List of High Priests of Israel

This page gives one list of the High Priests of Ancient Israel up to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD. Because of a lack of historical data, this list is incomplete and there may be gaps.

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Line of the High Priests of Israel

The High Priests, like all Levitical priests, belonged to the Aaronic line. The Bible mentions the majority of high priests before the captivity, but does not give a complete list of office holders. Lists would be based on various historical sources. In several periods of gentile rule, high priests were appointed and removed by kings. Still, most high priests came from the Aaronic line. One exception is Menelaus, who may not have been from the Tribe of Levi at all, but from the Tribe of Benjamin.

From the Exodus to Solomon's Temple

The following section is based on information found in the various books of the Bible, including the genealogies given in First Book of Chronicles and the Book of Ezra, the works of Josephus and the early-medieval Seder Olam Zutta.

- Aaron
- Eleazar, son of Aaron (Numbers 20:28)
- Phinehas, son of Eleazar
- Abishua, son of Phinehas
  - The Samaritans insert Shesha as the son of Abishua and father of Bukki.
- Bukki, son of Abishua
- Uzzi, son of Bukki

Though Phinehas and his descendants are not directly attested as high priests, this portion of the genealogy given in 1 Chronicles 6:3-15 is assumed by other sources (including Josephus and Seder Olam Zutta), to give the succession of the office from father to son. At some time, the office was transferred from descendants of Eleazar to those of his brother Itamar. The first known and most notable high priest of Itamar's line was Eli, a contemporary of Samuel.

- Eli, descendant of Ithamar, son of Aaron
- Ahitub, son of Phinehas and grandson of Eli
- Ahijah, son of Ahitub
- Ahimelech, son of Ahijah (or brother of Ahijah and son of Ahitub)
Abiathar, son of Ahimelech

Abiathar was removed from the high priesthood for conspiring against King Solomon, and was replaced by Zadok, son of Ahitub, who oversaw the construction of the First Temple. According to the genealogies given in 1 Chronicles 6:3-15, Zadok was a descendant of Uzzi (through Zerahiah, Meraioth, Amariah and Ahitub) and thus belonged to the line of Eleazar.

First Temple period

From Solomon's time (957 BCE[4]) until the captivity (586 BCE / 425 BCE according to historical Jewish sources[5]), the High Priests officiated in the Temple in Jerusalem. Information about who served in that office diverges between the Bible, Josephus and the Seder 'Olam Zuta. While Josephus and Seder 'Olam Zuta each mention 18 high priests,[6] the genealogy given in 1 Chronicles 6:3-15 gives twelve names, culminating in the last high priest Seriah, father of Jehozadak. However, it is unclear whether all those mentioned in the genealogy between Zadok and Jehozadak were high priests and whether high priests mentioned elsewhere (such as Jehoiada and Jehoiarib) are simply omitted or did not belong to the male line in this genealogy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zadok*</td>
<td>Zadok</td>
<td>Zadok - contemporary of King Solomon</td>
<td>Zadok was High Priest during the construction of the First Temple.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahimaaz</td>
<td>Ahimaaz</td>
<td>Ahimaaz - contemporary of King Rehoboam</td>
<td>Among the “princes/officials” of King Solomon listed in 1 Kings 4:2 &quot;Azariah, son of Zadok, the priest&quot; appears in first place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Azariah</td>
<td>Azariah</td>
<td>Azariah - contemporary of King Abijah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johanan</td>
<td>Joram</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Isus</td>
<td>Joash - contemporary of King Jehoshaphat</td>
<td>An Amariah is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 19:11 as &quot;the chief priest&quot; under King Jehoshaphat</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Jehoiarib - contemporary of King Jehoram</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Jehoshaphat - contemporary of King Ahaziah</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Jehoiada[^8]</td>
<td>Jehoiada - contemporary of King Jehoash</td>
<td>Jehoiada, brother-in-law of King Ahaziah, is mentioned in 2 Kings 11:4-17 as a priest leading the coup against Queen-mother Athaliah and installing Jehoash of Judah as king of Judah.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Axioramos</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>Phideas</td>
<td>Pediah - contemporary of King Jehoash</td>
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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Sudeas</td>
<td>Zedekiah - contemporary of King Amaziah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azariah</td>
<td>Juelus</td>
<td>Joel - contemporary of King Uzziah</td>
<td>Azariah II is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 26:14-18 as a &quot;chief priest&quot; opposing King Uzziah. In 1 Chronicles 5:36 Azariah, son of Johanan is singled out as &quot;he it is that executed the priest's office in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaria</td>
<td>Jotham</td>
<td>Jotham - contemporary of King Jotham</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ahitub II</td>
<td>Urias</td>
<td>Urijah - contemporary of King Ahaz</td>
<td>Uriah is mentioned in 2 Kings 16:10-16 as a priest who, on orders of King Ahaz, replaces the altar in the temple with a new Assyrian-style altar. He is also mentioned as a witness in Isaiah 8:2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>Nerias</td>
<td>Neria - contemporary of King Hezekiah</td>
<td>An Azariah is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 31:10 as &quot;the chief priest, of the house of Zadok&quot; under King Hezekiah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zadok II</td>
<td>Odeas</td>
<td>Hoshaiyah - contemporary of King Manasseh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallum*</td>
<td>Shallum</td>
<td>Shallum - contemporary of King Amon</td>
<td>Shallum, son of Zadok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilkiah*</td>
<td>Elcias</td>
<td>Hilkiah -</td>
<td>Hilkiah, priest at the time of King Josiah.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contemporary of King Josiah and of King Jehoahaz

| Azariah IV* | Azaros | Azariah IV - contemporary of King Jehoiakim | Azariah IV, son of Hilkiah| Chronicles 6:13 |
|-------------|--------|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Seraiah* | Sareas | Seraiah - contemporary of King Jeconiah and of King Zedekiah | Seraiah, son of Azariah IV| (2 Ki 25:18) |

Some name Jehozadak, son of Seraiah, as a high priest prior to being sent to captivity in Babylonia, based on the biblical references to "Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest". According to Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaqi), this is a misreading of the phrase, as "the high priest" does not refer to Jehozadak, who was exiled to Babylon without having served as high priest, but to his son Joshua, who ascended from Babylon at the end of the exile¹⁰

**After the Babylonian Exile**

[¹⁰] Joshua, son of Jehozadak, after the restoration of the Temple. Contemporary of Cyrus the Great (reigned 538-530 BC) and Darius I (reigned 522-486 BC).

- Joiakim, son of Joshua, (Nehemiah 12:10).

- Eliashib, son of Joiakim, (Nehemiah 12:10). Mentioned in the time of Nehemiah in 444 BC.

- Joiada, son of Eliashib, (Nehemiah 12:10) (A son married a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite for which he was driven out of the Temple by Nehemiah) (Nehemiah 13:28)


The five descendants of Joshua are mentioned in Nehemiah, chapter 12, 10f. The chronology given above, based on Josephus, however is not undisputed, with some alternatively placing Jaddua during the time of Darius II (423-405/4 BC) and some supposing one more Johanan and one more Jaddua in the following time, the latter Jaddua being contemporary of Alexander the Great.

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

- Simon I, son of Onias. Josephus identified him as Simeon the Just.[¹¹]

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

- Manasseh, son of Jaddua, brother of Onias I and uncle of Simon I and Eleazar

- Onias II, son of Simon I. Contemporary of Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt, (reigned 246-221 BC)?

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

- Onias III, son of Simon II, (?-175 BC), murdered 170 BC

- Jason, son of Simon, 175-172 BC

- Menelaus, 172-162 BC

- Onias IV, son of Onias III, fled to Egypt and built a Jewish Temple at Leontopolis (closed in 66 AD)

- Alcimus, 162-159 BC

**Inter-Sacerdotium:** It is unknown who held the position of High Priest of Jerusalem between Alcimus' death and the accession of Jonathan. Josephus, in *Jewish Antiquities XX.10*, relates that the office was vacant for seven years, but this is highly unlikely, if not impossible. In religious terms, the High Priest was a necessary part of the rites on the Day of Atonement, a day that could have not been allowed to pass uncelebrated for so long so soon after the restoration of the Temple service. Politically, Israel's overlords probably would not have allowed a power vacuum to last that length of time.
In another passage (XII.10 §6, XII.11 §2) Josephus suggests that Judas Maccabeus, the brother of Jonathan, held the office for three years, succeeding Alcimus. However, Judas actually predeceased Alcimus by one year. The nature of Jonathan's accession to the high priesthood makes it unlikely that Judas held that office during the inter-sacerdotium. The Jewish Encyclopedias try to harmonize the contradictions found in Josephus by supposing that Judas held the office "immediately after the consecration of the Temple (165-162), that is, before the election of Alcimus.”

It has been argued that the founder of the Qumran community, the Teacher of Righteousness (Moreh Zedek), was High Priest (but not necessarily the sole occupant) during the inter-sacerdotium and was driven off by Jonathan.

**Hasmonean dynasty**

- Jonathan Apphus, 153-143 BC
- Simon Thassi, brother of Jonathan Apphus, 142-134 BC
- John Hyrcanus I, son of Simeon Tassi, 134-104 BC
- Aristobulus I, son of John Hyrcanus, 104-103 BC
- Alexander Jannaeus, son of John Hyrcanus, 103-76 BC
- John Hyrcanus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus, 76-66 BC
- Aristobulus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus, 66-63 BC
- Hyrcanus II (restored), 63-40 BC
- Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, 40-37 BC

**Herodian-Roman period**

- Ananelus, 37-36 BC
- Aristobulus III, paternal grandson of Aristobulus, 36 BC
- He was the last of the Hasmoneans; II and brother of Herod's second wife Mariamne I
- Ananelus (restored), 36-30 BC
- Joshua ben Fabus, 30-23 BC
- Simon ben Boethus, 23-5 BC (his daughter Mariamne II was third wife of Herod the Great)
- Matthias ben Theophilus, 5-4 BC
- Joazar ben Boethus, 4 BC
- Eleazar ben Boethus, 4-3 BC
- Joshua ben Sib, 3 BC - ?
- Joazar ben Boethus (restored), ? - 6 AD
- Ananus ben Seth, 6-15
- Ishmael ben Fabus, 15-16
- Eleazar ben Ananus, 16-17
- Simon ben Camithus, 17-18
- Joseph Caiaphas, 18-36 (son-in-law of the high priest Ananus ben Seth)
- Jonathan ben Ananus, 36-37
- Theophilus ben Ananus, 37-41
- Simon Cantatheras ben Boethus, 41-43
- Matthias ben Ananus, 43
- Eleoneus ben Simon Cantatheras, 43-44
- Jonathan ben Ananus, 44 (restored)
- Josephus ben Camydus, 44-46
- Ananias son of Nedebeus, 46-59
- Jonathan, 58
- Ishmael II ben Fabus, 58-62 (relation to priest of same name from 15-16 CE?)
- Joseph Cabi, 62-63
- Ananus ben Ananus, 63
- Jesus son of Damneus, 63
- Joshua ben Gamla, 63-64 (his wife Martha belonged to family of Boethus)
External Links

- Article in the Jewish Encyclopedia

References

Notes

2. *Antiquities of the Jews* 10:151–153 (10.8.6)
3. According to Abu l-Fath, a Samaritan chronicler writing in the 14th century CE, this transfer was the result of a civil war between the followers of Uzzi and Eli. Samaritans claim descent from the followers of Buzzi, who in this account stayed at Mount Gerizim while Eli's followers moved to Shiloh. (Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, *The Keepers, An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans*; Hendrickson Publishing, 2002, p. 11–12.)


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