



STUDY GUIDE: THE CORRUPTION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

From the Maccabees to the Era of Yahusha (167 BCE – 0 CE)

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I. OVERVIEW

This guide traces the systemic rebellion against the Torah regarding the Office of the High Priest. For centuries, the priesthood was a sacred, lifelong appointment for the Zadokite line of the tribe of Levi. This period documents the transition of the office into a political tool, eventually held by non-Levites and puppet rulers.

II. PHASE 1: THE HELLENIZER CORRUPTION (175–162 BCE)

The initial break in the Zadokite lineage through Greek influence and bribery.

High Priest	Lineage	Rebellion Factor	Reference
Onias III	Levi (Zadokite)	None; he was the last of the righteous line.	2 Maccabees 3
Jason	Levi (Zadokite)	Usurped his brother through bribery; introduced Greek gymnasiums.	2 Maccabees 4
Menelaus	Benjamin	Major Rebellion: Held the office despite being from a non-priestly tribe.	2 Maccabees 4:23
Alcimus	Levi (Aaronide)	Executed the pious and collaborated with Greek oppressors.	1 Maccabees 7

III. PHASE 2: THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY (152–37 BCE)

The "Priest-Kings" who merged two separate roles (King and Priest) into one house.

High Priest	Lineage	Rebellion Factor	Reference
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Jonathan	Levi (Joarib)	Accepted the Priesthood as a political gift from a pagan King.	1 Maccabees 10
Simon	Levi (Joarib)	Established a hereditary dynasty "forever" by a human decree.	1 Maccabees 14
Aristobulus I	Levi (Joarib)	First to wear the royal crown (Diadem) while serving as High Priest.	Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 13.11
Alexander Jannaeus	Levi (Joarib)	Combined violent warfare with the priesthood; hated by the pious.	Josephus, <i>Ant.</i> 13.12

IV. PHASE 3: THE HERODIAN PUPPETS (37 BCE – 0 CE)

Herod the Great (an Edomite) completely removes the "life-term" and hereditary nature of the office.

- **Political Appointments:** High Priests were now appointed and removed at the whim of the King.
- **The Boethusian Monopoly:** Herod established wealthy families (like the House of Boethus) to manage the Temple as a business.
- **Final Corruption:** By 0 CE, the priesthood was no longer a spiritual calling but a tool of Roman/Herodian surveillance and wealth collection.

V. KEY TRANSGRESSIONS AGAINST THE TORAH

1. **Tribal Violation:** Menelaus (Benjamin) serving in a Levite-only role (Num. 18:1-7).
2. **Lineage Deviation:** The Hasmoneans (Joarib) displacing the Zadokite line (Ezekiel 44:15).
3. **Role Merging:** The Hasmoneans taking the Crown; the Kingship was reserved for the House of David/Judah (Genesis 49:10).
4. **Commercialization:** Buying and selling the office (Simony), leading to what **Yahusha** called a "den of thieves."

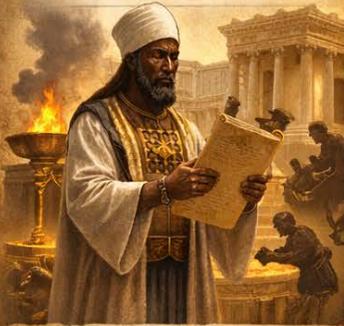
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Would you like me to add a section on the "Wicked Priest" mention in the Dead Sea Scrolls to further document the opposition to these lineages?

THE CORRUPTION OF THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD (175-159 BCE)

ONIAS III
Until 175 BCE

Tribe:
Levi (Zadokite)
2 Macc. 3:1-40



The last truly righteous Zadokite; **murdered in exile.**

JASON
175-172 BCE

Tribe:
Levi (Zadokite)
2 Macc. 4:7-15



Purchased the priesthood through bribery. Introduced Greek customs & built a gymnasium.

MENELAUS
172-162 BCE

Tribe: Benjamin
2 Macc. 4:23-50



MAJOR REBELLION
Against the Priesthood

Not a Levite. Stole Temple gold to pay bribes.

ALCIMUS
162-169 BCE

Tribe: Levi (Aaronide)
1 Macc. 7:5-25



Aligned with Greek power. Ordered the execution of sixty faithful men.

These events **fractured** the priesthood and set the stage for the rise of sects such as the **Essenes**.

PHASE 2: THE HASMONEAN DYNASTY (152-40 BCE)

THE PRIEST-KINGS



LEVI

JUDAH



FAMILY OF MATTATHIAS



JONATHAN APPHUS

152-143 BCE

Accepted the High Priesthood as a gift from a Greek King.

1 Macc. 10:18-21



SIMON THASSI

143-134 BCE

Levi (Joarib)

Granted the priesthood forever by decree of the people.

1 Maccasees 14:41



JOHN HYRCANUS I

134-104 BCE

Levi (Joarib)

Expanded its borders and forced conversions.

1 Maccasees 16:23-2



ARISTOBULUS I

104-103 BCE

Levi (Joarib)

First to wear the royal diadem while serving as High Priest.

Josephus, Antiquities 13.11



ALEXANDER JANNAEUS

103-76 BCE

Levi (Joarib)

Warrior king hated by the pious for cruelty.

Josephus, Antiquities 13.12



HYRCANUS II

76-40 BCE

Levi (Joarib)

Deposed during civil war with his brother Aristobulus II.

Josephus, Antiquities 14.1

THE PRIESTHOOD BECOMES POLITICAL POWER → Civil Conflict →

PHASE 3: THE HERODIAN "PUPPET" PRIESTHOOD (37-4 BCE)



APPOINTED BY THE KING — NOT BY LINEAGE



ANANELUS
37-36 BCE

Babylonian Priest
Herod's first appointment;
"outsider to local power."
Josephus, Antiquities 15.2



ARISTOBULUS III
17 BCE

Levi (Hasmonean)
The last Hasmonean priest;
age 17; drowned by Herod
Due to popularity



JOSHUA B. FABI
30-23 BCE

House of Phiabi
Part of a new class of
"Herodian" elite priests.
Josephus, Antiquities 15.9



SIMON B. BOETHUS
23-5 BCE

House of Boethus
Given the priesthood so Herod
could marry Simon's daughter.
Josephus, Antiquities 15.6



→ THE PRIESTHOOD BECOMES A POLITICAL APPOINTMENT → Hereditary Priesthood → Royal Appointment

THE PRIESTHOOD LINEAGE SHIFT (175 BCE - 0 CE)

THE LINEAGE SHIFT

**ZADOKITE
PRIESTHOOD**
Before 175 BCE



The Zadokite priestly house
held the high priestly office.

**BENJAMITE
INTERRUPTION**
Menelaus II 162



A Benjamite
interupted the Zadokite
line of high priests.

**HASMONEAN /
JOARIB PRIESTS**
152-37 BCE



**HASMONEAN /
JOARIB PRIESTS**
152-37 BCE

**HERODIAN POLITICAL
APPOINTMENTS**
37 BCE onward



**HERODIAN POLITICAL
APPOINTMENTS**
37 BCE onward

THE TRIBAL REBELLION

The Hasmonean rulers combined
the offices of King and Priest.
A role reserved in the
Torah for separate tribes.



The Hasmonean rulers combined the political
and commercial institution.

→ THE STAGE IS SET FOR THE CONFLICTS SEEN IN THE ERA OF YAHUSHA ←