

1. Josephus, Antiquities 12:5:1, William Whiston tr.

About this time, upon the death of Onias the High Priest, they gave the High Priesthood to Jesus his brother: for that son which Onias left [or Onias IV.] was yet but an infant... But this Jesus, who was the brother of Onias, was deprived of the High Priesthood by the King, who was angry with him, and gave it to his younger brother; whose name also was Onias. For Simon had these three sons; to each of which the High Priesthood came: as we have already informed the reader. This Jesus changed his name to *Jason*; but Onias was called *Menelaus*. Now as the former High Priest, Jesus, raised a sedition against Menelaus, who was ordained after him, the multitude were divided between them both. And the sons of Tobias took the part of Menelaus: but the greater part of the people assisted Jason; and by that means Menelaus, and the sons of Tobias were distressed, and retired to Antiochus, and informed him, that they were desirous to leave the laws of their country, and the Jewish way of living according to them; and to follow the King's laws, and the Grecian way of living...

2. Ramban, Commentary to Bereishit 49:10

ולפי דעתי היו המלכים המולכים על ישראל משאר השבטים אחרי דוד עוברים על דעת אביהם ומעבירים נחלה, והם היו סומכים על דבר אחיה השילוני הנביא שמשח לירבעם...

וזה היה עונש החשמונאים שמלכו בבית שני, כי היו חסידי עליון, ואלמלא הם נשתכחו התורה והמצות מישראל, ואף על פי כן נענשו עונש גדול, כי ארבעת בני חשמונאי הזקן החסידים המולכים זה אחר זה עם כל גבורתם והצלחתם נפלו ביד אויביהם בחרב... ואפשר גם כן שהיה עליהם חטא במלכותם מפני שהיו כהנים ונצטוו (במדבר י"ז) תשמרו את כהונתכם לכל דבר המזבח ולמבית לפרכת ועבודתם עבודת מתנה אתן את כהונתכם, ולא היה להם למלוך רק לעבוד את עבודת ד':

In my opinion, the kings from other tribes who reigned after David [in Yisrael] violated the wishes of their ancestors, switching the lots of tribes, relying on the words of Achiyah the Shilonite who anointed Yeravam...

This was the reason for the punishment of the Hasmoneans who reigned in the Second Temple. They were pious servants of G-d, and without them the Torah and commandments would have been forgotten from Israel, but they received a great punishment, as the four pious sons of the elder Chashmonai who reigned in succession, with all of their might and success, fell by the sword of their enemies...

And it is also possible that their sin in reigning was because they were kohanim. They were commanded (Bamidbar 18:7), "Guard your priesthood for all matters of the altar, from the House to the curtain, and serve; I will give you your priesthood as a gift of service," and they should not have reigned, only to serve the service of Gd.

3. Book of Maccabees I 14:39-49, from Lancelot Brenton ed. of Septuagint c/o sefaria.org

The people therefore sang the acts of Simon.... [Seleucid] King Demetrius also confirmed him in the high priesthood according to those things, And made him one of his friends, and honoured him with great honour. For he had heard say, that the Romans had called the Jews their friends and confederates and brethren; and that they had entertained the ambassadors of Simon honourably; Also that the Jews and priests were well pleased that Simon should be their governor and high priest for ever, until there should arise a faithful prophet; Moreover that he should be their captain, and should take charge of the sanctuary, to set them over their works, and over the country, and over the armour, and over the fortresses, that, I say, he should take charge of the sanctuary; Beside this, that he should be obeyed of every man, and that all the writings in the country should be made in his name, and that he should be clothed in purple, and wear gold...

4. Levine, Lee, *Hasmonean Jerusalem: A Jewish city in a Hellenistic orbit*, Judaism 46:2 (Spring 1997)

The Hasmoneans themselves quickly adopted Hellenistic mores; they instituted holidays celebrating military victories (Nicanor Day on the 13th of Adar), as did the Greeks; they signed treaties with Rome and forged close alliances with the upper strata of Jerusalem society, whose hellenized proclivities-as those of the Hasmoneans themselves (see below)-are attested by names such as Alexander, Diodorus, Apollonius, Eupolemus, Numenius, Antiochus, Jason, Antipater, and Aeneas.

In the subsequent period of Hasmonean rule (141-63 B.C.E.), instances of Hellenization within Jerusalem became much more commonplace. The document in 1 Maccabees 14 recording the public appointment of Simon as ethnarch, high priest, and strategos is written in a style strikingly reminiscent of documents from the Hellenistic world. The structure of this declaration, the extensive arguments invoked to justify and explain such appointments,

the use of purple robes and gold ornaments by the Hasmonean ruler, the dating of an era commencing with Simon's appointment, and, finally, recording the text of this document on bronze tablets and placing them in a prominent place in the Temple area and in the (Temple?) treasury are all elements borrowed directly from well-known Hellenistic practice.

5. Seneca, *Mad Hercules*

He who boasts his race boasts glory not his own.

6. Talmud, Bava Batra 109b

אמר רבי אלעזר לעולם ידבק אדם בטובים שהרי משה שנשא בת יתרו יצא ממנו יהונתן אהרן שנשא בת עמינדב יצא ממנו פנחס...
Rabbi Elazar said: One should always adhere to the good, for Moshe married Yitro's daughter and Yehonatan emerged from him, and Aharon married [Elisheva] the daughter of Aminadav and Pinchas emerged from him.

7. Talmud, Bava Batra 110a

הנושא אשה צריך שיבדוק באחיה, שנאמר "ויקח אהרן את אלישבע בת עמינדב אחות נחשון" - ממשמע שנאמר 'בת עמינדב' איני יודע שאחות נחשון היא? מה תלמוד לומר "אחות נחשון"? מכאן שהנושא אשה צריך שיבדוק באחיה.
One who marries a woman should check her brothers, as it says, "And Aharon married Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon" – since it says "daughter of Aminadav," don't I know she is Nachshon's sister?! Why does it say "sister of Nachshon"? From here we see that one who marries a woman should check her brothers.

8. Talmud, Kiddushin 70b

כשהקב"ה משרה שכינתו אין משרה אלא על משפחות מיוחסות שבישראל, שנא' "בעת ההיא נאם ד' אהיה לאלקים לכל משפחות ישראל (ירמי' ל:כה)" - "לכל ישראל" לא נאמר אלא "לכל משפחות".

When Gd makes His Shechinah manifest, He only does so upon families with proper Jewish lineage, as Yirmiyahu 30:25 says, "At that time, Gd declares, I will be Gd for all of the families of Israel" – not "for all Israel", but "for all of the families."

9. Talmud, Kiddushin 76b

"ולא מסנהדרין ולמעלה" - מאי טעמא? דתני רב יוסף: כשם שבית דין מנוקין בצדק, כך מנוקין מכל מום...
"And [there is no need to investigate the lineage of] someone who has been on the Sanhedrin or higher" – Why? Rav Yosef taught: Just as the court must be clean in its justice, so it must be clean of any defect...

Building a Sanctuary for Gd

10. Talmud, Rosh haShanah 24b

שפודין של ברזל היו, וחיפום בבעץ. העשירו - עשאוהו של כסף, חזרו העשירו - עשאוהו של זהב.
It was made of iron spits, covered with tin. When they became wealthier they made it of silver. When they became still wealthier, they made it of gold.

11. Shemot 31:2-5

ראַה קראתי בשם בצלאל בן-אורי בן-חור למטה יהודה: וָאָמַלְא אֹתוֹ רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים...
See, I have called the name of Betzalel, son of Uri, son of Chur, of the tribe of Yehudah. And I have filled him with the spirit of Gd...

12. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 40:1

"א"ר ברכיה בשם ר' חייא בר אבא שכר היראה תורה, שמיוכבד העמיד הקב"ה את משה וזכה שתכתב התורה על שמו... מרים ע"י שסרה מן הרע ומן החטא העמיד ממנה הקב"ה בצלאל וזכה לחכמה ולבינה...
Rabbi Berechyah cited Rabbi Chiya bar Abba: The reward for reverence is Torah, for from Yocheved Gd brought Moshe, and he merited that Torah was recorded in his name... Miriam avoided evil and sin, and Gd brought from her Betzalel, who achieved wisdom and understanding...

13. Shemot 31:6

וָאָנִי הֵנָּה נִתְּתִי אֹתוֹ אֶתְּהֵאֲבִיב בְּוָאֲחִיסְטָמָה לְמַטְהֵדָן וּבָלָב כָּל־חֲכָמִים לֵב נִתְּתִי חֲכָמָה...

And I, behold, I have placed with him Oholiav son of Achisamach of the tribe of Dan, and in the heart of each knowledgeable person I have placed knowledge...

14. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 40:4

א"ר חנינא בן פזי אין לך גדול משבט יהודה ואין לך ירוד משבט דן שהיה מן הלחינות... אמר הקב"ה יבא ויזדווג לו שלא יהו מבזין אותו ושלא יהא אדם רוחו גסה עליו לפי שהגדול והקטן שוין לפני המקום... המשכן בשני שבטים אלו נעשה, וכן המקדש, שלמה מיהודה וחירם (מלכים א ז) בן אשה אלמנה ממטה נפתלי...

Rabbi Chanina ben Pazi said: There is none greater than the tribe of Yehudah and none lowlier than the tribe of Dan, which came from the maids... Gd said: Let him be matched with Betzalel, so that they will not mock him, and so that no one will be arrogant, for the great and small are equal before Gd... The Mishkan was made by these two tribes. And so, too, the Beit haMikdash, Shlomo was from Yehudah and Hiram was "the son of a widow from Naftali"...

15. Divrei haYamim II 2:12-13

ועתה שלחתי איש חכם יודע בינה לחורם אבי: בן אשה מן בנות דן ואביו איש צרי, יודע לעשות בזהב ובכסף בנחשת...
I have now sent you a knowledgeable, understanding man, my master craftsman Hiram. He is the son of a woman from Dan and his father is a man of Tyre; he knows how to work in gold, silver, copper...

16. Melachim I 7:14

וישלח המלך שלמה ויקח את חירם מצר: בן אשה אלמנה הוא ממטה נפתלי ואביו איש צרי חרש נחשת וימלא את החכמה ואת התבונה ואת הדעת לעשות כל מלאכה בנחשת ויבוא אל המלך שלמה ויעש את כל מלאכתו:

And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a coppersmith. He was filled with knowledge and understanding and intelligence, to perform all of the tasks involving copper. He came to King Solomon and performed all of his tasks.

17. Malbim to Melachim I 7:14

ולי נראה שמה שכתוב בדברי הימים ששלח מלך חירם בכתב אל שלמה "ועתה שלחתי לך..." זה היה אביו של חירם זה, והיה שמו גם כן חירם, והוא נשלח מאת מלך צור בתחלת הבנין... ואחר שבע שנים מת, ושלח שלמה אחר בנו, ועל זה אמר, "וישלח שלמה ויקח את חירם מצור," כי הראשון בא אליו בפקודת מלך צור והשני בא על שם ששלח שלמה אחריו, והוא היה בן אשה אלמנה ממטה נפתלי, והיתה אלמנה כי מת חירם בעלה.

It appears to me that when Divrei haYamim says that King Hiram sent a written message to King Solomon, "Now I have sent you," that referred to the father of this Hiram, and his name was also Hiram. He was sent from the King of Tyre at the start of construction... And he died after seven years, and Solomon sent for his son. Regarding this it says, "And Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre," for the first came at the order of the King of Tyre and the second came because Solomon had sent for him. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and she was a widow because her husband, Hiram, had died.

18. Ezra 2:1-64

19. Rabbi Hayyim Angel, *The Literary Significance of the Name Lists in Ezra-Nehemiah*, JBQ July 2007

One also might argue that the brevity of the account in E-N, coupled with the astonishing attention given to the people who arrived to rebuild the Temple, suggests a different conclusion: The Torah and the Book of Kings highlight the physical structure of the sanctuaries, and the heroes who built them. Now in E-N, the *people* are at the center of the activity, as [Tamara Cohn] Eskenazi asserts, receiving literary endorsement by the inclusion of the lengthy name list in Chapter 2...

Chanukah

20. Shemot 32:26

ויעמד משה בַּשַּׁעַר הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לַד' אֵלַי...

And Moshe stood at the gate of the camp and he declared, "Who is for Gd – with me!"...

21. Maccabees I 2:24-28, from Lancelot Brenton ed. of Septuagint c/o sefaria.org

Now when he had left speaking these words, there came one of the Jews in the sight of all to sacrifice on the altar which was at Modin, according to the king's commandment. Which thing when Mattathias saw, he was inflamed

with zeal, and his reins trembled, neither could he forbear to shew his anger according to judgment: wherefore he ran, and slew him upon the altar. Also the king's commissioner, who compelled men to sacrifice, he killed at that time, and the altar he pulled down. Thus dealt he zealously for the law of G-d like as Phinees did unto Zambri the son of Salom. And Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me.

22. Judith's Menorah

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/912946/>

Balancing the Messages

23. Our exceptions Pinchas the Kohen, Ovadia the Prophet, Shemayah/Avtalyon the Judges

24. Talmud, Nedarim 81a

ומפני מה אין מצויין ת"ה לצאת ת"ה מבניהן? אמר רב יוסף: שלא יאמרו תורה ירושה היא להם

Why isn't it common for Torah scholars to have Torah scholars among their children? Rav Yosef: Lest people say Torah is an inheritance.

25. Talmud, Menachot 53a

אמרי ליה רבנן לרבי פרידא: רבי עזרא בר בריה דרבי אבטולס דהוא עשירי לר' אלעזר בן עזריה דהוא עשירי לעזרא קאי אבבא, אמר: מאי כולי האי? אי בר אוריין הוא יאי, אי בר אוריין ובר אבהן יאי, ואי בר אבהן ולא בר אוריין אישא תיכליה!

The Sages said to Rabbi Preida: Rabbi Ezra, grandson of Rabbi Avtulus, who is tenth to Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah, who is tenth to Ezra, is standing at the gate. [Rabbi Preida] said, "What is all this? If he is worthy of issuing rulings, good. If he is worthy of issuing rulings and he is a child of [great] ancestors, good. And if he is a child of [great] ancestors and not worthy of issuing rulings, let fire consume him!"

26. Talmud, Berachot 20b

"וחייבין בתפלה" - דרחמי נינהו.

"And they are obligated in prayer" – for it is [an appeal for] mercy.

Review questions

- (1) What four communal leadership roles seem to depend on lineage?
- (2) What are three reasons to elevate people with good lineage?
- (3) What demonstrates that the Mishkan was a product of meritocratic effort?
- (4) What demonstrates that the first Beit haMikdash was a product of meritocratic effort?
- (5) What demonstrates that the second Beit haMikdash was a product of meritocratic effort?
- (6) What aspects of Chanukah demonstrate that this victory was a product of meritocratic effort?
- (7) What three Talmudic sources demonstrate that access to Gd is meritocratic?

27. Rabbi Shammai Ginsburg, Imrei Shammai to Bamidbar 1:4

אמרו על חכם אחד, לא ממשפחה מיוחסת, שקינא בו איש בור ועם הארץ, שהקניט לחכם ואמר לו: הרינו מיוחס יותר ממך! ענה לו החכם, בך היחוס מסתיים ובי מתחיל היחוס.

They said of a certain sage, not from a family of lineage, that an ignorant and unlearned person was jealous of him. He antagonized the sage, saying, "I have greater lineage than you!" The sage replied, "With you, the lineage ends; with me, the lineage begins."