

Huldah's Biography, Part 1

THE TIMES IN WHICH Huldah lived were crucial to the formation of the Hebrew Bible. They also were tumultuous. In her lifetime she saw monotheistic reform and backsliding; kings summoned to and then forcibly deposed from the throne; sieges, surrenders, executions, and deportations; Jerusalem and the temple destroyed; and the initial triumph and climactic disaster of the Cyrus-led revolt. Working amidst this turbulence were the prophets, priests, and scribes who wrote and edited Scripture. Huldah herself participated, as did Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Second Isaiah, the author of the P Source, the Dtr team, the Shaphan group, and unknown others. Huldah's lifetime extended from about 640 to 564 BCE, a span of seventy-six years. For Hebrew Scripture, this was a period richer than any other—and Huldah helped to make it so.

The next two chapters will rely upon anagrams and coded writing to sketch a biography of Huldah the prophet. Once the outlines of her biography are clear, this book can fit issues and events to the Scripture she wrote and that others wrote about her. On its face, the Bible provides little information about Huldah. It mentions her name in only two places—in accounts about the scroll discovered during temple repairs in the reign of King Josiah. However, anagrams greatly expand scholarly access to the prophet. Scripture contains 1,773 Huldah anagrams, each inserted into an individual text word. As the opening chapter of this book says, “Biblical writers used anagrams much as modern authors use italics—to make a point, to insult, or to associate a person with an event, a trait, or a condition.” Sometimes the true context of an anagram is unclear. Most often,

however, the answer is plain to see. Readers, of course, must finally decide such distinctions for themselves.

Table 3.1: Huldah's Life, 640–564 BCE

Year	Age	Event
640		Birth
622	18	Consults on temple scroll
615	25	Marries Jehoiakim, bears Jehoiachin
605	36	Sees King Jehoiakim burn prophecy
597	43	Becomes queen mother
597	43	Exiled to Babylonia with Jehoiachin
592	48	As elder in Babylonia visits Ezekiel
586	54	In Jerusalem during siege
586	54	To Mizpah after Jerusalem's fall
585	55	Gedaliah murdered, Huldah to Egypt
575	65	Cyrus revolt begins
574	66	Israelites take Jerusalem
573	67	Enemies retake Jerusalem, Huldah flees
572	68	Makes way to Bethel
564	76	Death

An overview of Huldah's life follows the dates in table 3.1. The prophetess was born around 640 BCE, about the same year as Jeremiah. According to Scripture, in 622 a committee from King Josiah consulted her about a scroll discovered during temple repairs. At the time, she was perhaps eighteen and married to the king's wardrobe keeper. Some seven years later, Huldah presumably was married to Jehoiakim when she bore him a son. Anagrams show that in 605 she witnessed her husband, who was now Judah's king, defiantly burn Jeremiah's prophecy. In 597, Huldah's husband Jehoiakim was removed from the throne, to be replaced by her son, Jehoiachin. This made Huldah Judah's queen mother. A scant three months later, however, Nebuchadnezzar deposed Jehoiachin and sent him and his newly minted queen mother to exile in Babylon. Anagrams indicate that in 593 she held the title of elder and attended a meeting at Ezekiel's home in Babylonia. In 586, eleven years after her exile, Huldah reappeared in Jerusalem—anagrams relate that she witnessed Nebuchadnezzar's capture of the city. However, Huldah escaped deportation when the victors permitted her to remain in Israel. About 585, following the

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assassination of Babylon's governor of Judah, the prophetess joined others seeking refuge in Egypt.

Around 575, after a decade in Egypt, Huldah helped to launch an invasion of Palestine. The foray enjoyed initial success but the Babylonians subsequently crushed it. Huldah escaped, and by 572 had settled near Bethel. There, after several years of illness, she died and was buried in 564. Table 3.1 shows these events and correlates Huldah's age with calendar dates and events.

In examining these events, one cannot always follow strict chronological sequence. The reason is that sometimes a sure subsequent event (B) necessitates a probable prior happening (A). For example, if it is easy to prove that Huldah was Jehoiachin's mother (B), then it follows that earlier she most likely married his father Jehoiakim (A). Also, 2,700 years have passed since Huldah lived, and Scripture—the primary source about her—openly mentions her only twice. Clearly one must add the arts of deduction and inference to hard coding data when constructing a biography of this great woman.

564: AT SEVENTY-SIX, HULDAH DIES AT BETHEL

The chronology of Huldah's life begins with her death. Second Chronicles 16:12–13 says that in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, King Asa contracted a disease “in his feet” that led to his death two years later. “In his feet” has within it a Huldah anagram.¹ The anagram and the lengthy reign lead one to suspect that Asa's thirty-nine years had something to do with Huldah. As it happens, King Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon for most of Huldah's adult life. His reign lasted forty-three years, extending through the late 560s. Examination showed that there were two consecutive coded spellings of a rare athbash of “Nebuchadnezzar” running from the third through the twelfth words of v. 12.² The thirty-ninth year of Asa's reign actually applied to Nebuchadnezzar! This confirms that the prophetess was stricken in Nebuchadnezzar's thirty-ninth year, which was early 566 to early 565. Second Chronicles 16:13 says that Asa (Nebuchadnezzar-Huldah) died in the forty-first year of his reign. That is, Huldah died between March of 564 and February of 563.

1. wyl grb yields the Huldah athbash anagram gbyw. The same text word also contains wgrb, an anagram for Jehoiachin.

2. The two coded spellings of Nebuchadnezzar within 2 Chr 16:12 use trgt-wmxd(, which is an athbash of rc) rdkwbn.

By employing Asa and “feet,” the Second Chronicles author added two twists to his reference. First, King Asa had removed his own queen mother because she had made an Asherah pole (2 Chr 15:16). Huldah herself held the same queen-mother office and, by all indications, had led in the worship of Asherah. Second, scholars say that the word “feet” is used elsewhere in Scripture as a euphemism for genitals, implying that Huldah died as a result of loose living.³ The Chronicles writer takes a final swing at Huldah by saying about Asa, “Yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians.”

Other passages also bear upon Huldah's death. Genesis 35:7–8 says that after Jacob the patriarch had completed an altar at Bethel, Rebekah's nurse Deborah died and was buried beneath a tree named the oak of weeping. Later chapters of this book will reveal that Huldah wrote the stories of both Rebekah and Deborah. The Genesis verse could be a fabrication because it is the only mention of a second person called Deborah. Besides, Huldah-the-prophetess is strongly encoded beneath Gen 35:7–8, the passage that mentions the nurse named Deborah.⁴

The Bethel site was located in the kingdom of Samaria. Not coincidentally, half a dozen verses within the books of Kings couple the terms “burial” and “in-Samaria.”⁵ Since the Hebrew word for “in-Samaria” contains an anagram for Huldah, it seems likely that the authors intentionally associated Huldah's burial site with what they considered the sinful northern kingdom. Possibly another brief obituary appears in 2 Chr 24:15. “Jehoiada *grew old* [H, Baruch, Cyrus] and full of days, and died.”

What may be Huldah's own—and final—words are those that close Ps 39. She implores God, “Do not hold your peace at my tears, for I am your passing guest, an alien, like all my forebears. Turn your gaze away from me, that I may *smile* [H] again, before I depart and am no more” (Ps 39:12–13). In addition to the anagram, the closing words contain a Huldah coded spelling.⁶

3. Evans, “Asa,” 470. Evans cites Williamson, *Chronicles*, 276–77.

4. The athbash version of Huldah-the-prophetess is) qwry)) txd. Its three spellings in Genesis 35 use letters from consecutive text words starting at verse 7, words 11 and 12, and verse 8, word 2.

5. Pairing “burial” and “in-Samaria” are 1 Kgs 16:28; 22:37; 2 Kgs 10:35, 13:9, 13; 14:16. Second Chronicles 22:9 also has this combination.

6. l mh+, a Huldah athbash, runs from word 2 through word 6 in the final verse of Psalm 39.

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This book began Huldah's biography with her year of death, 564 BCE. Now that biography turns to the first of two dates that Scripture openly certifies—the year 622 BCE.

622: AT EIGHTEEN, HULDAH CONSULTED ON SCROLL

In 622 BCE, during repairs to the Jerusalem temple, workmen discovered what they thought to be an ancient scroll⁷ (experts think that this “book of the law” included what is now part of Deuteronomy. Further, the opinion of some is that reformers planted the scroll for discovery because they wanted to centralize worship at a cleansed Jerusalem temple). Officials carried the scroll to King Josiah who, upon hearing its contents, ordered further inquiry “of the LORD” (2 Kgs 22:8–13). A delegation “went to the prophetess Huldah the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she resided in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter, where they consulted her” (2 Kgs 22:14). Scripture tells us then that Huldah was a prophetess—one of the OT's seven female prophets—and of sufficient renown to be consulted on the important matter of the scroll. At that time, Huldah lived in the Second Quarter with her husband Shallum, a court functionary.

The Second Quarter was a residential district within Jerusalem. The single Hebrew word for it means “second,” but can also mean “double” or “copy.”⁸ According to Wilda Gafney, the term is associated with repetitive teaching. Gafney notes that the Targums say Huldah “lives ‘in the House of Instruction.’”⁹ This is not only plausible but also likely, given what we now know about Huldah's writing accomplishments. Also, the text seems to go out of its way to mention something not germane to the story. The word appears in Scripture as a Jerusalem location three times.¹⁰ Since the adjacent text word holds a Huldah anagram, the term “Second Quarter” appears to be associated only with the prophetess.

7. Scripture says that this happened during King Josiah's eighteenth year, which includes most of 622 and a short period in 621 BCE. For ease of notation, this book uses 622.

8. BDB 1041; Herion, “Second Quarter,” 1065.

9. Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam*, 192 n. 106.

10. 2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22; Zeph 1:10.

640: HULDAH'S BIRTH YEAR

How old would Huldah have been when the group consulted her in 622? The year of her death is established at 564, fifty-eight years later. That year of death seems as solid as such things can be. Suppose that Huldah was eighteen when she first prophesied. Adding eighteen to those fifty-eight years would bring her age at death to seventy-six and set her birth year at 640. The year of birth, 640, can vary but, for the sake of this biography, a year or two either way makes little difference. If Huldah had been born in 642 and died in 564, she would then have been seventy-eight at death and twenty when she prophesied about the scroll. If instead Huldah came into the world four years later, then she would have prophesied at age sixteen and died at seventy-four. According to Scripture, Huldah was married when Josiah's committee asked her to consult on the temple scroll. There is no firm data on women's ages at marriage, but experts suggest that they married while still in their teens and sometimes in their early teens.¹¹ All in all, it is reasonable to assume that Huldah was born in 640 BCE, was eighteen years of age when she saw the scroll in 622, and was seventy-six in 564 when she died.

605: HULDAH, THIRTY-SIX, WATCHES HER HUSBAND BURN JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY

Anagrams offer another firm date in Huldah's life. Early in King Jehoiakim's reign, Jeremiah's disciple Baruch read an entire scroll of his master to a gathering of notables. The prophecy was about the disasters that Babylon would bring upon Judah. The occasion was a fast called for "all the people *in Jerusalem* [H] and all the people who came from the towns of Judah *to Jerusalem* [H]." Continuing, "Baruch read . . . from the scroll, in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah son of Shaphan the secretary, which was in the upper court, at the entry of the New Gate of the LORD's house" (Jer 36:9–10). The year was 604, eighteen years after Huldah had given her judgment about the rediscovered temple scroll. Note that this first reading was in the scribes' room of the temple and that two anagrams tell us that Huldah was present. Huldah, even while married to Judah's king, may have been a practicing scribe.

The second reading took place immediately afterward in a different scribes' room—that of the palace. "Micaiah son of Gemariah son of

11. King and Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel*, 37.

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Shaphan . . . went down to the king's house, into the secretary's chamber; and all the officials were sitting there . . . And Micaiah told them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the scroll in the hearing of the people" (Jer 36:11, 13). Then the officials sent for Baruch and instructed him, "Bring the scroll that you read in the hearing of the people, and . . . sit down and read it *to us* [H]. So Baruch read it to them" (Jer 36:14–15). Again, the anagram announced Huldah's presence.¹²

The officials in the scribes' room recognized that King Jehoiakim himself had to hear Jeremiah's message, damning though it must have been. Those officials also understood that Baruch and Jeremiah might not survive such a hearing. First they told Baruch that he and Jeremiah must hide. Then they brought the scroll to the king. Jehudi, a royal official, "read it to the king and *all* [H] the officials who stood beside the king" (Jer 36:21). The italicized word "all" contains yet another Huldah anagram (the literal Hebrew of "all" is "in the ears of"). What comes next is one of the most chilling eyewitness accounts in Scripture: "Now the king was sitting in his winter apartment . . . and there was a fire burning in the brazier before him. As Jehudi read three or four columns, the king would cut them off with a penknife and throw them into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire that was in the brazier. Yet neither the king, nor any of his servants who heard all these words, was alarmed" (Jer 36:22–24).

The scroll was read in three places: in the scribes' room of the temple, in the scribes' room of palace, and in the king's apartment. Huldah's anagrams mark all three, implying that she was present in each location. If any specific places can ever lay claim to being a birthplace of Hebrew Scripture, it is those two scribal rooms. Perhaps Huldah composed some of hers within the temple or the king's palace. Indeed, there is an excellent chance that Huldah herself helped to write this very account in Jer 36. Consider the Huldah anagrams and the author's eyewitness command of the story. And besides, we know already that she probably composed at least part of the introduction to Jeremiah's book. Moreover—and at least as important as the anagrams—there is zero probability that the Huldah coding in Jer 36 can be coincidental.¹³

12. A Huldah anagram shows that she was also present when another prophet, Uriah son of Shemaiah, denounced Jerusalem and Judah "in words exactly like those of Jeremiah" (Jer 26:20). King Jehoiakim sent agents to seek him out in Egypt. They then brought him to Jerusalem, where the king had him killed.

13. Jeremiah 36 contains 201 coded Huldah spellings in the chapter's 618 text words. Scripture's other 304,878 text words have 46,894 spellings. A chi-square test

The chapter teems with the names of notables of Jehoiakim's time. Among them are six members of the Shaphan group—a term that identifies those who collectively produced several hundred chapters of Scripture.¹⁴ Group members whose names appear in Jer 36 include Gemariah, Achbor, Micaiah, Baruch, Jeremiah, and Shaphan himself, who once had served as King Josiah's secretary (Huldah was also a member, though the Jeremiah chapter does not mention her). The named presence of this many group members suggests that they were collectively responsible for writing Jer 36. However, there is no coded evidence that they had any hand in it. Indirectly, this points to Huldah as one of the authors. This writer's current research strongly indicates that most writings in Scripture had more than a single author. Perhaps unknown others collaborated on composing that Jeremiah chapter. But for now, Huldah should head any list of suspects.

597: AT FORTY-THREE, QUEEN MOTHER HULDAH EXILED TO BABYLON

Biblical authors seemed to enjoy playing with anagrams. Sometimes they shamelessly altered text words so as to supply the lacking final letter needed to complete a desired anagram. Take, for example, the name Abigail. It appears sixteen times in Scripture, four of which include the prefix *waw* signifying “and.” This added letter completes a Huldah anagram formed from “Abigail,” who was one of Scripture's heroines. In a fifth case (2 Sam 25:18), however, the author simply inserts a *waw* into the midst of the name's other letters, to the confusion of future scholars.¹⁵ The result achieved is that five of Abigail's sixteen appearances conceal Huldah anagrams—a balance that has zero probability of coincidence.

Here is another example of anagram whimsy. Whoever wrote the book of Esther liked to crowd multiple anagrams into single text words. In Esth 9:2, the word “and-the-satrap” contains at least a dozen different anagrams, five of which are variations of Ezra. Other text words in Esth 8 conceal six and nine anagrams, respectively.¹⁶

Another favorite practice was pairing anagrams within single text words. This provides the modern analyst with an extraordinary

shows that the Jer 36 spellings have zero probability of coincidental occurrence.

14. Appendix 1 of Kavanagh, *The Shaphan Group*, lists the chapters of Scripture written by the Shaphan group.

15. The Huldah anagram is *gbyw* and the altered Abigail word is *lygwby*.

16. The text words in Esth 8 are word 22 in verse 9 and word 15 in verse 10.

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opportunity—to track such pairings across the breadth of Scripture and then to draw conclusions about relationships from those pairings. The initial question, of course, is whether the pairing is statistically exceptional. If so, the next question is why the author(s) intentionally made the pairing. Here is an important example. Within Scripture, anagrams for “Huldah” appear 1,773 times, while those for Jehoiachin occur in an even 1,800 places. Well and good, but strangely, within the ocean of Scripture’s text words, Jehoiachin and Huldah anagrams find 246 text words in common. The odds are long against having even one of Scripture’s three hundred thousand-plus words house both a Huldah and a Jehoiachin anagram. Having them coincidentally share 246 text words has no measurable probability.¹⁷ Those who wrote those 246 text words purposefully fashioned those Huldah-Jehoiachin connections. Why did they do so?

Only two possible relationships come to mind: wife-husband and mother-son. Considering the first, a good estimate of Huldah’s birth year is 640. Second Kings 24:8 says Jehoiachin was eighteen in 587 when he assumed the crown. Simple arithmetic puts their age difference at thirty-five years, which almost eliminates a relationship between husband and wife.¹⁸

That leaves the mother-son possibility, though this has a major difficulty. Second Kings 24:8 reads, “Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months *in Jerusalem* [H]. His mother’s name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.” Scripture claims that the name of Jehoiachin’s mother was Nehushta, not Huldah. A number of things belie that. First, the word translated as “in Jerusalem” contains a Huldah anagram. It comes just three text words before Nehushta. Next, Nehushta’s father is said to be Elnathan of Jerusalem and his father, in turn, probably was Achbor, a member of the delegation that visited Huldah.¹⁹ It could be said that Nehushta’s family line leads straight to Huldah. The chain is Nehushta–Elnathan–Achbor, and Achbor called upon Huldah. If Nehushta was really Huldah, it seems that her own grandfather was one of those appointed by King Josiah to seek her advice, which accords with the pious-fraud theory of the temple scroll. That is, in 522 BCE, reformers—including Achbor—planted the scroll in the temple, confident that word of its discovery would reach the king.

17. A Venn diagram produces these chi-square proportions: $246 / 1,527$ and $1,554 / 302,169$. The P value = 0.

18. Second Chronicles 36:9 says that Jehoiachin was only eight when he began to reign. This would make the wife-husband disparity forty-three years rather than thirty-five.

19. Ward, “Elnathan,” 94.

Nehushta means “snake,” one of the symbols of Ashtoreth—a cult associated with Judah’s queen mothers. The name is also rooted in the word for bronze. The reformer king Hezekiah “*broke in pieces*” (a Huldah anagram) the bronze serpent named Nehushtan that Moses had fashioned (2 Kgs 18:4).²⁰ It appears that naming Jehoiachin’s queen mother Nehushta was a scriptural insult aimed at Huldah. Though interesting, these things are not decisive. What is decisive follows—two Jeremiah anagrams decide the question of the proper name of King Jehoiachin’s mother. The word *gebira* is the formal title for queen mother. The term appears twice in the book of Jeremiah and another four times elsewhere. Only the Jeremiah occurrences prefix the letter *waw* to *gebira* so as to allow formation of a Huldah anagram (Jer 13:18, 29:2).²¹ Here is one of those verses: “This was after King Jeconiah, and *the queen mother* [H], the court officials, the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the artisans, and the smiths had departed from Jerusalem” (Jer 29:2). The italicized words carry the Huldah anagram. Jeremiah uses the same anagram-bearing text word in 13:18, which predicts the doom of the king and his queen mother. The two Jeremiah anagrams determine the proper name of King Jehoiachin’s mother. The queen mother’s name was Huldah—not Nehushta. The term implying “snake woman” could have been invented to insult, but it also could have been the cultic name that Huldah used when she conducted worship before the Asherah goddess.

It is time to see where we have come and where we have still to go. Table 3.1a shows us. The shaded lines on the table are those already discussed. The parameters of Huldah’s life were 640 and 564—her estimated years of birth and of death. In 622, the committee of court officials sought her advice as a prophetess on the recently discovered temple scroll. In 604, eighteen years later, Huldah witnessed King Jehoiakim burn Jeremiah’s prophetic book one page at a time. Most of these events are documented by anagrams. The year 597 saw Huldah take the title of queen mother as her son Jehoiachin ascended the throne of Judah. Within a few months, however, both were forced into exile in Babylon. Referring again to the table, it is time to reach back to 615, the approximate year in which Huldah married Jehoiakim—a prince at the time—and bore him a son. The remainder of the chapter will cover this marriage and birth.

20. See Num 21:4–9 for the Moses account.

21. The word *hrybgl w* in Jer 13:18 houses the Huldah anagram *gbyw*. Jeremiah 29:2 is similar.

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615: AT TWENTY-FIVE, HULDAH MARRIES JEHOIAKIM, DELIVERS SON JEHOIACHIN

Given that Jehoiachin was eighteen when Nebuchadnezzar took the young king and his mother to Babylonia in 597 (2 Kgs 24:8), Huldah bore her son in 615 ($597 + 18 = 615$). Because she became queen mother when Jehoiachin ascended the throne, Huldah would then have been the wife of his father, King Jehoiakim. Since their son Jehoiachin was eighteen in 597, she would have married the father in, say, 616 while King Josiah still reigned. Keep in mind that when the delegation first called upon Huldah six years earlier, she was the wife of one Shallum, “son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe” (2 Kgs 22:14). The Kings author enumerates two generations for Shallum, presumably to highlight Huldah's non-royal marriage. How does Huldah move from marriage with a commoner to marriage with a king-to-be? Because Scripture does not directly address this question, here is a scenario that can fit the historical situation.

Huldah was surpassingly attractive—beautiful, skilled, accomplished, and a magnet to men. She was a woman in a thousand, perhaps in a million—a woman fit for a king. But what happened to Shallum the

wardrobe keeper, Huldah's first husband? While this is as yet unknown, there could be a real-life parallel between Shallum and Uriah the Hittite of David's time. King David arranged to have Uriah killed in battle after impregnating Uriah's wife Bathsheba.²² Shallum may have perished in a similar way.

However, the love between Huldah and Shallum seems to have been imperishable, for there is evidence that Shallum survived his former wife's marriage to royalty. Chapter 7 of the Song of Solomon supports coded spellings well beyond coincidence for both Shallum and Huldah. In addition, Song 7:6 addresses the woman as "O loved one, *delectable* [H] maiden!" The opening verse exclaims, "O queenly maiden!" Elsewhere, the woman's lover says, "A king is held captive in the tresses" of her hair (Song 7:5). These verses imply that the lovers continued to be intimate after Huldah remarried a prince or king. Future work—perhaps done years from now and certainly by others—might address such questions.

Moving to chapter 4 of Song of Songs, except for its final verse, the chapter's words are spoken entirely by the man. That man probably is Shallum, because chapter 4 has a disproportionate number of coded Shallum spellings—plus three Huldah anagrams. Here are the closing words: ". . . *flowing streams* [H] from Lebanon. Awake, O north wind . . . Blow upon my garden . . . that its fragrance may be wafted abroad. Let my beloved come to his garden, and eat its choicest fruits" (Song 4:15–16).

But it seems that Huldah attracted others besides Shallum. When one of King Josiah's sons saw her, his conversation with his parents might have gone like this: Samson's "father and mother said to him, 'Is there not a woman among your kin, or among all our people, that you must go to take a wife from the *uncircumcised* [H] Philistines?' But Samson said to his father, 'Get her for me, because she pleases me'" (Judg 14:3). The passage contains a Huldah anagram derived from "uncircumcised" that probably refers to her Moabite blood. Samson's father could have represented King Josiah, but which of Josiah's four sons was Samson? The obvious choice is Jehoiakim, who subsequently became king and fathered Jehoiachin with Huldah. The marriage followed by the birth would have taken place around 615 BCE, while Josiah was still on the throne.²³ Hopes would have

22. Huldah coded spellings throughout the David-Bathsheba tale in 2 Samuel 11 are respectable, but not statistically significant.

23. Possibly levirate marriage was involved. If so, then Huldah married one of Josiah's other sons before wedding Jehoiakim. Johanan, who did not reign (and probably died when a youth), is one candidate. Shallum, the youngest son, is another. Separately, Huldah in 622 seems to be angry at Josiah, for she says in 2 Kgs 22:14, "Tell the

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been high, the Josiah reforms well advanced, and Judah still independent—though precariously so.

Several passages tell what Huldah thought about the birth of a royal son. The first is Hannah's vow to God about a male son: "If only you will . . . *remember me* [H, Jehoiachin], and . . . give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head" (1 Sam 1:11). Further along, the text contains a Cyrus anagram, so the passage's composition date probably was long after Jehoiachin's birth. Whatever that date, Jehoiachin did not become a nazirite, nor did he live like one.

The next birth passage is a classic. The words are among the most celebrated in Scripture, in part because George Frederic Handel used them in *The Messiah*. The biblical source is Isaiah 9.

²The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. ³You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. ⁴For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. ⁵For all the boots of the *tramping* [Jehoiachin] warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire. ⁶For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, *Mighty* [Jehoiachin] God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Isa 9:2–7 H1–6)

Shown above are some of the verses that hold twenty-six coded spellings of Huldah variations. Almost 90 percent of the text words conceal Huldah encodings. However, there is a strange absence of coding in vv. 4–5. That section includes a Jehoiachin anagram ("tramping"), and another ("mighty") appears in v. 6. Not quoted above are vv. 8–11. These are also densely encoded, but within text that is hostile to Huldah. Altogether, vv. 2–11 are statistically significant in their Huldah encodings. There is

man" instead of the more courteous "Tell the king." The Talmud calls her haughty for doing so (*Meg* 2.6 in Neusner, *Talmud*, 7:72).

zero probability that they occurred coincidentally.²⁴ Aside from a small clump in vv. 14–15, the second half of Isaiah 9 is bare of coded Huldah spellings. Enemies seem to have appended to Huldah's original paean of thankfulness a verbal attack on her, Jacob, and perhaps others.²⁵ In summary, because of coding and anagrams, Huldah certainly composed vv. 2–7. The text after v. 7 originated with Huldah's enemies.

Contemporary scholars differ widely on the context appropriate for Isa 9:2–7. Is the child pre-exilic, post-exilic, or even simply above history?²⁶ What person could have been described as “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”? Coding and anagrams allow us to conclude several things. First, Huldah composed this passage and the child announced in verse 6 was of royal blood. Also, the Jehoiachin anagrams strongly suggest that he himself was either the child or the child's father. In addition, Jehoiachin coding is strong throughout the passage.²⁷ If Jehoiachin was the *child*, then Huldah was the mother and the date of composition was 615.

But if Jehoiachin was the *father*, the Isaiah 9 passage's date should be advanced to mid-Exile, and Huldah herself was not the child's mother. At least one passage with a Huldah anagram supports this possibility. Solomon says in prayer that his father David walked before the Lord “*in uprightness* [H] of heart toward you; and you . . . have given him a son to sit on his throne today” (1 Kgs 3:6). Cyrus and Jehoiachin anagrams stand in the following verse, which dates the passage to the later 570s. As discussed elsewhere, Huldah equated Jehoiachin with King Solomon. This suggests that when Solomon spoke of receiving a son to sit upon David's throne, the thought was really Jehoiachin's. Perhaps the heir apparent was born in Egypt or en route to the recapture of Jerusalem.

In about 574 BCE the Cyrus-led forces took Jerusalem and began to reestablish the nation of Judah. During the short time that they held the city, the Jews probably installed Jehoiachin as king. If so, the newborn could have been his son. Isaiah 9, then, would have been written to paint his future. Something along these lines makes sense for two reasons. First, verses 3 through 5 are militant. Examples are “dividing plunder,” “on the

24. Isaiah 9:2–11 (H1–10) contains 26 Huldah coded spellings in 125 text words, while the remainder of HS has 2,657 such spellings in 305,371 text words. The chi-squared probability of coincidence equals zero.

25. A Jacob-Israel parallel in v. 8 refers to the prophet named Jacob.

26. Seitz, “First Isaiah,” 481.

27. Fifty Jehoiachin coded spellings within 125 text words yield a chi-square probability of 8.23×10^{-10} .

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day of Midian,” “trampling warriors,” and “garments rolled in blood.” The other reason Isa 9:2–7 might be dated after the rebels took Jerusalem is that the second part of Isaiah 9 sounds much like a description of Judah after neighboring fighters had slaughtered its defenders. That would account for the verbal attack on the prophet Jacob and the scorn heaped on the elders, dignitaries, and prophets who had led their people to ruin.

Here is an explanation that could fit the entire chapter. Huldah wrote some part of Isa 9:1–7 to celebrate Jehoiachin’s birth in 615. In about 574, she revised it to cover a different birth immediately after the Judahites had freed Jerusalem. But when the revolt failed, critics added vv. 8–21 to Huldah’s revised preface, mocking her vision of a new age under David in which “he will establish and uphold . . . with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore” (Isa 9:7). This sounds complex, but the compositional history of Isa 9 probably *is* complex. To complicate it further, 1 Chr 3:17–18 lists seven sons of Jehoiachin, and ration tablets excavated in Babylon name five Jehoiachin sons.²⁸ The year 592 is a sure date for one of the ration tablets. With so many princes on the scene, the weight of evidence could shift back toward a birth date of 615, with Jehoiachin himself as the “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” The mother of this extraordinary child would be the woman who composed the birth announcement—Huldah herself. However, the identity of the child in Isa 9 for now must remain unsettled.

A notable line from the book of Joel probably reflects upon Huldah’s Isaiah 9 vision. “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons *and your daughters* [Jehoiachin] shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see *visions* [H]” (Joel 2:28 H3:1). In the Hebrew, Joel 3 is a short insert between chapters 2 and 4. The insert’s three Huldah anagrams make it nearly certain that the Huldah connection is not coincidental.²⁹ The dreams-visions passage in Joel is by, or at the least about, Huldah the prophetess.

For some eighteen years, Huldah would have been a royal personage in Judah. By position, she was one of King Jehoiakim’s wives and, with the birth of Jehoiachin, she became a contender for queen mother. It stands to reason that someone of Huldah’s beauty and force of character would have become the first among equals. The Huldah anagram in this next verse about King David’s son Absalom suggests that she led in the court:

28. Weidner, “Jojachin,” 923–35; cited by Albright, “King Jehoiachin,” 52.

29. The chi-square probability is 4.18×10^{-3} that the three Huldah anagrams are not coincidental.

“Thus Absalom did to every Israelite who came to the king for judgment; so Absalom *stole* [H] the hearts of the people of Israel” (2 Sam 15:6). Also, Jehoiachin—like King David’s son Solomon—did not come to the throne as the eldest son. It appears that Huldah, like Solomon’s mother Bathsheba, engineered her son’s succession. This excerpt from First Kings gives that 597 drama a more ancient setting: “But the priest Zadok . . . and the prophet Nathan . . . and David’s own *warriors* [H, Jehoiachin] did not side with Adonijah. Adonijah *sacrificed* [Jehoiachin] . . . fatted cattle . . . and he invited all his brothers, the king’s sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, but he did not invite the prophet Nathan . . . or *the warriors* [H, Jehoiachin] or his brother Solomon” (1 Kgs 1:8–10). The rest of this lengthy chapter relates how Bathsheba, Nathan, and the king’s warriors secured approval from the dying King David and stage-managed the anointing and crowning of Solomon—even as his brother Adonijah celebrated what he anticipated would be his own enthronement.

The anagrams cited above only hint at the truth behind this text. In addition, 1 Kings 1 conceals *over six hundred* coded Jehoiachin spellings. These are formed from natural or athbash spellings of all six versions of that person’s Hebrew name. Probabilities for both the Huldah and the Jehoiachin encodings make it certain that these are no accident.³⁰ Behind the story of Solomon’s investiture seems to be an eyewitness version of how Jehoiachin became king. Huldah and her group ignored primogeniture and contrived to crown her son Jehoiachin (he was to reign for only three months before Nebuchadnezzar sent him and his mother into exile).

Another anagram in 1 Kings 1 indicates that Shaphan, King Josiah’s ex-Secretary, assisted Huldah in the coup (Shaphan became a leader of the exiles in Egypt after about 586). The chapter also has a single Cyrus anagram that would date 1 Kings 1 to the decade following 575. These also support the theory that Huldah helped to write the chapter.

The next chapter will resume Huldah’s biography, picking up its thread when she became queen mother and then soon after was exiled to Babylon with her son Jehoiachin. The date is 597 and Huldah is by now middle-aged.

30. Huldah coded spellings total 190 in 1 Kings 1, with 32,852 in the rest of Hebrew Scripture; Jehoiachin spellings are at 622, with 44,934 in Scripture’s remainder. Chapter 1 contains 813 text words and the rest of Scripture has 304,683. Chi-square tests produce P values of 9.79×10^{-23} for Huldah occurrences and 0 for those of Jehoiachin. Coincidence for each name is out of the question. Spellings for each name cover forty-seven of the chapter’s fifty-three verses, so it can be assumed that the same author(s) wrote the entire chapter.