

The Keeper of the Wardrobe (2 Kgs 22:14 || 2 Chr 34:22): A Historical and Exegetical Study

Stanisław Paprocki

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

stanislaw.paprocki@wp.pl

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7043-2501>

ABSTRACT: This article analyses the office of the ‘keeper of the wardrobe’ (שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים *šōmēr habbēgādīm*) mentioned in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22, marginal in exegetical literature, yet important for reconstructing the realities of ancient Israel. The study presents three main interpretations of this role: keeper of the Temple wardrobe, overseer of the royal wardrobe, and an official with an undefined role. A philological and comparative analysis, supported by rabbinical sources and the testimony of Josephus, indicates that the keeping of the wardrobe had practical, prestigious, and symbolic significance, closely linked to institutions of worship and authority. The findings open new perspectives for research into the functioning of temples and the role of garments in the religious and political structures of the ancient Near East.

KEYWORDS: Shallum, Huldah, keeper, keeper of the wardrobe, temple

The problem of the role of the so-called keeper of the wardrobe (שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים *šōmēr habbēgādīm*) is rarely addressed in exegetical literature. Auxiliary tools used in biblical studies, such as lexicons, theological dictionaries, and biblical encyclopedias, at best mention this office only in passing, often as brief references without any in-depth historical or cultural analysis. What is more, interpretations available in the literature differ widely on the fundamental question: What was the role of this official, and what resources did he oversee?

Based on key biblical texts – primarily 2 Kgs 22:14 (LXX 4 Reg 22:14) and 2 Chr 34:22 – there are three main interpretations: (1) Shallum, mentioned in both passages, was the overseer of liturgical, i.e. priestly, wardrobe;¹ (2) he was the keeper of the royal wardrobe, serving as a court official;² (3) the question of the identity of the wardrobe and its keeper is, for some commentators, such as Rashi, secondary, one that can be resolved in any way

¹ J.A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (NAC 9; Brentwood, TN: Broadman & Holman 1994) 378; R.B. Dillard, *2 Chronicles* (WBC 15; Waco, TX: Word Books 1987) 281; J.M. Hicks, *1 & 2 Chronicles* (College Press NIV Commentary. Old Testament Series; Joplin, MO: College Press 2001) 516; A. Tronina, *Druga Księga Kronik. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* (NKB.ST 10/2; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2016) 417.

² E.L. Curtis – A.A. Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1910) 509.

without significant implications for the interpretation of the text.³ In this context, it is reasonable to ask several research questions: Who was the keeper of the wardrobe? Was this office held by Shallum, his ancestor, or perhaps, as some readings of the LXX suggest, his wife Huldah? What exactly was kept: royal or ritual wardrobe? What were the duties of this office, and where was it located?

The lack of clear answers to these questions is the premise of this study. This article aims to provide a multifaceted analysis of the office of the keeper of the wardrobe in historical, philological, and literary contexts. The first part of the study will attempt to reconstruct the office historically, based on comparative data from the ancient Near East. This will be followed by a critical analysis of the texts of 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 in Hebrew and Greek. Next, the figures of Huldah and Shallum will be discussed in the context of their possible membership in the Temple elite. The location of the office and the nature of the resources entrusted to it will also be analysed. Finally, the potential continuation of this role in New Testament times and extra-biblical evidence, including rabbinical and historical sources, such as the Mishnah *Shekalim* and Josephus' account of the keeping of priestly garments in the Antonia Fortress, will be considered. The article concludes with a summary of the conclusions and an indication of potential directions for further research.

1. The Official in Charge of the Wardrobe in Near Eastern Traditions: The Case of the Role of *ša ina muḫḫi ṣubāti* and Its Parallels in the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic Literature

In administrative texts from Mesopotamia, dating from the late Babylonian period and almost contemporary with the oldest elements of biblical tradition, the title *ša ina muḫḫi ṣubāti* is attested, literally: 'he who [is] over the wardrobe,' performing the role of an overseer of the wardrobe, presumably in a ritual or royal context.⁴ This title indicates the existence of a specialised office responsible for keeping, maintaining, and handling ceremonial or representative garments.

A similar role is found in the Hebrew Bible, where historical narratives related to the reign of King Josiah mention a 'keeper of the wardrobe' (שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים *šōmēr habbēgādīm*) in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22. Although this role does not figure in the plot of these

3 Cf. Rashi, *Commentary on II Chronicles* 34, 22, 2. Similar views are held by J.A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Kings* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1951) 526–528; T.L. Constable, "2 Kings," *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. I. Old Testament* (eds. J.F. Walvoord – R.B. Zuck) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books 1985) 582; L.M. Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos Old Testament Commentary 9; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 2014) 504; R.W. Klein, *2 Chronicles: A Commentary* (ed. P.D. Hanson) (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2012) 504.

4 'Keeper of the (divine) wardrobe'; see I.J. Gelb et al. (eds.), *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. XVI. Š (Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago 1962) 225.

passages, its presence in the biographical description testifies to the social significance of the office, which may have been connected with Temple or court administration.

A similar official title also appears in the account of the temple of Baal in Samaria (2 Kgs 10:22), where the overseer of the wardrobe is mentioned as לְאִשָּׁר עַל־הַמִּלְתָּהּ (*la'āšer 'al-hammeltaḥā*⁵) 'the one who [is] over the wardrobe'. The similarity of this term to Babylonian terminology suggests the existence of a common, supra-regional category of offices responsible for vestments, both liturgical and representative.

Traces of a similar role have also been preserved in rabbinical tradition. In Talmudic literature (b.*Berakhot* 56a), there are two Aramaic terms: בסטייר (*bstyrr*) and טורזיא (*twrzy*) which may indicate the cultural memory of a profession related to the keeping or supervision of the wardrobe.

A compilation of data from Babylonian documents, the Hebrew Bible, and rabbinical literature provides an outline of the office of the 'keeper of the wardrobe' as a position of significant administrative importance. Regardless of the local cultural context, the keeper of the wardrobe appears to play not only a technical role but also a prestigious one, linked to the functioning of institutions of power and worship.

2. The Keeper of the Wardrobe in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22: Analysis of Textual Differences and Identification against the Masoretic Tradition and the Septuagint

References to the 'keeper of the wardrobe' in 2 Kgs (22:14) and 2 Chr (34:22) provide interesting comparative material for research into the textual transmission of the Hebrew Bible. Although both narratives describe the same event – King Josiah sending a delegation to the prophetess Huldah – they differ in redaction and vocabulary, as well as in the identification of characters and the attribution of their roles. This section aims to highlight these differences in light of a comparison between the Masoretic texts and the Septuagint versions, and to point out possible historical and philological premises that may help interpret the title 'keeper of the wardrobe' (שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים *šōmēr habb'gādīm*) in its biblical and extra-biblical contexts. Particular attention is paid to semantic analysis and possible functional shifts of this office in the traditions of Deuteronomy and Chronicles.

2 Kgs 22:14 (LXX 4 Reg. 22:14⁵)

MT:

וַיֵּלֶךְ חִלְקִיָּהוּ הַכֹּהֵן וְאַחֲיָהוּ וְעֶבְכָּזָר וְשָׁפָן וַעֲשָׂהוּ אֶל־חִלְדָּה הַנְּבִיאָה אֲשֶׁתוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן־חֲרָחִס שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים
וְהִיא יֹשֶׁבֶת בִּירוּשָׁלַם בְּמִשְׁנֶה וַיִּדְּבְרוּ אֵלֶיהָ:

⁵ All quotations of the LXX come from A. Rahlfs – R. Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes Alfred Rahlfs. Editio altera quam recognovit et emendavit Robert Hanhart*, 2 ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2006; reprint 2019).

the author of the Chronicles, who often marginalises or omits personal details in favour of emphasising central theological themes, such as divine approval of the ruler's reformist actions or the hierarchy of priestly roles.

Both texts also provide a similar abbreviated genealogy of Shallum [Sellem], limited to two generations: his father and grandfather. In the genealogy of the prophetess Huldah's husband, we find variations in the names of both Shallum's father and grandfather.

In 2 Kgs 22:14, the name of Shallum's father is rendered תִּקְוָה (*tiq'wā^h*). This name, in addition to its noun meaning 'hope' (cf. Ruth 1:12; Job 5:16), is also attested as a male proper name (see Ezra 10:15). This variant is confirmed in the Syrian manuscripts (S), as well as in the testimonies of S^A and S^W, and in Lucian's revision of the Septuagint (S^L), which suggests their dependence on the Deuteronomistic tradition.⁹

In the parallel account in 2 Chr 34:22, the variant form of the prophetess Huldah's father-in-law's name is found, illustrating the *qere-ketiv* phenomenon characteristic of the Masoretic tradition. In this case, the written form (*ketiv*) is תֹּקְהַת (*tôḳahat*) while the read form (*qere*) is תִּקְהַת (*tāq'hat*). This discrepancy is both graphic and phonological and may result from subsequent orthographic or phonetic adaptation to ease pronunciation or to adapt the form to local reading traditions. The words differ slightly in the Hebrew consonantal text (תֹּקְהַת versus תִּקְהַת).¹⁰

However, the written form (*ketiv*) – תֹּקְהַת (*tôḳahat*) *wāw gādōl* (ו), may be the result of a secondary phonetic reinterpretation. This transformation may be due to dialectal influence or a scribal error, involving the transposition of the letters ק and ו in the name תִּקְוָה (*tiq'wā^h*). As a result, the graphic form תֹּקְהַת (*tôḳahat*) may have been created, with the secondary addition of the final ת, to preserve the correct structure of a name ending with a consonant.

In the Septuagint's account of 2 Kgs 22:14, the name of Shallum's father appears in different variants depending on the manuscript tradition. The Septuagint gives the form Θεκουε. The Codex Alexandrinus (S^A) contains the version θεκκουε, while the Codex Vaticanus (S^B) has the variant θεκκουαυ. The spelling of Huldah's father-in-law's name contains a scribe's error consisting of the mistaken repetition of the letter *kappa* (dittography). The change in the ending transmitted by S^B can be explained by the *assimilatio grammatica*. In the parallel passage (2 Chr 34:22), both the main text of the LXX and S^A transmit the name in the form Θακουαθ. The phonetic similarity of these variants to the name of the town of Tekoa (תִּקְוָה *tqôa* ' ; Θεκωε), known, among other things, as the birthplace of the prophet Amos (cf. Amos 1:1), may suggest a secondary reinterpretation of the name of Shallum's father by Greek redactors or translators. This transformation could

⁹ See 2 Kgs 22:14 in Rahlfs – Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta*.

¹⁰ Martin Noth considers the spelling of the name in the version transmitted by the Second Book of Chronicles (תֹּקְהַת *tôqabat*) to be original and claims that the name is not of Semitic origin. Cf. M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personennamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (BWANT 3/10; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1928; reprint Hildesheim: Olms 1966) 260.

have been graphic and phonetic, resulting in a name that sounds similar to the well-known Judean toponymy.

In light of this analysis, the form תִּקְוָה (*tiq^awā^h*) appears to be the original, both because of its Hebrew lexical roots and its widespread attestation across various textual families. The other variants can be interpreted as later contaminations or errors arising during oral and written transmission.

Further textual discrepancies are evident in the name of Shallum's grandfather. In 2 Kgs 22:14, the form חַרְחָס (*harḥas*) appears, while 2 Chr 34:22 contains the variant חַרְחָס (*harḥas*). Both forms are a *hapax legomenon* and do not appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, making it impossible to determine their semantics unequivocally.

From a textual criticism perspective, the preferred version may be the form חַרְחָס (*harḥas*), in line with the principle of *lectio difficilior potior* ('the more difficult reading is the stronger'). As it is rarer and morphologically more complex, it may be the original form of the simplified variant חַרְחָס (*hasrā^h*), which may have arisen as a result of redactional smoothing or a scribe's error. It should be noted, however, that the lack of etymological clarity of both names leaves the question of their originality partially open.

In the discussed passage of the Septuagint (LXX), the variant of the name Αραας attested by the Codex Vaticanus (ℳ^B) was adopted, designated in the critical apparatus of the LXX as the original variant of this manuscript (B). The textual variants of the name are heterogeneous and differ depending on the manuscript tradition. One variant of the Codex Vaticanus, designated B^C, transmits the form Αρδας. In turn, the Codex Luciani (ℳ^L) contains the spelling Αδρα, while the Codex Alexandrinus (ℳ^A) attests the form Αρας.

Another difficulty is the new district of Jerusalem (מִשְׁנֵה מִשְׁנֵה *mišnē^h*) mentioned in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22. The translator of the LXX, who probably did not understand the original meaning of the word (מִשְׁנֵה מִשְׁנֵה *mišnē^h*) transliterated it. The author of 4 Reg. 22:14 included in the translation the preposition בַּ (b^a) and the definite article הַ (*ha*) as well as the noun מִשְׁנֵה (*mišnē^h*), which is an adverbial of place. Therefore, the author attempted to translate them accurately as ἐν τῇ μασενα but transliterated the word (מִשְׁנֵה מִשְׁנֵה *mišnē^h*). The author of 2 Par. 34:22 does the same but omits the definite article and renders the troublesome expression as a proper name: ἐν μασανα. Based on the Hebrew text, it can be assumed that the prophetess Huldah lived in the 'second' place/district of Jerusalem, although it is uncertain whether this was clear to the translator of the Septuagint. The word μασανα is a *hapax legomenon* in the LXX. The Codex Vaticanus (ℳ^B^{min}) contains evidence of another spelling of this word: μασσαναι, while the Codex Alexandrinus (ℳ^A) gives the variant: μεσαναι.¹¹

After discussing the most significant differences found not only in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22, but also in their Greek equivalents, we now move on to analyse the highlighted phrases above.

11 See Rahlfs – Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta*.

From a morphological point of view, the word שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*) is a Qal part. m. s. st. cstr., which was formed from the verb שָׁמַר ('to keep'). In 2 Kgs 22:14, it is rendered in the *scriptio defectiva* שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*), while in the parallel passage in 2 Chr 34:22, it is rendered in the *scriptio plena* שׁוֹמֵר (*šōmēr*). The most popular Hebrew word for keeper is שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*). The *scriptio defectiva* form שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*) appears 40 times in the Old Testament, while the *scriptio plena* form שׁוֹמֵר (*šōmēr*) appears only 10 times. Both a lexical analysis of the words שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*) and נָצַר (*nōṣēr*) and an analysis of their contexts allow us to conclude that these words are synonyms. The lexeme נָצַר (*nōṣēr*) appears 12 times in the *scriptio defectiva* form, and twice in the *scriptio plena* (נֹצֵר *nōṣēr*). We note that both words, which have a similar morphological structure and similar semantics, rarely appear in the *scriptio plena* form (שׁוֹמֵר *šōmēr*; נֹצֵר *nōṣēr*). It is conceivable that the full notation of a given word was intended to limit its interpretative ambiguity (text without diacritics) by narrowing down the possible readings to one desired form, which served to eliminate ambiguity in the biblical text.

Analysing passages from the Septuagint's 4 Reg. 22:14 and 2 Par. 34:22, we observe a significant difference relative to the MT. Furthermore, the two Greek passages differ in their word choice. The expression שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים (*šōmēr habbēgādīm*) in 4 Reg. 22:14 is rendered with a single word, ἡμαιοφύλαξ, which is a neologism coined by the translator from a combination of two words: (1) ἡμάτιον ('clothing', 'garment', 'cloak') and (2) φύλαξ ('keep', 'keeper', 'watchman'). The lexeme ἡμαιοφύλαξ is a *hapax legomenon* in the LXX. We note that the noun φύλαξ, both in the masculine (ὁ φύλαξ – 'keeper') and feminine (ἡ φύλαξ – 'keeperess') forms, has the same form in the genitive τοῦ φύλακος and τῆς φύλακος. The noun φύλαξ is *epicene*, meaning its form remains the same regardless of gender, and the difference is indicated by context and the use of the appropriate article. Its compounds, such as ἡμαιοφύλαξ, can mean both male and female keepers (see ἡ νομοφύλαξ in 4 Macc 15:32). The definite article (τοῦ) in 4 Reg. 22:14, in the context of the expression in question, clearly indicates a male keeper.

The version in 2 Par. 34:22 differs significantly from the MT. Its author uses three words (φύλάσσουσαν τὰς στολάς) to render the Hebrew שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּגָדִים (*šōmēr habbēgādīm*). Instead of the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*) in the masculine gender, it has here its feminine counterpart φύλάσσουσαν as part. pres. act. acc. f. s. from the verb φύλάσσω ('to keep'). This difference is very significant, as it suggests that Huldah, not her husband, is the 'keeperess of the wardrobe'.¹²

12 If we assume – as seems more likely – that the translator of the Septuagint had access to a *scriptio defectiva* (שֹׁמֵר *šōmēr*; cf. 2 Kgs 22:14), and that his Vorlage was of the *scriptio continua* type (שמרהבדגים) and lacked vowel notation, then the range of possible reconstructions is significantly broadened, allowing for a more accurate explanation of the discrepancy between the Greek text of 2 Chr 34:22 and its Hebrew counterpart. In this view, the wāw can be interpreted as a secondary addition, perhaps introduced to reduce the ambiguity of the reading.

There are several ways to explain this discrepancy:

- (1) The author of the Greek text divided the individual Hebrew words differently. If we assume that the author of 2 Par. 34:22 had the Hebrew text as a *scriptio continua*, then we can imagine that the author did not extract the verb form (שׁוֹמֵר *šômēr*) and the definite article together with the noun (הַבְּגָדִים *habbēgādīm*) from שׁוֹמֵר בְּגָדִים, but most likely separated the definite article (הַ *ha*) from the noun and mistakenly attached it to the verb form, creating a new inflected feminine verb form (שׁוֹמְרָה *šômṛāḥ*). The word שׁוֹמְרָה (*šômṛāḥ*) is Qal part. act. f. s.; it is an alternate form of the basic form שׁוֹמֵרֶת (*šōmeret*) and, as such, may appear in Hebrew dialect variants.¹³ The expression in question requires the use of *status constructus*, not *status absolutus*.
- (2) The LXX translator may have noticed the form qal. part. act. m. s. st. abs (שׁוֹמֵר *šômēr*), and interpreted the definite article (הַ *ha*) as suffix 3 f. s. (שׁוֹמְרָה *šômṛāḥ*); in that case, the meaning of the expression would be: ‘her keeping’ (see נֹסֶרֶת *nōṣṛāḥ*; Isa 27:3).
- (3) Another possibility is to recognise the noun form שׁוֹמְרָה (*šāmṛāḥ*) f. s. abs. present only in Ps. 141:3. The fundamental problem with adopting this solution is the presence of the letter *wāw* in the *scriptio plena* (שׁוֹמְרָה), because, phonetically, the short vowel /ō/ in the first syllable cannot be orthographically represented by the long /ō/ written with the use of *wāw gādōl* as a *mater lectionis*.
- (4) Theoretically, the form שׁוֹמְרָה can also be identified verbally as qal perf. 3 f. s. שׁוֹמְרָה *šāmṛāḥ*. This inflected form occurs in Job 10:12; 24:15 and in Ps 119:167.
- (5) Alternatively, one may consider the spelling שׁוֹמְרָה as a Qal perf. 3 s. m. verb with an added 3 f. s. *suffix* (שׁוֹמְרָה *šāmṛāḥ*) as in Amos 1:11. Although this seems unlikely.
- (6) However, if we were to accept the noun form שׁוֹמְרָה (*šāmṛāḥ*) with the feminine possessive pronoun 3rd person singular (שׁוֹמְרָה – *šāmṛāḥ*), this would cause further morphological changes, resulting in the following form שׁוֹמְרָתָה (*šāmṛātāḥ*).
- (7) Another possible reading of the consonant cluster שׁוֹמְרָה would be the form qal. part. pass. f. s. שׁוֹמְרָה (*šāmṛāḥ*). This is where there is a difficulty in accepting the interpretation of the consonant *wāw* as a *mater lectionis* for a shva. This word appears in Ps 77:5 (LXX 76:5) in the plural and *status constructus* (שׁוֹמְרוֹת *šāmṛōt*). In the LXX, this word is rendered as φυλάκις, a feminine noun from the same semantic field as the verb φυλάσσω, but this is most likely an error on the part of the Greek translator, as שׁוֹמְרָה (*šāmṛāḥ*) means ‘eyelid’.
- (8) Another possibility is to accept שׁוֹמְרָה (*šāmṛāḥ*) with the 3 f. s. suffix, but then the form thus created should be שׁוֹמְרָתָה (*šāmṛātāḥ*).

13 Grammatical forms of this type arise when there are several different inflectional patterns, e.g. several competing suffixes. In Hebrew morphology, for the feminine gender, these are: הַ and תַּ, see T.O. Lambdin, *Wprowadzenie do hebrajskiego biblijnego* (trans. H. Drawnel – B.M. Sokal) (Materiały Pomocnicze do Wykładów z Biblistyki 11; Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2011) 433–437, § 184–186, and 443–445, § 188–189, here: 443, § 188.

The most significant flaw in the hypotheses discussed above is the assumption that the translator of the Septuagint, when working on 2 Chr 34:22, had access to a *scriptio plena* Hebrew source text (שֹׁמֵר *šōmēr*). However, if, as would appear more likely, the translator had a *scriptio defectiva* version (שֹׁמֵר *šōmēr*) – much more frequently attested in biblical material (as shown at the beginning of this paragraph) – and additionally a *scriptio continua* (שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים), then accepting these assumptions significantly increases the credibility of the aforementioned hypotheses, leading rather to the interpretation of the form φυλάσσοῦσαν as a copyist's error.

Another component of the analysed expression is the Hebrew word הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*), derived from the basic noun בֶּגֶד (*beḡed*) 'vestment, clothing'. In the biblical corpus, this form occurs in the masculine plural in the *status absolutus*, most often (29 instances) without a definite article (בְּגָדִים *b^gādīm*). In this semantic context, it takes on a collective character and refers generally to 'vestments'.

The form הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*) occurs relatively rarely in the Old Testament – it is recorded only seven times (Exod 28:4; 29:5; Lev 8:2; 21:10; 2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22; Zech 3:4). In the last two instances (2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22), the meaning of the expression remains ambiguous, as the context does not specify to whom the robes kept by שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*) belong – whether they are royal or high priestly vestments. In the remaining five instances, however, the immediate context clearly indicates that the term הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*) refers unambiguously to the collective term for high priestly vestments (Exod 28:4; 29:5; Lev 8:2; 21:10; Zech 3:4). It should be noted that the noun בְּגָדִים (*b^gādīm*), occurring without a definite article, has a broad range of meanings and can generally mean 'clothing', 'coat', or 'garment'. However, in the form with a definite article הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*), its meaning is narrowed down and consistently refers to priestly vestments, especially in the context of the high priesthood.¹⁴

The rarity of the form בְּגָדִים (*b^gādīm*) containing the definite article הַבְּגָדִים – *habb^gādīm* seems to support the argument that the copyist made an error, mistaking the definite article of the form הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*) with the feminine suffix of the form derived from the verb שֹׁמֵר (*šōmēr*). Analysis of the semantic field of the Hebrew expression הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm*) has shown that the biblical keeper of the wardrobe guarded the vestments used for worship.

The enigmatic nature of the text of 2 Chr 34:22 in the Septuagint version stems from its significant deviation from the Masoretic tradition. While the Hebrew text contains the noun הַבְּגָדִים (*habb^gādīm* – 'vestments'), the Greek manuscripts render it as τὰς ἐντολάς ('commandments', 'precepts') instead of the expected στολὰς ('vestments'). A cursory examination might lead to the conclusion that this difference could be explained away by homophony, i.e. a mistake resulting from the phonetic similarity of both words, which could have led to the erroneous replacement of one term with another during the copying

¹⁴ See A. Rambiert-Kwaśniewska, *Terminologia tekstylna w Biblii Hebrajskiej i Septuagincie: Szaty, dodatki i tekstylia użytkowe* (Wrocław: Chronicon 2023) 59–81, 203–225, 379–388.

of the text. However, ancient manuscripts containing the text of the Septuagint (including codices A, B, G, L, O, R, S) do not attest to the reading φυλάσσουσαν τὰς στολὰς. Instead, they transmit the variant φυλάσσουσαν τὰς ἐντολὰς ('keeperess of the commandments'), which in some contemporary studies has been replaced by φυλάσσουσαν τὰς στολὰς ('keeperess of the wardrobe'). We are therefore dealing here with a conjecture, i.e. a contemporary, critical proposal for text emendation, unsupported by manuscript tradition. Its purpose seems to be to harmonise the Greek text with its Hebrew counterpart חַבֵּיבֵי הַבְּגָדִים (*habbēgādīm*). The editors of the Septuagint recension compiled by Alfred Rahlfs considered the variant φυλάσσουσαν τὰς ἐντολὰς to be the result of a transmission error.¹⁵

Evidence from ancient LXX manuscripts attests that Huldah is not a keeperess of royal or even priestly wardrobe, but, as a prophetess, she is a keeperess of commandments and precepts (implicitly, God's). Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that the change from 'keeper of the wardrobe' (חַבֵּיבֵי הַבְּגָדִים *šōmēr habbēgādīm*) to 'keeperess of the commandments' (φυλάσσουσαν τὰς ἐντολὰς) was intentional.

The arguments in favour of this hypothesis are as follows:

- (1) The *status constructus* of feminine Hebrew participles ending in הָ [-ā^h] takes the form הָ [-a^h].¹⁶ This makes it problematic to accept argument 6 (הַמְרָאָה *šām̄rātāh*) הַמְרָאָה (*šmārā^h*) and proposal 8 הַמְרָאָה *šmurātāh* הַמְרָאָה *šmurātāh*, which do not take this morphological regularity into account.
- (2) Throughout the entire Hebrew Bible, the root שָׁמַר (*šōmēr*) does not appear even once in the feminine participle form, regardless of grammatical number. It is even less likely to occur in a morphological variant form. This fact significantly limits the likelihood that the translator could recognise and render a form that is not attested in the Hebrew source text.
- (3) The only instance in the Septuagint where the feminine active participle of the verb φυλάσσω appears is 2 Sam 23:5. However, in this case, both in the Hebrew text (הַמְרָאָה *šmurā^h*) and the Greek (πεφυλαγμένη), there is a passive participle referring to the covenant (תִּרְיָה *b'rîṭ*; διαθήκη), which has been 'kept' – implicitly by God. Thus, the feminine active participle form is unattested, which undermines the translator's ability to identify it in other contexts.

Analysis of the arguments presented leads to the conclusion that the difference is not due to a copyist's error (i.e. an accidental modification) but constitutes a conscious and deliberate interference with the text. The possibility that this modification was made not only in the Greek translation but also in the Hebrew variant should be considered.

The ancient redaction of the Septuagint text seems justified. Encountering the rare phrase φυλάσσω τὰς στολὰς, the translator (or possibly the redactor, although this seems less likely) decided not to render Huldah's role literally as 'keeperess of the wardrobe'. Instead

¹⁵ For the critical apparatus of 2 Chr 34:22, see Rahlfs – Hanhart (eds.), *Septuaginta*.

¹⁶ See Lambdin, *Wprowadzenie do hebrajskiego biblijnego*, 443, § 188.

of placing the prophetess in the context of Temple worship in Jerusalem – and thus in an office that may have been unknown or incomprehensible to the Jewish diaspora in Alexandria – the translator made her a model of life in accordance with the Torah/Law.

In light of the *Letter of Aristeas*, which places the creation of the Septuagint in Alexandria, it should be assumed that the Jewish community of that city – unlike the Jews of Elephantine – had no direct experience of Temple worship based on the Jerusalem model.¹⁷ In the context of the religious and cultural syncretism prevailing at the time, the translator may have consciously adapted the text of 2 Chr 34:22 to make it more readable and relevant to Greek-speaking readers. As a result, the prophetess Huldah in 2 Chr 34:22 was presented as a model of life in accordance with the Law of Moses.

Notably, the phrases φυλάσσω and ἡ ἐντολή appear relatively frequently in the Septuagint: a cursory analysis using lexical concordance tools (e.g. BibleWorks 10) indicates that such expressions occur in approximately 70 passages (see Deut 8:2,11; 10:13; Lev 36:3; 1 Reg 2:3; 3:14; 2 Reg 23:3; 2 Chr 34:31). This may suggest that the translator used a well-known, recognisable idiom that better conveyed the text's message in the religious and cultural context of the Egyptian diaspora.

A comparative analysis of 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 and their Greek translations revealed significant redactional, phonetic, and morphological differences that reflect both the different theological intentions of the authors and the evolution of the text during its transmission. The variants of names and the phrase שׁוֹמֵר הַבְּגָדִים (*šōmēr habbġādīm*) indicate a complex redactional process involving conscious stylistic adaptations, scribal errors, and interpretative decisions by translators. In light of the available data, the Deuteronomistic version appears to be the original, both lexically and historically, while the Chronicles and Greek variants should be considered later interpretative or redactional transformations.

3. The Genealogy of Shallum and the Problem of Identifying the Keeper of the Wardrobe

The passages in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 appear to emphasise Huldah's high socio-religious status. Both passages begin with an unambiguous reference to her as a prophetess (נְבִיאָה נְבִיאָה *nəḇî' āḥ*), which is a formal confirmation of her authority in the religious sphere. However, the current state of research on prophetesses in ancient Israel is limited due to the scarcity of source material. The Hebrew Bible mentions only five women who were given the title of prophetess (נְבִיאָה *nəḇî' āḥ*; προφῆτις): (1) Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron (Exod 15:20); (2) Deborah, who also served as a judge (Judg 4:4); (3) Huldah, wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, keeper of the wardrobe (2 Kgs 22:14; 2 Chr 34:22); (4) the unnamed wife of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 8:3); and (5) Noadiah, the opponent

¹⁷ See J. Bosowski, "Diaspora żydowska w Egipcie w czasach biblijnych," *Scriptura Sacra* 19 (2015) 65–84.

of the governor Nehemiah (Neh 6:14). All the women mentioned, except Noadiah, are presented in a positive light.¹⁸

Neither the author of the Second Book of Kings nor of the Chronicles attempts to explain why Huldah was chosen as the recipient of the king's enquiry, nor do they explain why she was called a prophetess. The narrative assumes that her role was not in doubt and did not require explanation, which may indicate social acceptance of the role of prophetesses at that time. This is also confirmed by non-biblical sources – inscriptions and texts from Mari (early 2nd millennium BC) and Assyrian documents from the 7th century BC – that record the activities of prophesying women at royal courts.¹⁹ It is also worth recalling Joel's eschatological prophecy (Joel 3:1), which foretells a time when '[...] Your sons and daughters will prophesy [...]' In St. Peter's interpretation (Acts 2:14–21), this prophecy is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, which gives it a universal and inclusive character in relation to the gift of prophecy.²⁰

Huldah is presented in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 in a highly unusual manner, making her a unique character in the entire narrative of the Hebrew Bible. In no other case is a woman introduced into the biblical text in such a complex way, both in terms of content and formal language. Firstly, Huldah is mentioned by name, which in itself is a significant distinction in the portrayal of female biblical characters. Secondly, she was assigned a clearly defined religious and social role – that of a prophetess (חֲזַיִת *nḥi' āh*) – which confirms her authority and active role in the community's religious life. Thirdly, her social status is further defined by the use of the noun חֲזַיִת (*'ēšet*) in the *status constructus*, combined with her husband's name – Shallum – and the presentation of his abbreviated genealogy.

The lexical and semantic connection between חֲזַיִת (*'ēšet*) and Shallum is indicated by the *mūnāh* accent under the first part of the compound חֲזַיִת (*'ēšet*). Additionally, the word חֲזַיִת (*'ēšet*) is followed by a *paseq* (|), a vertical separator that occurs relatively rarely in the Hebrew Bible. According to Lea Himmelfarb's findings, the *paseq* appears only 587 times

18 The rabbinic tradition, represented by the Babylonian Talmud (b. Meg. 14a–14b), expands this list to seven women recognised as prophetesses: (1) Sarah, wife of Abraham (14a.13); (2) Miriam (14a.14–15); (3) Deborah (14a.16–17; 14b.10); (4) Hannah, Samuel's mother (14a.18–20); (5) Abigail, David's wife (14a.21–22; 14b.1–4); (6) Huldah (14b.5–8, 10–13); and (7) Esther (14b.9–10). Of this group, only Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah are formally referred to as prophetesses in the Hebrew Bible, suggesting a later traditional interpretation based not only on their titles but also on their actions. Cf. M. Cogan – H. Tadmor, *II Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 11; Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company 2008) 283–284.

19 Cf. Tronina, *Druga Księga Kronik*, 413; see also Cogan – Tadmor, *II Kings*, 283–284.

20 The early Christian tradition transmitted through St Luke mentions women who are prophetesses. These include Anna (προφῆτις), who lived in the Jerusalem Temple (Luke 2:36) and was one of the first to accept and recognise Jesus as the promised Messiah of God, and the four daughters of Philip the deacon, who prophesied (προφητεύουσαι) in the Church community (Acts 21:8–9). The Book of Revelation speaks of a woman who claims to be a prophetess. Most likely, she is a morally corrupt woman who encourages fornication and the consumption of sacrifices offered to idols. For this reason, the author of Revelation compares her to Jezebel (Rev 2:20, ἡ ἑβελ), the wicked wife of King Ahab (see 1 Kgs 21).

in the 24 books of the Hebrew biblical canon.²¹ Although it does not directly affect the recitation of the text or its melody, it serves as a visual and semantic delimiter of lexical units, often signalling important titles or attributes of characters.²² In both analysed passages – 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 – the *paseq* appears between אֶשֶׁל (‘ēšēl) and the name Shallum, followed by an abbreviated genealogy (using the expression בֶּן (bēn) and the name of the father and then the grandfather) and a mention of the office held.

The term ‘keeper of the wardrobe’ (שֹׁמֵר הַבִּגְדִים שֹׁמֵר הַבִּגְדִים *šōmēr habbīgādīm*) appears in the masculine gender, which definitively excludes the possibility that the prophetess Huldah could have held this role. The biblical text clearly indicates that a man held this role, although the exact identification of this person in genealogical terms remains open.

The syntax of the Hebrew biblical text in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22 does not allow for an unambiguous determination of who exactly held the office of keeper of the wardrobe – Shallum or one of his ancestors. From a syntactical point of view, both Shallum and his grandfather, referred to as Harhas (הַרְחָס *harḥas*) in 2 Kgs 22:14 and Hasrah (הַסְרָה *hasrāh*) in 2 Chr 34:22, could be identified as holding this role. The genealogy present in both passages allows for the attribution of office to each of the men mentioned. It cannot be ruled out that this office was held in turn by successive generations – grandfather, father, and grandson. It is also possible that this position remained within one family for many years. However, the literary context of the pericopes in question suggests that this role was performed by a man who lived at the same time as King Josiah (reigned c. 640–609 BC). Thus, it appears that the redactors intended to identify Shallum as the current keeper of the wardrobe referred to in the text.

To deepen the analysis, a comparison was made with other biblical texts with a similar syntactic structure, including Num 25:11; 1 Sam 14:3; 2 Kgs 14:8; 1 Chr 26:24; 2 Chr 20:14; Neh 11:11, 17; 12:26. In each of these cases, a consistent sequence has been preserved: the character’s name, an abbreviated genealogy (father and grandfather), and the office. In light of this syntactic paradigm, as well as the literary convention of the Masoretic Text, it should be assumed that it was Shallum, not his ancestor, who served as keeper of the wardrobe in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22.

Analysis of the Hebrew biblical texts (2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22) allows us to conclude that the prophetess Huldah was portrayed as the wife of the keeper of the wardrobe, which further defines her social status in the narrative.

²¹ See L. Himmelfarb, “The Exegetical Role of the Paseq,” *Sef* 58/2 (1998) 244.

²² See S.J. Park, *The Fundamentals of Hebrew Accents: Divisions and Exegetical Roles Beyond Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020) 6–7, 157–162.

4. Analysis of the Term ‘*bamišneh*’ in the Context of Huldah’s Place of Residence and Its Interpretations in Various Rabbinic Sources and Translations

The last detail mentioned in 2 Chr 34:22 is that Huldah ‘lived in Jerusalem in the Mishneh district’ (יִשְׁבֶּת בִּירוּשָׁלַם בַּמִּשְׁנָה *wʾhî yôšebet bîyrûšālim bamišneh*; καὶ αὕτη κατοίκει ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐν μαασαναί). The meaning of the Hebrew word מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) remains unclear. The translator of the Septuagint did not translate this word into Greek, but transliterated it as μαασνα, thus avoiding a difficult translation.²³

Analysis of the occurrence of the word מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) in the Old Testament reveals that it most often means ‘double’ (Gen 43:12, 15; Exod 16:5, 22; Deut 15:18;), ‘copy’ (Deut 17:18; Josh 8:32;), and ‘second’ (Gen 41:43; 1 Sam 8:2;). This is also how it was interpreted in the Vulgate, which in 2 Chr 34:22 uses the term *secunda*, meaning ‘second’. The prophet Zephaniah, who lived at the same time as the prophetess Huldah, uses the word מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) to refer to a part of Jerusalem (Zeph 1:10). Contemporary Polish translators of the Old Testament do the same. Most recent translations of the Bible render this word as ‘the other side of the city’ or ‘the other/new district of Jerusalem’. Contemporary scholars believe that the Hebrew word מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) should be understood as referring to the ‘second’ part of Jerusalem, which was built during the city’s expansion in the 8th century BC. The expansion of the Holy City during this period may have resulted from a significant population growth in Jerusalem. The sudden increase in population is attributed to the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 721 BC. The influx of refugees from Israel into Jerusalem may have necessitated the city’s expansion.

The exact location or area of מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) is unknown today. Mazar identifies מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) as the suburbs of the City of David, which grew on the western hill of Jerusalem and were established during the reign of King Hezekiah (718–689 BC). Excavations carried out in this area have confirmed the existence of a large settlement on the hill west of the Tyropoeon Valley, also known as the Valley of the Cheesemakers. In this part of the city, remains of a wall from the Second Temple period were found that stretched west of the original City of David, surrounded the top of the hill bordering the Valley of Gehenna, and was then connected to the Temple walls in the north. This ‘new city wall’ more than tripled the area of Jerusalem compared to its original size (see Rashi on II Chr 34, 22, 3).

Regardless of where and what the מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) was, an intriguing question remains: why did the biblical author include this detail in his narrative about the prophetess Huldah? Perhaps the divinely inspired author, by including this detail in the account devoted to Huldah, wanted to convey information about her past, origins, or social status. Archaeologists believe that in Huldah’s time, the wealthiest part of Jerusalem was the original area

23 *Targum 2 Chronicles* (hereinafter Tg2Chron) translates it as בֵּית אוֹלְפָנָא (*b’bêt ‘ūlpānā*), which means ‘study hall’ – a place where the Torah is studied. According to the rabbis, the מִשְׁנֶה (*mišneh*^h) was the place where Huldah taught.

of the City of David, located on the south-western slope of the city. Most likely, this is where the royal palace and the houses of the wealthier officials and citizens of the city were located. The מִשְׁנֶה (*mišne^h*) was the 'second' part of the city, which was most likely inhabited by refugees from the Northern Kingdom of Israel after the Assyrians finally conquered their territory in 721 BC. It can be reasonably assumed that Huldah was part of this group.

According to the Tractate *m.Middot* (lit. Measurements), discussing the dimensions of the Second Temple, five gates led to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. To this day, pilgrims and tourists visiting the southern wall of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem can admire the remains of two ancient gates, which are walled up. Archaeologists call them the 'Double Gate' and the 'Triple Gate' because of the number of arches they have. In ancient times, these gates were called 'Huldah gates', in honour of the prophetess Huldah (*m.Middot* 1:3). It should be noted that no other prophet has been honoured in this way; none of the gates of the Temple, nor the Temple Mount, nor even Jerusalem itself, has been named after any other prophet. According to the Mishnah, the two Huldah Gates constituted the most important entrance and exit to the Temple complex during the Second Temple period in Jerusalem. It is now believed that the three-arched Huldah Gate was used by pilgrims entering the Temple Mount, while the double-arched Huldah Gate was used by pilgrims leaving the Temple. These gates connected directly to the Temple Mount and led pilgrims through underground tunnels to the Outer Court of the Jewish Temple. Today, the remnants of two monumental staircases connected to the Huldah Gates can still be seen.²⁴

5. Hypothesis Concerning the Location of the Keeper of the Wardrobe (2 Kgs 22:14 || 2 Chr 34:22)

A seemingly insignificant mention of Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe, in 2 Kgs 22:14 (par. 2 Chr 34:22) of Deuteronomistic narrative, provides a premise for reconstructing the hypothetical location of the office in question. We will attempt to reconstruct it based on the complementarity of sources, as no single source provides complete plans or all the architectural details of both Solomon's Temple and the Second Temple. Only by combining data from the Bible (1 Kgs 6–7; 2 Chr 3–4; Ezek 40–48) with references to Talmudic literature and the accounts of Josephus, and supplementing them with information corroborated by archaeology, can we obtain a picture of the temples and their liturgical and functional rooms.

Biblical narratives contain several references to offices overseeing ritual garments, indicating the existence of an institutionalised role responsible for priestly and liturgical

²⁴ Rabbinical interpretations of the term מִשְׁנֶה (*mišne^h*) linked it to an educational institution run by the prophetess Huldah in Jerusalem. It was not until the Middle Ages that Rashi, in his commentary on 2 Chr 34:22, recorded several hypotheses regarding the location of this school: (1) between the two city walls, (2) in the Gate of Huldah, (3) outside the wall or adjacent to the Chamber of Hewn Stone. (4) The last of these ideas was supposedly based on the lost Tractate *Middot* of the Mishnah.

vestments. In 2 Kgs 10:22, there is mention of an official in charge of ‘vestments’ who participates in the preparation of pagan worship of Baal, which indirectly confirms the existence of similar roles in the Israelite Temple.

To fully understand the significance of this role, one should refer to the description of King Jehu’s actions in 2 Kgs 10:22. The text contains the following phrase: And he said unto him that was over the vestry (לְאִשֶּׁר עַל־הַמִּלְתָּהּ *la’āšer ‘al-hammeltaḥā^h*), ‘Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal.’ This fragment depicts the keeper of the wardrobe as an administrative role responsible for issuing ritual garments. In the case of Jehu, this office is used instrumentally in the context of a religious ruse aimed at eliminating the cult of Baal from Samaria (cf. 2 Kgs 10:18–28).

The lexeme מִלְתָּהּ (*meltāḥā^h*), rendered in many translations as ‘vestry’, is a *hapax legomenon*, which significantly complicates its unambiguous interpretation in a lexical context. In tractate *b.Gittin* (V, 59a.16–17), the rabbis attempt to derive the meaning of this term exegetically, proposing two plausible interpretations: (1) as a specific way of folding vestments, or (2) as a reference to the exceptionally thin material from which they were made – a material so thin that, when folded, the garment took up no more than one and a half pistachio nuts in volume, but when unfolded, it could cover the entire body.

Conversely, according to the authors of *The Pulpit Commentary*, the semantic identification of the meaning of the word מִלְתָּהּ (*meltāḥā^h*) does not present any major difficulties, mainly for two reasons: firstly, the literary context in which the word appears is sufficiently clear; secondly, this context explicitly indicates the functional connection of the term with the keeping or arranging of clothing, which facilitates its interpretation despite the lack of parallel occurrences in other biblical texts.²⁵

An even more significant reference is found in 2 Kgs 22:14 and in the parallel text of 2 Chr 34:22, where Huldah is presented as a prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the wardrobe שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים (*šōmēr habbēḡādīm*).

A comparison of these two pericopes – one describing Josiah’s religious reform, the other the plan to exterminate the servants of Baal – reveals that the role of ‘him that was over the vestry’, though marginal, is not devoid of theological and narrative significance. In both cases, this figure participates – directly or indirectly – in Israel’s religious purification, which raises questions about the status of auxiliary offices and their role in the realisation of God’s Economy of Salvation within the Deuteronomistic tradition.

The office of the keeper of the wardrobe is an important link in the development of the office called ‘Phineas over the vestments’ (פִּנְחָס עַל הַמִּלְבוּשׁ *pinḥās ‘al hammalbūš*), described in Mishnah *Shekalim* 5:1. The Tractate *Shekalim* is part of the canonical Mishnah, redacted by Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi circa 200 CE. Although its redaction took place after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), the content of the Mishnah, including the

25 Cf. H.D.M. Spence-Jones (ed.), *2 Kings* (The Pulpit Commentary; London – New York: Funk & Wagnalls 1909) 212. Contemporary commentaries also confirm this thesis, see D. Slager, “Preface,” R.L. Omanson – J.E. Ellington, *A Handbook on 1 & 2 Kings* (United Bible Societies’ Handbooks; New York: United Bible Societies 2008) I, 960.

Tractate Shekalim, is based on earlier oral traditions dating back to the time of the Jerusalem Temple.

In m. Shekalim 5:1 (cf. y. *Shekalim* 5:1 [49a]), there is a list of fifteen honourable offices that, according to rabbinical tradition, were to be held in uninterrupted succession in the Temple. These were administrative and ritual roles, named after historical figures – probably the first or most distinguished Temple officials. This list does not assume that these people were contemporaries but is symbolic and commemorative: the names of former leaders of Israel are preserved in it as Temple offices, which can be interpreted as an institutional commemoration.

The fifteenth and last office listed in this catalogue is the role referred to as ‘Phineas over the vestments’ (עַל הַמְּלִבוֹשׁ *pinhās ‘al hammalbūš*), in charge of the Temple’s priestly vestments and ritual garments. This reference may be to a specific official from the Second Temple period. Still, in light of rabbinic thought, it cannot be ruled out that the name ‘Phineas’ (also spelt Pinchas or Phinehas) was deliberately used here as a reference to the biblical figure – the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron (cf. Num 25:7–13).

The biblical Phinehas came to prominence as a zealous defender of the covenant with YHWH during a time of moral crisis in Israel, for which he received from God a ‘covenant of peace’ and a ‘covenant of perpetual priesthood’ (Num 25:12–13), which is interpreted as legitimising his priestly role. In this light, naming an office related to priestly vestments after him can be interpreted as (1) a symbolic tribute to his concern for the purity and sanctity of the priesthood, and at the same time (2) a conscious attempt to inscribe this figure into the later institutional system, even if it does not refer to him directly in historical terms. Such typological references are inherent to the rabbinical way of thinking about the past, in which significant figures become archetypes of roles and values cherished in the Temple tradition.

Figure 1 illustrates a cross-section of the outer wall of Solomon’s Temple, showing the architectural layout of the rooms adjacent to the main body of the building. The spaces shown in the picture, including storage rooms, rooms for priests, and staircases connecting successive floors, were added to the outer walls of the Temple in a way that allows practical use without placing excessive strain on the load-bearing walls.

According to the description in 1 Kgs 6:5–7, the side chambers also served as support, reinforcing the structure of the main building. For this reason, their width increased with height: the lower part measured five cubits, the middle six, and the uppermost seven. Vertical communication between the floors was facilitated by an indoor staircase: ‘The entrance for the middle story was on the south side of the house: one went up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle story to the third’ (1 Kgs 6:8).

These chambers were mainly used for storage, keeping the materials necessary for worship: liturgical vessels and priestly vestments. Their size was so considerable that, according to 2 Kgs 11:2–3, they could also serve as a hiding place. Joash, the future king of Judah, stayed there for six years, hidden from Queen Athaliah.

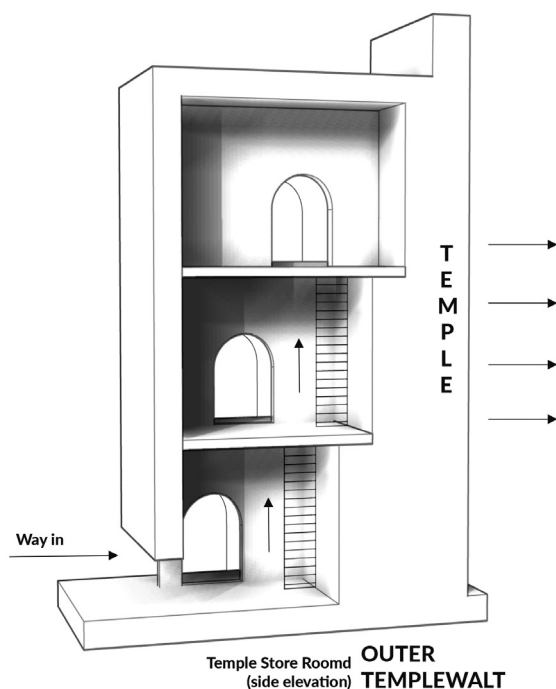


Fig. 1. A cross-section of the outer wall of Solomon's Temple
(created by Paulina Paprocka)

The hypothetical layout of the side chambers in Solomon's Temple finds strong archaeological analogies in the temple discovered in 1955 at 'Ain Dārā, located in north-western Syria, near the town of 'Afrīn.²⁶ Both the temple at 'Ain Dārā and the biblical description of Solomon's Temple (1 Kgs 6) show the presence of side chambers adjacent to the central space of the *cella*. At 'Ain Dārā, these chambers were located along the sides of the sanctuary and probably served as auxiliary or storage rooms, which is analogous to the presumed functions of Solomon's chambers.²⁷

During the Second Temple period, the Temple complex was significantly expanded, resulting in the building of additional courts, new entrance gates, cisterns, and numerous

²⁶ See M. Novák, "The Temple of 'Ain Dārā in the Context of Imperial and Neo-Hittite Architecture and Art," *Temple Building and Temple Cult: Architecture and Cultic Paraphernalia of Temples in the Levant (2.–1. Mill. B.C.E.)*. *Proceedings of a Conference on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Institute of Biblical Archaeology at the University of Tübingen, 28–30 May 2010* (ed. J. Kamlah) (ADPV 41; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2012) 41–42.

²⁷ See Novák, "The Temple of 'Ain Dārā in the Context of Imperial and Neo-Hittite Architecture and Art," 47, 51–52; See also D. Bahat, *The Carta Jerusalem Atlas*, 3 ed., updated and expanded (Jerusalem: Carta 2011) 29.

auxiliary rooms and storage spaces. The diagram below illustrates a hypothetical reconstruction of the Herodian Temple, based on data from biblical texts and rabbinic tradition, particularly the Mishnah and Tosefta tractates.

According to the account in *m.Middot* 1:4, seven gates led to the inner court of the sanctuary: three on the north, three on the south, and one – the Nikanor Gate – on the east. Inside the latter, there were two chambers, symmetrically on both sides (marked with letters A and B in the Figure 2). One of them was intended for the official in charge of ceremonial garments – פִּנְחָס עַל הַמַּלְבֻּשׁ (*pinḥās ‘al hammalbûš*), i.e. ‘Phinehas, the valet [of priests]’. The second chamber was used by priests baking the showbread, which was then placed on a special table in a holy place (cf. Exod 25:30; Lev 24:5–9).²⁸

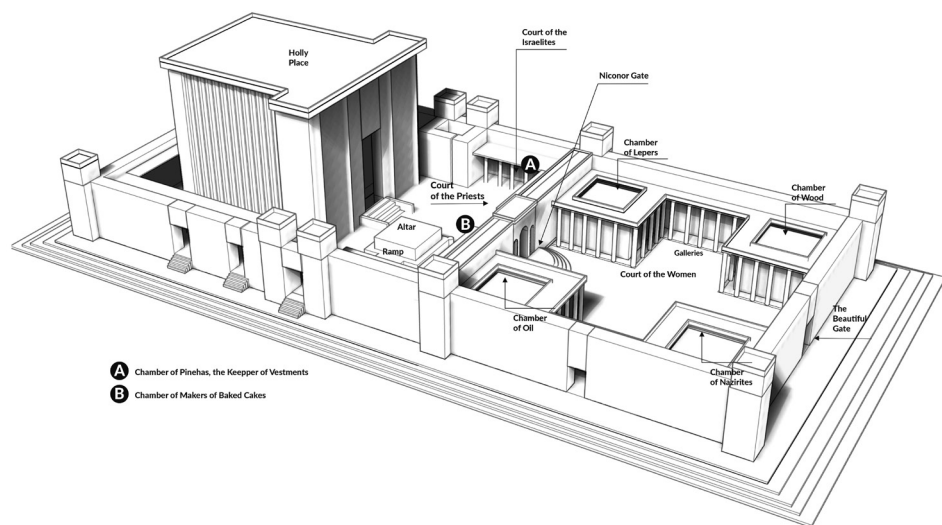


Fig. 2. A hypothetical reconstruction of the Herodian Temple
(created by Paulina Paprocka)

In Jewish tradition, especially in Talmudic and Midrashic sources, the title Pinchas haMalbish refers to an official responsible for dressing priests and keeping liturgical vestments. The chambers known as לשכת נפחם מהלביש, as described in rabbinical tradition, were integral to the architecture of the Jerusalem Temple and served various administrative and liturgical functions. These rooms were probably used both as storage

²⁸ See L. Ritmeyer, *The Quest: Revealing the Temple Mount in Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Carta – The Lamb Foundation 2015) 356.

rooms for priestly vestments and as chambers for the official responsible for their preparation and distribution.

The writings of Josephus also shed light on the institutional status of priestly vestments. In *The Antiquities of the Jews* (Ant 18:90–95; 20:6–14), he mentions the Roman administration's practice of depositing the high priest's vestments in the Antonia Fortress, which demonstrates that liturgical garments had not only ritual but also political significance. High priests could only use them with the consent of the Roman governor, which confirms that keeping the vestments was considered a matter of state and ceremonial importance.

Conclusion

The mention of the keeper of the wardrobe in 2 Kgs 22:14 and 2 Chr 34:22, seemingly incidental and inconspicuous, turns out to be the starting point for an extensive analysis of the institutional, literary, and cultural aspects of this role in ancient Israel. The reconstruction of the office of שֹׁמֵר הַבְּגָדִים (*šōmēr habbġādīm*) presented in this article highlights its significance not only in practical terms – as the office in charge of the wardrobe – but, above all, in terms of prestige and symbolism, rooted in its close connection with institutions of worship and power.

A comparative analysis of biblical and extra-biblical sources, especially rabbinical texts and the accounts of Josephus, confirms that the stewardship of vestments – especially liturgical ones – was a high-ranking position requiring trust and close interaction with the Temple or court administration. Furthermore, philological and textual considerations of the Masoretic and Greek texts show that the very process of redacting and transmitting the biblical text influenced the perception of the official and his role.

This article offers a starting point for in-depth research into the relationship between the biblical text and the socio-institutional reality of the ancient Near East, demonstrating that even seemingly marginal figures and offices, such as the 'keeper of the wardrobe', can play a significant role in reconstructing the theological and cultural imagery of the Hebrew Bible. Pointing to the complexity and multidimensionality of this role opens up the possibility of reinterpreting other, hitherto underappreciated elements of biblical narratives.

In light of the findings presented, it appears reasonable to expand research in several key areas: (1) conducting an in-depth archaeological and architectural analysis of potential locations for vestment storage within the Jerusalem Temple; (2) examining the continuity of the office of keeper of the wardrobe in the Second Temple period and its possible counterparts in New Testament times, taking into account rabbinic sources and the testimonies of Jewish historians such as Josephus; (3) continuing comparative studies on wardrobe administration and clothing symbolism in other cultures of the ancient Near East, including in particular Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Hittite Empire.

A compilation of philological, historical, literary, and archaeological data indicates that the office of keeper of the wardrobe not only played a specific administrative role but also helped shape the structure of power, ritual, and religious identity in ancient Israel. Further research in this area may significantly expand our knowledge of the Temple's functioning, the significance of ceremonial objects, and the social hierarchy of the biblical world.

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