Prof. K.M.L.L. De Troyer of Claremont School of Theology (USA) for her stimulating and critical remarks.

I wish to thank the Theologische Universiteit Kampen for creating favourable conditions, including financial ones, for writing this dissertation. I am indebted to the personnel of the Kampen theological libraries of Oudestraat and Broederweg for their kind assistance. I am grateful to the Stichting Pieter Haverkorn van Rijsewijk (Amsterdam) for their financial support in publishing this dissertation.

Thanks are due to Carolina Koops and Jolanda Paans-Spoelstra for their assistance in some of the bibliographical research. I am thankful to Dr Denise Dijk and Dr Dorothea Erbele-Kuester for discussing a previous draft of chapter 1 with me. To Jeanet Aartsen and Yvonne van den Brake, who critically read the text with a feminist eye, I wish to express my warmhearted gratitude. I also thank Dr Leslie McFall (Cambridge) for correcting my English. For any errors that remain I bear full responsibility.

During the years in which I wrote this dissertation I had the privilege to work in the team of the Sectie Semitica of the Theologische Universiteit Kampen. I thank my colleagues for their friendship and encouragement. I am indebted to Frans de Boer-Knegt, David Kroeze,
Jaap Overeem and, especially, to Dr Eveline van Staalduine-Sulman, for their assistance in making the indexes.

I thank my family and friends for offering their interest in my research. The continuous support of my parents during the years of my study and writing were extremely important to me and I therefore wish to dedicate this book to my mother, Dina Marsman-Hasewinkel and the blessed memory of my father, Derk Jan Marsman. Finally, deep feelings of love and gratitude concern my husband, Aart ten Have, who encouraged me and supported me in innumerable ways.

Kampen, March 2003

Hennie J. Marsman