

## EVERY WOMAN IN THE BIBLE:

### HULDAH:

*(II Kings 22:14. II Chronicles 34: 23-28.) ( A Hebrew prophetess to whom King Josiah sent his high priest Hekiah to ask concerning the book, found in the Temple. She tells him that, because of idolatry, Jerusalem will be destroyed. She prophesies that King Josiah will be spared.)*

*DATE: About 625 B.C.*

*NAME: Hulduh (HUL-duh: "weasel" (!)!*

*Main Contribution: A prophetess consulted by King Josiah when workers discovered a lost book of God's Law.*

### **Huldah's Role In Scripture:**

Though many of the Hebrews were given to idolatry and were ignorant of God, still the lamp of Divine truth was kept burning in the heart of a woman. That woman was Huldah.

Huldah possessed two great qualities, righteousness, and prophetic insight. She used these qualities very wisely. This prophetic power, was never given to the undeserving, but was given to her because she loved God with all her heart.

Huldah lived during critical years in Judah's history. For over a half a century, kings with NO loyalty to the Lord had ruled, and most of Judah's people had turned to paganism. Then Josiah became King and set out to lead his people back to God.

In the process of repairing the temple a lost book of God's Law, generally thought to be Deuteronomy, was discovered. When Josiah read the lost book, he was shocked and shaken. Josiah had not fully understood how guilty his people were of departing from God, nor had he known the punishments Scripture decreed for their sins. He must have known about Huldah's ability, and immediately the King sent representatives to inquire about what God wanted and what He would do.

Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah were sent with the Book of the Law; (which was recently discovered during repairs in the Temple at Jerusalem) to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, who was the keeper of the wardrobe, meaning either the Priest's or the Kings wardrobe; probably the King's. The reasoning of this thought is that it would place her close to life inside the palace and Temple. She lived in the Second District in Jerusalem. Jewish tradition is that Huldah taught publicly in a school.

Other tradition has it that she taught and preached to women. What is fascinating is that these representatives were sent to Huldah, a prophetess. Clearly, Huldah had established a reputation as God's spokesperson. We can infer that she was a woman of distinction. The messengers he sent were his high priest, Hilkiah, who had found hidden away this amazing roll of manuscript, the lost Book of the Law. Another messenger was Shaphan, the scribe in the Temple, to whom Hilkiah had first taken the lost book. Parts of this book are still found in Deuteronomy. It is thought to be the first book of the Bible that was canonized (to glorify, to consider or treat as holy). King Josiah had faith in Huldah's spiritual powers and wanted her to tell him whether the book was genuine or not. We are even more impressed when we realize that the prophet Habakkuk, whose book is part of the Old Testament, was living at this time. Yet Huldah was clearly the King's first choice when seeking to know God's will.

Only a deeply devout woman, one of real intellectual attainments would have been sought out by a King and a Priest to give her opinion as to whether or not this scroll was indeed the word of the Lord. It turned out to be one of the most important scrolls in the history of Israel.

His choice was wise, for Huldah had a word from God for the young king. God would indeed bring calamity on His sinning people. This is what the LORD says; “I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people – all the curses written in the book that has been read in the presence of the King of Judah. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all that their hands have made, my anger will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched. Tell the King of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before God when you heard what He spoke against this place and its people, and because you humbled yourself before me and tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. Now I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place and on those who live here.'” But because Josiah's heart was tender and he had responded when he heard God's Word, judgment would not fall during Josiah's reign.

Commentators have questioned why King Josiah sent his personal messengers to consult a woman. Why were they not sent to a man? Josiah, who had come to rule at age 8, doubtless had learned to relay a great deal on his mother Jeddiah as queen-mother.

We know little about her, but we do know that Josiah's father Amon was murdered in his own palace by his servants because of idolatry. But King Josiah centralized religion in Jerusalem, exalted the Levites, threw out the shrines of the false gods, and led his people to new spiritual heights. We naturally assume that the godly Josiah had a godly mother. Because of her, he would have a sympathetic appreciation of a woman as righteous and as spiritually dis-concerning as Huldah?

Noteworthy it is that in the short account of Huldah's prophecy the scribe repeated four times her phrase, “Thus saith the Lord,” making us know that Huldah did not think of herself as an oracle, but only as a channel through which God's word came.

Huldah' prophecy gave King Josiah greater courage to put into action the laws written in the book of the Law, which had been sent to her for verification. After this, Josiah had the scroll read in the house of the Lord and made a covenant to walk after the Lord and to keep his commandments. And because of it, he fought evil in Judah more zealously.

High regard he had for Huldah's prophecy when he acted so promptly, and when he also sought to make himself more worthy of the promised forbearance of God, though he knew the threatened evil to his country and his people could not be averted.

Only a woman who studied immutable spiritual laws and who prayed unceasingly could have been given insight into the mystery of the future. But Huldah was woman who could throw back the veil of Israel's future because she lived so close to God.

### **EXPLORING HULDAH'S RELATIONSHIP'S:**

Each verse where Huldah's name is mentioned refers to her as a prophetess and as the wife of Shallum. It is significant that Deborah was identified in much the same way. She too was a prophetess and also a wife. (Judges 4:4).

### **HULDAH: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY:**

- Huldah experienced no conflict between the roles of prophetess and wife. Huldah's husband did not feel threatened by the fact that his wife had an important ministry.
- A woman can have a ministry and still have a reputation as a good wife. Marriage and ministry are not necessarily in conflict.

## **VASTHI**

### **Esther 1:10-22.**

Vashti was the principle wife of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes), around 475 B.C. Her name means “beautiful woman,” and she was included in Scripture because of her “stand for women's rights” or perhaps for her natural obstinacy – led her to refuse the King's command to appear at a banquet he was hosting. Vashti's subsequent divorce by Xerxes led to the search for a new queen of Persia that resulted in the crowning of Esther. This enabled Esther to save the Jewish people from extermination.

Aside from the significance, the account in the first chapter of Esther is fascinating for its insight into the terror assertive women can strike into the hearts of some men. Then the King said to the wise men who understood the times (for this was the King's manner toward law and justice... )“What shall we do to Queen Vashti, according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus brought to her by the eunuchs.)”

And Mecucan answered before the King and the Princes: “Queen Vashti has not only wronged the King, but also all the Princes, and all the people who are in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the Queen's behavior will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes, when they report “King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in before him, but she did not come.” This very day the noble ladies of Persia and Media will say to all the King's officials that they have heard of the behavior of the Queen. Thus there will be excessive contempt and wrath. If it please the King, let a royal decree go out from him and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it will not be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus, and let the King give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the King's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout the empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.” (Esther 1:13; 15-20).

As we might expect, this recommendation pleases the King and he acted immediately to protect husbands everywhere from their wives.

What makes this account even more humorous is that the husband's position as ruler of the household was thoroughly established in both law and custom in the ancient world. How amazing that the King and Princes of such a mighty kingdom felt so insecure in their home life!

### **VASHTI: AN EXAMPLE FOR TODAY:**

- The personalities of the man and woman involved in a marriage will do far more to determine the character of the relationship and the role of each person than will the laws and expectations of society.
- What is important in a marriage is that a husband and wife love one another completely and seek what is best for their spouse.

*Anymouse.*