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**BIBLICAL TOPICS FOR STUDY – LIST OF HIGH PRIESTS FO ISRAEL  
FROM AARON TO 70 AD**

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Here I list the high priests of Israel from Aaron until the fall of the Second Temple in 70 AD. They are separated by historical periods. The primary source is the Bible, but some references to certain high priests' names can be found in Flavius Josephus and in Seder Olam Rabbah ('The Great Order of the World'), a Hebrew-language chronology from the second century AD that details the dates of biblical events from creation to the conquest of Persia by Alexander the Great.

**High Priests from the Exodus to Solomon's Temple (1 Chr 6: 1-15; 49-53):**

Aaron  
Eleazar  
Phinehas  
Abishua  
Bukki  
Uzzi

Eleazar's lineage passes to Ithamar through Eli:

From the time of Moses, Aaron was chosen for the high priesthood, and his descendants (Eleazar and Ithamar) would assist him in his office, but only Eleazar's descendants would be high priests. The descendants of Ithamar also burned incense at the golden altar along with the sons of Eleazar. How and exactly why the priesthood passed from the line of Eleazar to Ithamar is unknown. We know that the Ark of the Covenant was in Shiloh since the time of Joshua [Josh. 18: 1, 8, 10; Josh. 22: 13; 29-32; Josh. 24: 31; 33 – Phinehas, son of Eleazar, was still high priest]. From Judg. 2: 7, 11-13; Judg. 18: 31; Judg. 19: 18; Judg. 21: 19; Judg. 17: 6; Judg. 21: 25, we can read that "In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes," which leads us to suppose that, in this time of great idolatry and political chaos in Israel, the high priesthood may have passed to the lineage of Ithamar. It is a possibility.

The first known high priest from the line of Ithamar at the end of the period of the Judges was Eli (1 Sam. 1: 3), who served in the tabernacle at Shiloh and judged Israel for 40 years (1 Sam. 4: 18). The Bible does not explicitly give Eli's ancestry, but 1 Chr. 24: 3 says that his great-grandson (Ahimelech) was a descendant of Ithamar ["Along with

Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, David organized them according to the appointed duties in their service”]. My note: It may not be Ahimelech here, but his son Abiathar, who officiated alongside Zadok during David’s reign.

The Bible sometimes speaks of Ahimelech as the son of Abiathar (Chr. 15: 11; 1 Chr. 18: 16; 2 Sam. 8: 17), not his father (1 Sam. 22: 20; 1 Sam. 23: 6). Therefore, it is not known whether Abiathar had sons with the same name as their grandfather or whether the names were transposed (source: J. D. Douglas – The New Bible Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1995), but most likely Ahimelech, son of Ahitub, was the father of Abiathar (1 Sam. 22: 9). This Ahitub is not the same Ahitub, father of Zadok.

→

Eli

Phinehas

Phinehas begot Ichabod (1 Sam. 4: 19-22 cf. 1 Sam. 14: 3) and Ahitub.

Ahitub begot Ahijah and Ahimelech (1 Sam. 22: 9).

Ahijah, high priest (1 Sam. 14: 3: “who was wearing an ephod”).

Ahimelech, his brother, came after him as the high priest.

Abiathar (son of Ahimelech; 1 Sam. 22: 20; 1 Sam. 23: 6). With the death of the priests of Nob by Saul, Abiathar escaped and fled to David (1 Sam. 22: 20; 1 Sam. 23: 6); he later shared the priesthood with Zadok (2 Sam. 19: 11). Abiathar was removed from the high priesthood by Solomon: 1 Kin. 2: 26; 2 Sam. 15: 24. Zadok remained.

→ Return to the lineage of Eleazar:

Zadok (son of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of Meraioth, son of Zerahiah, descendant from Eleazar; he officiated in the time of David and Solomon: 1 Chr. 15: 11; 1 Chr. 18: 16).

Ahimaaz (son of Zadok), contemporary of Rehoboam.

Azariah (grandson of Zadok, served in the time of Solomon, 1 Chr. 6: 9; 1 Kin. 4: 2; 1 Chr. 6: 10; Rehoboam and Abijah).

Johanan (1 Chr. 6: 9).

Jehoiada, brother-in-law of King Ahaziah (son of Jehoram), for he married Jehosheba (sister of Ahaziah), is mentioned in 2 Kin. 11: 1-17 as a priest who led the coup against Queen Mother Athaliah and installed Joash of Judah as king of Judah.

Azariah II, son of Johanan is mentioned in 2 Chr. 26: 16-20 as a high priest who opposed King Uzziah. In 1 Chr. 6: 10, Azariah, son of Johanan, is mentioned as “(it was he who served as priest in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem).”

Amariah (1 Chr. 6: 11, contemporary of King Jotham).

Ahitub II (Josephus calls him Urias; and Seder Olam Rabbah, Urijah. He was a contemporary of King Ahaz; 1 Chr 6: 11; 2 Kin. 16: 10-16; Isa. 8: 2).

Azariah III (2 Chr. 31: 10; 13b – high priest in the time of Hezekiah; Josephus calls him Nerias).

Zadok II (1 Chr. 6: 12; Josephus calls him Odeas, and Hebrew literature, Hoshaiiah. He was a contemporary of King Manasseh).

Shallum, son of Zadok II (1 Chr 6: 12. Contemporary of King Ammon, father of Josiah).

Hilkiah (contemporary of Josiah and Jehoahaz, also called Johanan or Shallum; Hilkiah discovered the Book of the Law, which was lost).

Azariah IV (1 Chr. 6: 13, son of Hilkiah; Josephus calls him ‘Azaros’; contemporary of King Eliakim or Jehoiakim).

Seraiah, son of Azariah IV, was a contemporary of Jehoiachin (or Jeconiah) and Mattaniah (Zedekiah). He was taken captive to Babylon along with Zephaniah the second priest – 1 Chr. 6: 14; Jer. 52: 24; 2 Kin. 25: 18.

Jehozadak (1 Chr. 6: 15; taken captive to Babylon).

According to Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki or Rashi, a French rabbi who lived from 1040 to 1105, Jehozadak was exiled without having served as high priest. Regarding Jer. 52: 24, the “second priest” or “the priest next in rank” is known to Jews in the Targum as “the Sagan” of the priests, that is, a priest appointed to minister in the name of the high priest in case something happened that prevented him from officiating. The word ‘Sagan’ (סָגָן) in Hebrew ‘subordinate’, ‘attendant’ or ‘officer’. It is used to describe someone who holds a subordinate position of authority, such as an assistant to an officer or a deputy commander. According to the Mishnah, the Sagan became ever-present in the post-exilic period on the Day of Atonement. The Sagan was from the lineage of Ithamar, the brother of Eleazar.

### **Post-exilic Period (Second Temple):**

Jeshua or Joshua (520 BC, during the period of the prophets Zechariah (520-480 BC) and Haggai (520 BC): Ezra 2: 2; Ezra 3: 2; Ezra 10: 18; Neh. 12: 1; 10-11; Hag. 1: 12; Hag. 2: 2; Zech. 3: 1).

Joiakim (Neh. 12: 10 – 480 BC) → Here, there is a possibility, according to rabbinic tradition, that Ezra may have served as high priest (came in 458 BC to minister in the rebuilt temple: 520-516 BC).

But the Bible only mentions Eliashib (son of Joiakim: Neh. 3: 1; Neh. 12: 10; 22; Neh. 13: 4; 7; Neh. 13: 28 – 458-443 BC; in the time of prophet Malachi – 450-400 BC. Eliashib was related by marriage to Tobiah the Ammonite (Neh. 13: 4), who was expelled from the temple by Nehemiah: Neh. 13: 8).

Joiada (son of Eliashib: Neh. 12: 10; 22; Neh. 13: 28 – 420 or 415 BC; in the time of prophet Malachi – 450-400 BC). One of Joiada’s sons married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, which is why he was expelled from the Temple by Nehemiah (Neh. 13: 28).

Jonathan (or Johanan, Neh. 12: 10; 22 – 408-336 BC; Mentioned in the Elephantine papyri in 410 BCE).

Jaddua (Neh. 12: 10; 22 – 340 or 336 BC; Jaddua met Alexander the Great in 332 BC).

**Intertestamental period** (Historical listing, not biblical (source: wikipedia.org and Flavius Josephus) → **Dominion of the Ptolemies on Palestine** (323-198 BC):

Onias I, son of Jaddua (Contemporary of Areus I of Sparta – 309-265 BC).

Simon I or Simeon the Just, son of Onias I.

Eleazar (brother of Simon I and son of Onias I; Contemporary of Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt – 283-246 BC).

Manasseh (son of Jaddua, brother of Onias I and uncle of Simon I and Eleazar).

Onias II (son of Simon I, around 234 BC; contemporary of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt – 246-221 BC).

Simon II, son of Onias II and contemporary of Ptolemy IV Philopator of Egypt (221-204 BC).

**Dominion of the Seleucids on Israel** (198-167 BC; priest chosen by the Seleucids):

Onias III, son of Simon II (185-175 BC), assassinated in 170 BC by Menelaus.

Onias IV, son of Onias III, had no leadership in Judea, only a temple he built in Egypt around 150 BC in Leontopolis ('city of lions'), in the province of Heliopolis, over an abandoned pagan temple where there was an abundance of building materials, so that the Jews of Egypt could worship the God of Israel in a temple similar to the one in Jerusalem. It was built with the permission of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BC) and Cleopatra II. It was destroyed around 73 AD by order of Vespasian, who feared that through this temple, Egypt could become a new center for the Jewish-Roman wars and therefore ordered the Roman governor in Egypt to demolish it. The governor died, and his successor completed the work from March to August of 73 AD.

Jason (175-172 BC; the last descendant of Zadok, son of Simon II and uncle of Onias III; placed in the high priesthood by Antiochus IV Epiphanes).

Menelaus (172-162 BC; he was not of priestly origin; he was second after Jason, appointed by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In 162 BC, Menelaus was executed for stealing Jason's office and the temple treasury and for killing Onias III).

Revolt of the Maccabees (lasted from 167 to 160 BC), under the command of Mattathias Hasmon in the village called Modiín. Mattathias was a priest but there is no proof that he belonged to the lineage of Aaron. He was father of five children: John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, and Jonathan. Mattathias died in the riot (166 BC), and his son Judas Maccabee was appointed general. Finally, the Maccabees drove the troops of Antiochus IV (Seleucid King) out of Jerusalem. Judas Maccabeus died at the Battle of Elasa in April 160 BC, but remained as high priest (165–162 BC) in the temple after his purification and consecration.

Alcimus [162-159 BC; He was from a priestly family, but not from the lineage of a high priest. In fact, he was a civil ruler of the province of Judea, appointed by the king of Syria, Antiochus V Eupator (164-162 BC)].

During the 7 years between Alcimus' death and Jonathan's position as high priest in Jerusalem, it is not known who held that position. There are only hypotheses of a priest descended from Zadok in the Dead Sea Scrolls, found in 1947.

### **Hasmonean Dynasty on Israel (167-63 AC):**

Jonathan Maccabee or Jonathan Apphus (153-143 BC).

Simon Maccabee or Simon Thassi, brother of Jonathan Apphus (143-134 BC).

John Hyrcanus I (the youngest son of Simon Maccabee or Simon Thassi – 135-104 BC).

Aristobulus I (His birth name was Judas, the eldest son of John Hyrcanus I – 104-103 BC).

Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BC, son of John Hyrcanus I and brother of Aristobulus I).

Queen Salome Alexandra (widow of Aristobulus I) and John Hyrcanus II (76-67 BC), her eldest son by Alexander Jannaeus.

Aristobulus II (67-63 BC – another son of Salome and Alexander Jannaeus).

### **Roman Period:**

In 65-64 BC, the Seleucid Empire was annexed to the Roman Republic. Thus, the Hasmonean Period also ended, and the Roman Period began, when Pompey invaded Jerusalem (63 BC) and intervened in the civil war between Hyrcanus II, who supported the Pharisees, and Aristobulus II (and his son Antigonus), who supported the Sadducees.

Pompey's armies besieged Jerusalem and, after three months, conquered the city. Pompey restored the high priesthood to John Hyrcanus II in place of Aristobulus II, but prevented him from wearing the crown →

John Hyrcanus II (restored – 63-40 BC. His grand-daughter, Mariamne I, was the second wife of Herod the Great; he was murdered by Herod in 30 BC). The Jews became tributaries of the Romans.

Regarding Pompey's invasion of Jerusalem, Josephus wrote that although Pompey invaded the temple, he did not destroy it:

“Of the Jews there fell twelve thousand, but of the Romans very few... and no small enormities were committed about the temple itself, which, in former ages, had been inaccessible, and seen by none; for Pompey went into it, and not a few of those that were with him also, and saw all that which it was unlawful for any other men to see but only for the high priests. There were in that temple the golden table, the holy candlestick, and the pouring vessels, and a great quantity of spices; and besides these there were among the treasures two thousand talents of sacred money: yet did Pompey touch nothing of all this, on account of his regard to religion; and in this point also he acted in a manner that was worthy of his virtue... The next day he gave order to those that had the charge of the temple to cleanse it, and to bring what offerings the law required to God; and restored the high priesthood to Hyrcanus, both because he had been useful to him in other respects, and because he hindered the Jews in the country from giving Aristobulus any assistance in his war against him.” [Josephus, ‘Antiquities of the Jews’ xiv.iv. §4].

Antipater, an Idumean friend of John Hyrcanus II [Josephus, ‘Antiquities of the Jews’ xiv.iv. § 3], supported Pompey's invasion and aligned himself with Roman interests. He thus attained a position of great influence in Judea after the Roman conquest, and was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 BC [Josephus, ‘Antiquities of the Jews’ xiv.viii. § 5], making him a Roman citizen. He allowed Antipater to rebuild Jerusalem and appoint his sons, Phasaël and Herod, to leadership positions in the region. Antipater appointed Herod I as military prefect of Galilee.

Antipater was poisoned by a political rival in 43 BC, but Herod did not immediately replace him because the Parthians invaded Syria and Palestine and placed Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II and an enemy of Hyrcanus II, on the throne of Judea and as high priest in Jerusalem (40-37 BC), deposing John Hyrcanus II as king and high priest.

Antigonus (40-37 BC, son of Aristobulus II) was the last king of the Hasmonean dynasty and appointed high priest by the Parthians.

After 3 years of great conflicts, the Roman Senate, under the influence of Mark Antony and Octavian, gave Herod the title of king of Judea [Josephus, ‘Antiquities of the Jews’ xiv.xiv. § 4].

### **Herodian Dynasty (37 BC–92 AD, with the death of Agrippa II):**

Herod the Great was appointed King of Judea by the Roman Senate in 37 BC and appointed Ananelus as high priest (37-36 BC).

Aristobulus III of Judea (36 BC). Aristobulus III was the grandson of John Hyrcanus II and brother of Mariamne I (Herod's second wife), therefore brother-in-law of Herod the Great; he was murdered by Herod, who also murdered John Hyrcanus II of Judea 30 BC.

Ananelus (restored – 36-30 BC).

Joshua ben Fabus (30-23 BC).

Simon ben Boethus (23-5 BC; Father of Mariamne II, Herod's third wife).

Matthias ben Theophilus, 5-4 BC. On the eve of the Day of Atonement, he became ritually impure and consequently unable to perform the duties of his office, which were performed by his relative Joseph ben Ellem (Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews' xvii. 6, § 4 and <https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/10488-matthias-ben-theophilus> – Jewish Encyclopedia, by Isidore Singer, Samuel Krauss). His deposition, however, was not due to this cause, but to the fact that he was allegedly implicated in the Jewish uprising, when the golden eagle was torn from the Temple gate. Herod the Great had a large golden eagle built and placed over the main gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. Two Jewish rabbis and the common people reacted to this, and the rabbis' disciples removed the eagle, along with the citizens. Matthias ben Theophilus, the high priest, was also one of those who instigated the rebellion. Enraged, Herod had the rabbis and their disciples arrested. Some were sentenced to death and burned alive, while others were punished with severe penalties. Some sources say he placed the eagle there to please Caesar and consolidate his power. Flavius Josephus describes in § 2 that the king had dedicated the great golden eagle to the temple, but he does not mention Caesar Augustus.

Joazar ben Boethus (4 BC, son of Simon ben Boethus).

Eleazar ben Boethus (4-3 BC, also son of Simon ben Boethus, appointed by Archelaus, son of Herod after his death).

Joshua ben Sie (3 BC-6 AD) or Joazar ben Boethus (restored).

Annas (6-15 AD – Ananus ben Seth or Annas ben Seth, the father; Jn. 18: 13; Lk. 3: 2; Acts 4: 6; the Annas of the Gospels; he was appointed by Quirinius, Roman governor in Syria in 6 AD, but at the age of 36 he was deposed by the procurator Valerius Gratus, Roman prefect of the Province of Judea).

Ishmael ben Fabus (Phiabi, 15–16 AD).

Eleazar ben Ananus (son of Annas, 16-17 AD).

Simon ben Camithus (17–18 AD).

Caiaphas (Joseph ben Caiaphas, 18–36 AD, Annas' son-in-law: Lk 3: 2; Jn 18: 13. He was appointed high priest by Valerius Gratus, the Roman procurator who preceded Pontius Pilate; and was deposed by Vitellius, the Roman governor of Syria).

Jonathan ben Ananus, son of Annas (36-37 AD; after the death of Caiaphas; he was appointed by Vitellius, Roman governor of Syria).

Theophilus ben Ananus (37-41 AD).

Simon Cantheras ben Boethus (41–43 AD, descendant of Simon ben Boethus and appointed by Agrippa I).

Matthias ben Ananus (43 AD).

Elioneus ben Simon Cantheras (43–44 AD, son of Simon Cantheras ben Boethus).

Jonathan ben Ananus (son of Annas – restored; 44 AD).

Josephus ben Camydus (44-46 AD, but nothing is known about his identity. He was appointed by Herod V or Herod Pollio King of Chalcis, a city in Ituraea; Herod V ruled from 41 to 48 AD, was the son of Aristobulus IV and grandson of Herod the Great, and brother of Herod Agrippa I).

Ananias ben Nedebeus (46-58 AD, from the time of Paul).

Jonathan (58 AD) →

From that point on all high priests were appointed by Agrippa II:

Ishmael II ben Fabus (restored 58–62 AD; any relation to priest of same name from 15–16 AD or is he his descendant?).

Joseph Cabi ben Simon (62–63 AD; nothing is known about him).

Ananus ben Ananus (63 AD, son of Annas; the youngest of the five brothers. He was removed from his position due to the people's appeal for executing James the Just or James, 'the Lord's brother' – Gal. 1: 19).

Joshua ben Damneus (63 AD).

Josua ben Gamla (63–64 AD; his wife Martha belonged to family of Boethus. He was forced to give way to Mattathias ben Theophilus. Nevertheless, he remained one of the leaders of Jerusalem and, together with Ananus ben Ananus (the previous high priest, Annas the Younger, killed by the rebels in 66 AD for advocating peace with Rome) and other prominent men, unsuccessfully opposed the election of Phinehas, son of Samuel, as high priest by the Zealots).

Mattathias ben Theophilus (65-66 AD, who could be the son of Theophilus, son of Annas (37-41 AD), or descendant of the Matthias ben Theophilus, of 5-4 BC. He was in office when war broke out against the Romans (Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews” xx. 9, § 7). During the conflicts in Jerusalem that preceded Titus’ siege, Mattathias ben Theophilus was deposed (“War of the Jews” iv. 3, § 7); like the other aristocrats, he belonged to the party that supported peace with the Romans, and one of his sons sought refuge among them. On one Day of Atonement, he remained in the Holy of Holies longer than usual, praying for the Sanctuary, which was in danger of destruction by the Zealots. He was killed by Simon Bar Giora, the Zealot. [Isidore Singer & Samuel Krauss – Jewish Encyclopedia).

Phannias ben Samuel (or Phinehas ben Samuel, 67–70 AD), the 83rd high priest since Aaron and of the priestly order of Eniachim [it seems to be 1 Chr. 24: 12, ‘the twelfth division of Jakim,’ where some copies have ‘the division of Eliakim’]. He was a leader of the revolutionary forces and died during the destruction of Herod’s Temple in 70 AD. He was appointed to his office by the casting of lots by the Zealots. Josephus censures him, saying that “He was a man not only unworthy of the high priesthood, but that did not well know what the high priesthood was, such a mere rustic was he,” since he was a farmer who tilled the earth (“War of the Jews,” iv.iii.§ 8). However, in the Talmud [source: Jewish Virtual Library: Klausner, Bayit Sheni, 5 (19512), 208f; Jos. Ant., 4, ch. 3], he is referred to as ‘Nasi’ (נָּסִי), in Jewish priestly literature, meaning ‘prince’ or ‘leader.’ More specifically, in rabbinic literature, the term refers to the leader of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court. This act of the Zealots gave rise to great resentment and was the cause of a civil war between them and the other groups of the people, leading to Titus’ entry into the city and its subsequent destruction.

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