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Autor(en): **Woods, Jonathan**

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Killing for Yhwh

Legitimation through Inner-Israelite Violence in 1 Maccabees

Jonathan Woods

The revolt of the Hasmoneans is often portrayed as the struggle between Torah-observant Israelites and their Seleucid overlords.¹ However, not everyone within Judea came under the banner of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers. As Lester Grabbe notes, there were likely several anti-Seleucid groups competing against each other at this time, «perhaps even with violence on occasion.»² The internal struggle within Judea is to a large extent concealed within 1 and 2 Maccabees, but there is still enough evidence to indicate that there were periods of violent struggles between competing groups within Judea.

The Hasmoneans eventually overcame their internal and external opponents to establish their high priestly rule within Judea. However, when it came to recording their heroic struggle, they were left with a difficult question: should they omit the violence that they committed against their fellow Israelites? Such an approach would have had several advantages. First, the Hasmoneans could have presented themselves as the leaders of a unified movement. The entire nation supported them. It is possible that the Hasmoneans maintained significant support throughout their insurrection, but it is also clear that their support was not unanimous and waxed and waned at various stages.³ It could also be difficult to reconcile the claims that their movement was supported by God at the same time that it targeted fellow Israelites. It is true that memories of the Hasmonean violence may have lingered on in the memory of those who witnessed it, but outside of written sources it is questionable how long these memories would have persisted.

However, the pro-Hasmonean author of 1 Maccabees did not choose to silently omit the violence that the Hasmoneans committed against their fellow

¹ Throughout this article, I use the term «Israelites» instead of «Jews». This decision is due to the repeated use of the phrase «sons of Israel» within 1 Maccabees.

² Grabbe 2020: 359.

³ Grabbe 2020: 381. For a full discussion of possible challengers to the Hasmoneans, see Eckhardt 2016: 55–70.

Israelites.⁴ Instead, he exulted in it and used it as a means of affirming the legitimacy of their rule.⁵ The author of 1 Maccabees is repeatedly concerned with affirming Hasmonean legitimacy, and his systematic efforts show the importance of this issue within the Hasmonean court. Jonathan Goldstein states, «1 Maccabees is a history written to demonstrate the right of the Hasmonaeen dynasty, descended from the zealous priest Mattathias and his son Simon, to be hereditary high priests and princes ruling the Jews.»⁶ Likewise, Dongbin Choi argues, «1 Maccabees selectively recounts the events concerning the Maccabean revolt with a pro-Hasmonean bias.»⁷ Within the account of 1 Maccabees, only two Jewish groups carry out violent acts against Israelites: the Hasmoneans and Alcimus and his followers.

Alcimus became high priest during the reign of Demetrius I while Judas' revolt was still ongoing. He therefore represented a significant rival to the Hasmonean attempt to gain power. It is likely that there were violent confrontations between these rival groups, the memory of which may be preserved within the account of 1 Macc 7. However, not all violence is presented equally. The violence of the Hasmoneans is presented as righteous and zealous, continuing in the tradition of heroes of the past. Contrastingly, the violence of Alcimus is wicked, traitorous, and a mark of his unworthiness to hold the office of high priest.

This article will explore how the memory of violence during the Maccabean revolt is exploited by the author of 1 Maccabees to support Hasmonean interests. First, the book closely identifies members of the Hasmonean family with Phinehas, the zealous priest whose violent behaviour is rewarded with eternal priesthood in Num 25. The author emphasises the Hasmoneans' descent from

4 On 1 Maccabees as unconditionally pro-Hasmonean, see Bartlett 2003: 807–830; Rappaport 2004; van der Kooij 2012: 29–49; Williams 2015: 261–272.

5 The presentation in 1 Maccabees contrasts with that of 2 Maccabees, which downplays Hasmonean violence against Israelites. Judas only uses violence against Israelites on one occasion to punish soldiers who are bribed to betray Israel (2 Macc 10:22). The only Israelite character who commits extensive violence against his fellow Israelites is Jason. However, his actions are unequivocally condemned. The narrator comments that Jason did not realise «that success at the cost of one's kindred is the greatest misfortune» (οὐ συννοῶν τὴν εἰς τοὺς συγγενεῖς εὐήμεριαν δυσημεριαν εἶναι τὴν μεγίστην) (5:6). From this comment, it seems that intra-Israelite violence could never be justifiable to the author of 2 Maccabees.

6 Goldstein 1988: 73.

7 Choi 2021: 18.

Phinehas and portrays them analogously to their ancestor.⁸ They can therefore claim priestly legitimacy from their ancestry and from their actions.⁹ And subsequently, their priestly legitimacy and historical analogy to Phinehas legitimises their acts of violence.

Second, 1 Maccabees sets up a contrast between the Torah-observant and zealous violence of the Hasmoneans and the evil violence inflicted by the high priest Alcimus and the renegades who follow him. Alcimus is the only rival claimant to the high priesthood within 1 Maccabees, and his negative portrayal is inflated to delegitimize him and highlight the Hasmoneans' virtue.¹⁰ The way in which the author of 1 Maccabees uses the portrayal of Alcimus will be demonstrated by a comparison with his presentation in 2 Maccabees. One of the primary aspects of Alcimus' negative portrayal, and a major difference between his presentation in 1 and 2 Maccabees, are the examples of violence that he unnecessarily inflicts upon fellow Israelites. Throughout 1 Maccabees, the author repeatedly draws a distinction between good and bad violence as represented by the characters of the Hasmoneans and Alcimus. This contrast is achieved through a combination of written tradition and recent memory that reflects a distinctly pro-Hasmonean bias.

1. Righteous Killing

The opening chapter of 1 Maccabees describes the beginning of Seleucid persecution within Israel. «Certain renegades» (υἱοὶ παράνομοι) (1:11) make a covenant with the Gentiles that involves them adopting «the ordinances of the Gentiles» (τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἔθνῶν) (1:13).¹¹ The two examples cited in the opening section are the construction of a gymnasium in Jerusalem and the removal of the marks of circumcision. Antiochus Epiphanes then comes to Jerusalem, enters the sanctuary, and plunders it. He issues an order that everyone should be one people without different customs. As a result, proper offerings cease, the Temple is defiled, unclean animals are sacrificed, and children remain uncircumcised. The Seleucid decree was enforced by inspectors, and

many of the people, everyone who forsook the law, joined them, and they did evil in the land.

8 Doran 1959: 50 discusses how descent from Phinehas was used to legitimate Hasmonean claims.

9 Choi 2021: 19.

10 Choi 2021: 19.

11 English translations taken from NRSV.

καὶ συνηθροίσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ πολλοὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς πᾶς ὁ ἐγκαταλείπων τὸν νόμον καὶ ἐποίησαν κακὰ ἐν τῇ γῆ (1:52).

Anyone who adhered to the Law was killed. The narrator concludes the opening section by declaring:

Many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. Very great wrath came upon Israel.

καὶ πολλοὶ ἐν Ἰσραηλ ἐκραταιώθησαν καὶ ὠχυρώθησαν ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῦ μὴ φαγεῖν κοινὰ καὶ ἐπεδέξαντο ἀποθανεῖν ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν τοῖς βρώμασιν καὶ μὴ βεβηλώσωσιν διαθήκην ἁγίαν καὶ ἀπέθανον. καὶ ἐγένετο ὀργὴ μεγάλη ἐπὶ Ἰσραηλ σφόδρα (1:62-64).

Mattathias and his family are introduced into this scene of Israelite martyrdom and foreign oppression. He and his sons leave Jerusalem and settle in Modein, where they mourn what is happening in Jerusalem. However, the king's officers soon arrive there and order the inhabitants to offer sacrifices. They appeal to Mattathias as a leader of the community to be the first to offer sacrifice. He refuses and states that he and his sons will never be induced to offer sacrifice and abandon the religion of their ancestors. Mattathias' defiant response does not have the intended effect, as the text goes on to state that

[w]hen he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein.

καὶ ὡς ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν τοὺς λόγους τούτους προσήλθεν ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς πάντων θυσιάσαι ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ ἐν Μωδεῖν (2:23).

However, the apostate was not prepared for Mattathias' response:

When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time, he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar.

καὶ εἶδεν Ματταθίας καὶ ἐζήλωσεν, καὶ ἐτρόμησαν οἱ νεφροὶ αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν θυμὸν κατὰ τὸ κρίμα καὶ δραμῶν ἔσφαξεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν. καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦ βασιλέως τὸν ἀναγκάζοντα θύειν ἀπέκτεινεν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ καὶ τὸν βωμόν καθεῖλεν (2:24-25).

In his fury, Mattathias kills both the offender and the gentile who was enforcing it. The narrator summarises the actions of Mattathias by comparing him to Phinehas:

Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.

καὶ ἐζήλωσεν τῷ νόμῳ καθὼς ἐποίησεν Φινεες τῷ Ζαμβρι υἱῷ Σαλωμ (2:26).¹²

First Maccabees 2:26 is a direct reference to the story of Israel's idolatry in Num 25. Many scholars have observed that 1 Macc 2:23-26 is modelled on Num 25.¹³ Benedikt Eckhardt even describes it as «a biblically inspired invention».¹⁴ In that narrative, the Israelites are seduced by Moabite women and start to worship their gods. God becomes angry with Israel and sends a plague against them. As the plague is ravaging the Israelite camp,

one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites.

καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ ἐλθὼν προσήγαγεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν Μαδιανῶτιν ἐναντίον Μωυσῆ καὶ ἐναντι πάσης συναγωγῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ (Num 25:6).¹⁵

Just as in 1 Maccabees, this public act of disobedience does not go unpunished:

When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he got up and left the congregation. Taking a spear in his hand, he went after the Israelite man into the tent, and pierced the two of them, the Israelite and the woman.

καὶ ἰδὼν Φινεες υἱὸς Ἐλεάζαρ υἱοῦ Ἀαρων τοῦ ἱερέως ἐξανέστη ἐκ μέσου τῆς συναγωγῆς καὶ λαβὼν σειρομάστιν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ εἰσῆλθεν ὀπίσω τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ Ἰσραηλίτου εἰς τὴν κάμινον καὶ ἀπεκέντησεν ἀμφοτέρους, τὸν τε ἄνθρωπον τὸν Ἰσραηλίτην καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα (Num 25:7-8).

The plot parallels between these stories are significant:

12 The historicity of the account of Mattathias has been challenged by numerous scholars. For an overview of the main arguments against its historicity, see Sievers 1990: 29–36; Bernhardt 2017: 275–285; Grabbe 2020: 359f.

13 Goldstein 1976: 6f; Sievers 1990: 30f; Mendels 2013: 20; Borchardt 2014: 57.

14 Eckhardt 2016: 69.

15 I have quoted Greek translations of the text of Numbers rather than the Hebrew text in order to provide a clearer comparison with the Greek text of 1 Maccabees. However, the Greek text of 1 Maccabees is widely acknowledged to be a translation of a Hebrew original, and one cannot be sure which Greek version of Numbers the translator of 1 Maccabees used, if any. Choi notes that 1 Maccabees is written in the style of Septuagint, but there are also many differences with OG texts (39f.). Many of the textual parallels identified here rely upon plot and thematic parallels rather than shared lexemes. For a more thorough discussion of the issue of the Hebrew original and its relation to the Septuagint, see Choi 2021: 32–44.

Table 1: 1 Maccabees 2 and Numbers 25 parallels

1 Maccabees 1-2

«Very great wrath came upon Israel»

(καὶ ἐγένετο ὀργή μεγάλη ἐπὶ Ἰσραηλ σφόδρα) (1:64)

«Mattathias and his sons tore their clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned greatly»

(καὶ διέρρηξεν ματταθίας καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν καὶ περιεβάλλοντο σάκκους καὶ ἐπένθησαν σφόδρα) (2:14)

«When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein»

(καὶ ὡς ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν τοὺς λόγους τούτους προσήλθεν ἀνὴρ Ἰουδαῖος ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς πάντων θυσιάσαι ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ ἐν Μωδεῖν) (2:23).

«When Mattathias saw it»

(καὶ εἶδεν Ματταθίας) (2:24)

«He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar»

(καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν θυμὸν κατὰ τὸ κρίμα καὶ δραμῶν ἔσφαξεν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὸν βωμόν. καὶ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦ βασιλέως τὸν ἀναγκάζοντα θύειν ἀπέκτεινεν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ καὶ τὸν βωμόν καθεῖλεν) (2:25).

«He burned with zeal for the Law»

(καὶ ἐζήλωσεν τῷ νόμῳ) (2:26)

Numbers 25

«In order that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel»

(καὶ ἀποστραφήσεται ὀργή θυμοῦ κυρίου ἀπὸ Ἰσραηλ) (25:4)

«While they (the congregation) were weeping at the entrance of the tent of meeting»

(αὐτοὶ δὲ ἔκλαιον παρὰ τὴν θύραν τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου) (25:6)

«Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman into his family, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the whole congregation of the Israelites»

(καὶ ἰδοὺ ἄνθρωπος τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ ἐλθὼν προσήγαγεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν Μαδιανῶτιν ἐναντίον Μωυσῆ καὶ ἔναντι πάσης συναγωγῆς υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ) (25:6).

«When Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, saw it»

(καὶ ἰδὼν Φινεες υἱὸς Ἐλεάζαρ υἱοῦ Ἀαρων τοῦ ἱερέως) (25:7)

«Taking a spear in his hand, he went after the Israelite man into the tent, and pierced the two of them, the Israelite and the woman»

(λαβὼν σειρομάστιγν ἐν τῇ χειρὶ εἰσῆλθεν ὀπίσω τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τοῦ Ἰσραηλίτου εἰς τὴν κάμινον καὶ ἀπεκέντησεν ἀμφοτέρους, τὸν τε ἄνθρωπον τὸν Ἰσραηλίτην καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα) (25:7-8).

«Because he was zealous for his God»

(ἀνθ' ὧν ἐζήλωσεν τῷ θεῷ αὐτοῦ) (25:13)

The actions of these two violent priests are almost identical. A period of apostasy results in wrath coming upon Israel. Those faithful to Yhwh mourn Israel's sinful acts. These priests witness someone publicly committing a sin, and they resort to violence. These acts of priestly violence are justified as zeal for either the law in 1 Maccabees or for God in Numbers. They kill the Israelite offender as well as the Gentile who is encouraging them to break the law. These parallels, alongside the direct reference to Phinehas, signal an allusion to Num 25. In particular, a close analogical relationship is established between Phinehas and Mattathias.

Following Mattathias' violent outburst, he forms a band of those faithful to the Law, who go throughout Israel enforcing the Law. The narrator describes how they organised an army and struck down sinners in their anger and renegades in their wrath.

καὶ συνεστήσαντο δύναμιν καὶ ἐπάταξαν ἁμαρτωλοὺς ἐν ὀργῇ αὐτῶν (2:44).

Although the violence carried out by Mattathias and his followers does not directly parallel the actions of Phinehas, he is acting in the spirit of the zealous priest. Violence is the only response to lawbreakers. As Lester Grabbe notes, the narrative openly admits that the first targets of the Hasmoneans were Israelites: «In spite of the fine words about the Maccabean fight for the law against the heathen, Judas's first excursions were against his fellow Jews, those they considered as collaborators».¹⁶ Intra-Israelite violence is presented as the foundation for the revolt.

However, Mattathias is unable to cleanse Israel before his death. In a deathbed speech to his sons, he laments the state of Israel and calls on his sons to

show zeal for the law and give your lives for the covenant of our ancestors.

ζηλώσατε τῷ νόμῳ καὶ δότε τὰς ψυχὰς ὑμῶν ὑπὲρ διαθήκης πατέρων ἡμῶν (2:50).

He commissions his sons to continue his acts of violence against anyone who threatens the covenant. He then commands them to «remember the deeds of the ancestors, which they did in their generations; and you will receive great honour and an everlasting name» (καὶ μνήσθητε τὰ ἔργα τῶν πατέρων ἃ ἐποίησαν ἐν ταῖς γενεαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ δέξασθε δόξαν μεγάλην καὶ ὄνομα αἰώνιον) (2:51). He mentions eleven figures from Israel's traditional past, but he gives a special prominence to Phinehas,¹⁷ who is the only person in Mattathias' list described as «our

¹⁶ Grabbe 2020: 362.

¹⁷ Rappaport 2013: 715.

ancestor». ¹⁸ Mattathias describes how «Phinehas our ancestor, because he was deeply zealous, received the covenant of everlasting priesthood» (Φινεες ὁ πατήρ ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ζηλώσει ζῆλον ἔλαβεν διαθήκην ἱερωσύνης αἰωνίας) (2:54).¹⁹ His final act is to appoint Simon as the patriarch and Judas as the military leader. With his final breath, he calls upon his sons to «pay back the Gentiles in full and obey the commands of the law» (ἀνταπόδοτε ἀνταπόδομα τοῖς ἔθνεσιν καὶ προσέχετε εἰς πρόσταγμα τοῦ νόμου) (2:68).

Mattathias' speech contains two primary messages: fight against the Gentiles and lawbreakers; and you will be rewarded if you are faithful. The emphasis on these two aspects highlights that the analogy between Phinehas and Mattathias is incomplete. In Num 25, God tells Moses that «Phinehas ... has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them» (κατέπαυσεν τὸν θυμὸν μου ἀπὸ υἰῶν Ἰσραὴλ ἐν τῷ ζηλώσει μου τὸν ζῆλον ἐν αὐτοῖς) (25:11). Phinehas' zeal saves Israel. As a reward, God gives him and his descendants «a covenant of perpetual priesthood» (διαθήκη ἱερατείας αἰωνία) (25:13). Despite acting in a similar manner, Mattathias does not turn wrath away from Israel. He does not complete his mission. As a result, he does not receive a reward.²⁰ Instead, he must call upon his sons, specifically Judas and Simon, to continue his campaign.

18 The importance attached to ancient ancestry is discussed by Bloch and Zerubavel. Bloch states, «Antiquity is lineage's chief claim to legitimacy; and the older the genealogy, the more prestigious and powerful that claim becomes» (1983: 84). Zerubavel comments further, «Despite the fact that the exact nature of a person's ties to his ancestors becomes increasingly vague and the amount of genetic material he shares with them actually decreases, the more remote from him they are, the more we value those ties» (2012: 56). He also provides a list of political rulers who stretch their pedigree to enhance their legitimacy.

19 The praise of the ancestors in Sirach provides an interesting comparison to 1 Macc 2. Phinehas is given a prominent position, described as ranking «third in glory» (τρίτος εἰς δόξαν) (Sir 45:23), subordinate only to Moses and Aaron. He is described as «being zealous in the fear of the Lord, and standing firm, when the people turned away ... and he made atonement for Israel» (ἐν τῷ ζηλώσει αὐτὸν ἐν φόβῳ κυρίου καὶ στήναι αὐτὸν ἐν τροπῇ λαοῦ ... καὶ ἐξιλάσατο περὶ τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ) (45:23). As a result, he received a covenant of friendship. However, it is notable that his violent action is omitted. Phinehas is zealous and resolute in the face of Israelite apostasy, but Sirach does not explain how he atones for Israel. Sirach's omission of Phinehas' violence contrasts significantly with 1 Maccabees, in which it is Phinehas' actions as a violent priest that make him such a desirable figure for the Hasmoneans. In addition, Mattathias gives Phinehas special prominence amongst the ancestors and does not include Moses and Aaron. For Mattathias, Phinehas is subordinate to no one. On the prominence of Phinehas in Mattathias' list in 1 Macc 2, see Honigman 2014: 179.

20 Contra Goldstein 1976: 7: «As Phinehas was rewarded by being made the founder of the high priestly line (Num 25:12-13), so will Mattathias be rewarded.»

Judas assumes the leadership and fights against the enemies of Israel. However, a praise of his deeds in 1 Macc 3:3-9 precedes the narrative of his leadership. This poem emphasises that he continued his father's mission. It states that he

searched out and pursued those who broke the law; he burned those who troubled his people.

καὶ ἐδίωξεν ἀνόμους ἐξερευνῶν καὶ τοὺς ταρασσοντας τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῶ ἐφλόγισεν (3:5).

He targets Israelite apostates just as his father did. The poem continues,

He went through the cities of Judah; he destroyed the ungodly out of the land; thus he turned away wrath from Israel.

καὶ διήλθεν ἐν πόλεσιν Ἰουδα καὶ ἐξωλέθρευσεν ἀσεβεῖς ἐξ αὐτῆς καὶ ἀπέστρεψεν ὀργὴν ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ (3:8).

Judas succeeds where his father failed. In 1:64, «very great wrath came upon Israel» (καὶ ἐγένετο ὀργὴ μεγάλη ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ σφόδρα). Judas saves Israel from this wrath. Judas' action alludes to Phinehas in Num 25, who «turned back my wrath from the Israelites» (κατέπαυσεν τὸν θυμὸν μου ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ) (Num 25:11). The Greek in these verses is not identical, though this is not problematic for the allusion. The lexeme in 1 Macc 3 matches the lexeme used in 1 Macc 1, bracketing the introduction of Mattathias and his family.²¹ In turn, the announcement of the outbreak of wrath in 1 Macc 1 is itself alluding to Num 25:4,²² in which God commands Moses to

take all the chiefs of the people, and impale them in the sun before the Lord, in order that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.

Λαβὲ πάντα τοὺς ἀρχηγούς τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίσον αὐτοὺς κυρίῳ ἀνέναντι τοῦ ἡλίου καὶ ἀποστραφήσεται ὀργὴ θυμοῦ κυρίου ἀπὸ Ἰσραὴλ.

Phinehas is one of a small number of characters in the Hebrew Bible who turns away God's wrath. This includes characters such as Moses, Jeremiah, and Elijah who intercede on behalf of the people and make atonement for them. It is possible that 1 Macc 3:8 is not alluding to a specific character. Instead, Judas is portrayed as a mediator who will save Israel from God's judgement. Yet, there are several reasons why 1 Macc 3:8 should be considered an allusion to Phinehas specifically

21 Choi 2021: 188.

22 Goldstein states that the author uses a rarer lexeme «to set the scene for the portrayal of Mattathias as a latter-day Phinehas» (1976: 227f). See also Bartlett 1998: 70.

and not to a mediator in general. First, Phinehas and Judas are the only characters who turn away God's wrath through violent acts. This zealous violence is what ties the Hasmonean family to Phinehas. Second, Judas' act of taking away wrath from Israel in chapter 3 is connected to the wrath that came upon Israel in the final verse of chapter 1. The primary narrative between these statements is the story of Mattathias. He acts like Phinehas, gives Phinehas a special place among his ancestors, and is even explicitly compared to Phinehas. The strong emphasis on Phinehas in chapter 2 makes it probable that he is still the focus of an allusion to a mediator at the beginning of chapter 3. Third, the analogy between Phinehas and Mattathias is incomplete. If Judas is not presented as completing the work of his father, then the allusion to Phinehas presents Mattathias as a failure. He could not save Israel and was not rewarded. The pro-Hasmonean stance of the author makes it unlikely that he would portray the father of the Hasmonean dynasty as a failure. Instead, it seems more probable that an intentional comparison between Judas and Phinehas is being used to complete the analogy that began between Mattathias and Phinehas. Finally, the statement that Judas destroyed the ungodly from the land does not fit easily with the rest of Judas' narrative. The account of his actions in 1 Maccabees includes few stories of him targeting renegades. Instead, it focuses on his wars and diplomatic relationships with foreign kingdoms. The only explicit description of Judas' violence against fellow Israelites is during his struggle with Alcimus. He is described as

taking vengeance on those who had deserted and preventing those in the city from going out into the country.

ἐποίησεν ἐκδίκησιν ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσιν τοῖς αὐτομολήσασιν καὶ ἀνεστάλησαν τοῦ ἐκπορεύεσθαι εἰς τὴν χώραν (7:24).

Violence against Israelites is given little attention within Judas' narrative, yet it is the primary focus of the praise of his deeds. It is probable that the author wanted to emphasise that Judas completed his father's work (and therefore the analogy with Phinehas) and was willing to create incoherence between the poem and the narrative to achieve his goal.

However, Judas does not receive any reward. He dies in battle against Bacchides, and his brother, Jonathan, assumes the leadership. The reward is reserved for his final brother Simon. In chapter 14, the people wish to express their gratitude to Simon and his family. They decide to set up a public record praising Simon's rule. Part of this record reads:

The Jews and their priests have resolved that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise.

καὶ ὅτι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς εὐδόκησαν τοῦ εἶναι αὐτῶν Σιμωνα ἡγούμενον καὶ ἀρχιερέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα ἕως τοῦ ἀναστῆναι προφήτην πιστὸν (14:41).

The resolution of the people parallels Phinehas' reward:

It shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of perpetual priesthood.

καὶ ἔσται αὐτῷ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ μετ' αὐτὸν διαθήκη ἱερατείας αἰωνία (Num 25:13).

It is highly likely that Simon's sons are intended as his successors. The public record therefore establishes the Hasmonean dynasty. The statement is preceded by the question, «How shall we thank Simon and his sons?» (Τίνα χάριν ἀποδώσομεν Σιμωνι καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτοῦ) (1 Macc 14:25). Within this context, it is unlikely that the people would designate Simon as eternal high priest but exclude his sons from this role.

In 1 Maccabees, the analogy with Phinehas is spread across three characters. Mattathias has the greatest similarity to Phinehas. When wrath comes upon Israel, he inflicts violence upon lawbreakers and renegades. Judas completes his father's work by turning away wrath from Israel. Finally, Simon receives the reward of an eternal priesthood.

Scholars claim that the analogy between Phinehas and Mattathias was used to make the Hasmoneans appear more legitimate in their role as high priests.²³ Phinehas' descendants were promised the priesthood, so why shouldn't Mattathias' descendants be promised the same? However, the argument made by the author of 1 Maccabees is more potent than a mere comparison between patriarchs. The author distributes the role of Phinehas among three separate members of the family. In some way, then, they each represent a new Phinehas. The Hasmonean claim is not based on the actions of Mattathias. Their claim is that each of them is in some way analogous to Phinehas.

The analogy with Phinehas is crucial to the author's attempt to justify their violent acts against Israelites. In each case, the Israelites whom they target are

23 Eckhardt states, «Given the dynastic implications of Pinhas' deed, the story clearly has an ideological function» (2016: 70). In principle this statement is correct, but it is limited on two fronts. First, the connection with Phinehas is not limited to one character or one story. It is spread across three characters in different sections of the narrative. Second, the use of Phinehas is more than just an attempt to legitimate their dynastic claims. The analogy with Phinehas also provides biblical justification for their acts of violence against Israelites.

presented as traitors of the nation or lawbreakers. Each case of violence is therefore in some way analogous to the violence of Phinehas. There is one more explicit example of Hasmonean violence against Israelites and two more implied acts of violence. Following the deaths of Judas and Alcimus, «all the lawless» (πάντες οἱ ἄνομοι) plotted to capture Jonathan and bring him to Bacchides. Once their plot became known, Jonathan's men

seized about fifty of the men of the country who were leaders in this treachery and killed them.

καὶ συνέλαβον ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνδρῶν τῆς χώρας τῶν ἀρχηγῶν τῆς κακίας εἰς πεντήκοντα ἀνδρας καὶ ἀπέκτειναν αὐτούς (9:61).

Those killed by the Hasmoneans are portrayed as traitors and conspirators with the Gentiles. Their aim is to eliminate the righteous Hasmoneans through their cooperation with the Seleucids. A few verses later, Jonathan's leadership of the people is summarised:

He began to judge the people; and he destroyed the godless out of Israel.

καὶ ἤρξατο Ἰωνᾶθαν κρίνειν τὸν λαὸν καὶ ἠφάνισεν τοὺς ἀσεβεῖς ἐξ Ἰσραηλ (9:73).²⁴

A similar summary is found in Simon's eulogy. The emphasis of Simon's eulogy is the peace and prosperity that he brought to Judea, but it also contains the statement that he «did away with all the renegades and outlaws» (καὶ ἐξῆρεν πάντα ἄνομον καὶ πονηρόν) (14:14). Although the only narrative to focus on violence against fellow Israelites is that of Mattathias in 1 Macc 2, it is significant that the summaries of the leadership of each of his three sons also include a reference to violence against Israelites. And importantly, the author repeatedly emphasises that the only Israelites killed by the Hasmoneans are law-breakers and traitors. The Hasmoneans did not brutally murder their political opponents; they purged Israel of the wicked.

The focus on the Hasmoneans' righteous violence in 1 Maccabees fits into a wider attempt to emphasise their legitimacy through their pedigree and their

24 Grabbe claims that this verse «also emphasizes the extent of the internal opposition to the Maccabean movement at this time» (2020: 392). It is possible that the multiple statements about Hasmonean violence against Israelites are indicative of high levels of internal opposition, but it is difficult to identify specific examples of this as Grabbe has done. 1 Macc 9:73 may simply be an attempt to bring Jonathan's summary into line with Judas' and Simon's, such that all three figures carry out acts of violence against the wicked.

deeds. An emphasis on the righteousness and legitimacy of the Hasmoneans is essential to create a contrast between them and the godless traitors whom they kill. The opening seven chapters introduce the pedigree of the Hasmoneans. They are from the family of Jerusalem priests, «of the family of Joarib» (τῶν υἱῶν Ἰωαριβ) (2:1). The reference is likely to Jehoiarib, who is identified in the division of priests in 1 Chr 24. In particular, he is the first priest chosen by lot, suggesting a degree of prominence.²⁵ However, the historicity of 1 Maccabees' claim is contested. 2 Maccabees presents the most significant challenge to the claim of the Hasmoneans' priestly descent and has an obsessive focus on the high priesthood. It details the actions of Onias and the intrigue of Jason, Menelaus, and Alcimus. Despite the detailed account of the high priesthood, it contains no references to the Hasmoneans as priests or of having priestly descent.²⁶ Mattathias does not even appear in the narrative.²⁷ The omission of the Hasmonean's priestly descent in 2 Maccabees neither proves nor disproves the Hasmonean claim in 1 Maccabees. However, it raises the possibility that the genealogy in 1 Maccabees is an attempt to manufacture the Hasmonean's priestly pedigree.

Throughout 1 Maccabees, the Hasmoneans are repeatedly portrayed as Torah observant. Their faithfulness to the Law extends beyond their persecution of law-breakers and enforcement of obedience to the Law. For example, Judas follows Torah stipulations regarding military engagements during one of the first conflicts with the Seleucids:

Those who were building houses, or were about to be married, or were planting a vineyard, or were faint-hearted, he told to go home again, in accordance with the law.

καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς οἰκοδομοῦσιν οἰκίας καὶ μνηστευομένοις γυναῖκας καὶ φυτεύουσιν ἀμπελῶνας καὶ δειλοῖς ἀποστρέφειν ἕκαστον εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὸν νόμον (3:56; cf. Deut 20:5-8).

The Hasmoneans' Torah piety is particularly emphasised during the cleansing of the Temple in chapter 4. After the defeat of Lysias, Judas returns to Jerusalem and cleanses the sanctuary. However, the Gentiles have defiled it, and the Hasmoneans' tear their clothes, lament, and sprinkle ash on their heads (4:39). Judas then

chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place ... then they took unhewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one ... they rose and offered sacrifice,

25 Dirksen 2005: 289.

26 Goldstein 1976: 85.

27 Bartlett 1998: 66.

as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering.

καὶ ἐπελέξαντο ἱερεῖς ἀμώμους θελητὰς νόμου καὶ ἐκαθάρισαν τὰ ἅγια καὶ ἤραν τοὺς λίθους τοῦ μiasμοῦ εἰς τόπον ἀκάθαρτον ...καὶ ἔλαβον λίθους ὀλοκλήρους κατὰ τὸν νόμον καὶ ᾤκοδόμησαν θυσιαστήριον καινὸν κατὰ τὸ πρότερον ... καὶ ἀνήνεγκαν θυσίαν κατὰ τὸν νόμον ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων τὸ καινὸν ὃ ἐποίησαν.²⁸

The detail and care taken by Judas is emphasised by the repeated locution «as the law directs» (κατὰ τὸν νόμον). At numerous points within 1 Maccabees, the relationship of a character to the Law is used as a means of evaluating that character.²⁹ Therefore, the repeated emphasis on Judas' observance of the Law is designed to highlight his overwhelmingly positive characterisation.

The justification of Hasmonean high priesthood on account of their deeds is made explicit towards the end of the book. The author records,

The people saw Simon's faithfulness and the glory that he had resolved to win for his nation, and they made him their leader and high priest, because he had done all these things and because of the justice and loyalty that he had maintained towards the nation.

καὶ εἶδεν ὁ λαὸς τὴν πίστιν τοῦ Σιμωνος καὶ τὴν δόξαν ἣν ἐβουλεύσατο ποιῆσαι τῷ ἔθνει αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔθενετο αὐτὸν ἡγούμενον αὐτῶν καὶ ἀρχιερέα διὰ τὸ αὐτὸν πεποιηκέναι πάντα ταῦτα καὶ τὴν δικαιοσύνην καὶ τὴν πίστιν ἣν συνετήρησεν τῷ ἔθνει αὐτοῦ (14:35)

Simon's position does not derive from his genealogy, even though his priestly pedigree is stated. The Hasmoneans' most important qualification is their righteousness.

The righteousness of the Hasmoneans and the analogy with Phinehas is the prism through which the author of 1 Maccabees presents the violent actions of the Hasmoneans. The Hasmoneans are presented as a return to Torah-observant leadership, and their killings of Israelites are only acts of purging the wicked from Israel. The author of 1 Maccabees does not simply seek to justify the violence of the Hasmoneans; he attempts to use their violence as a means of legitimising their rule.

28 1 Macc 4:42-53; cf. Exod. 20:25; Deut. 27:5-6; Exod 29:38-42; Num. 28:3-7. For a discussion of the relation between these verses and their relation to their referents, see Choi 2021: 124-128.

29 Borchardt 2014: 202.

2. *Killing of the Righteous*

However, while 1 Macc records many acts of violence among Israelites, not all acts of violence are recorded equally. The violence of the Hasmoneans is a testament to their devotion to Torah observance and the purity of Israel. It is justified and at the same time functions as a form of legitimation. The violent acts perpetrated by the opponents of the Hasmoneans are not presented in the same manner. First Maccabees includes only one rival high priest, and he and his followers are the only other Israelites to inflict violence upon fellow Israelites. However, their acts of violence do not function as a proof of righteousness but rather of wickedness. The righteous Hasmoneans and the wicked Alcimus are contrasted in several ways, but their acts of violence are one of the primary means of creating contrast.

The high priesthood is not mentioned until chapter 7 of 1 Maccabees:³⁰

Then there came to him (Demetrius) all the renegade and godless men of Israel; they were led by Alcimus, who wanted to be high priest.

καὶ ἦλθον πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες ἄνδρες ἄνομοι καὶ ἀσεβεῖς ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ Ἄλκιμος ἠγεῖτο αὐτῶν βουλόμενος ἱερατεῦειν (7:5).

He is immediately associated with the «renegade and godless men of Israel» (πάντες ἄνδρες ἄνομοι καὶ ἀσεβεῖς ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ). Alcimus is successful in his petition and becomes high priest. He is introduced as a political schemer, and, unlike the Hasmoneans, he has no genealogy to legitimate him. Daniel Lanzinger asks, «How did Alcimus obtain the position of high priest? Here the author of 1 Maccabees leaves no doubt: Alcimus was a usurper who took advantage of the takeover of another usurper (Demetrius I)». ³¹ However, his priestly pedigree is affirmed when he returns to Jerusalem.

A group of scribes appeared in a body before Alcimus and Bacchides to ask for just terms ... for they said, «A priest of the line of Aaron has come with the army, and he will not harm us».

καὶ ἐπισυνήχθησαν πρὸς Ἄλκιμον καὶ Βακχίδην συναγωγὴ γραμματέων ἐκζητῆσαι δίκαια ... εἶπον γὰρ Ἄνθρωπος ἱερεὺς ἐκ σπέρματος Ααρων ἦλθεν ἐν ταῖς δυνάμεσιν καὶ οὐκ ἀδικήσει ἡμᾶς (7:12-14).

The Hasideans state Alcimus' Aaronic ancestry rather than the narrator, so the validity of their claim is not certain. However, their introduction as scribes makes

30 Bartlett 1998: 81.

31 Lanzinger 2015: 92.

the claim more probable. The group is presented as foolish for trusting Alcimus, but there is no reason to suspect that the Jerusalem elite would be unaware of his lineage. The narrator states the Hasmonean priestly pedigree in more explicit terms, yet Alcimus is still presented as a legitimate rival to the high priesthood.³²

A comparison with 2 Maccabees and Josephus is revealing. Second Maccabees describes Alcimus as a «former high priest» (προγεγονώς ἀρχιερέυς) prior to his appeal to the Seleucid king (2 Macc 14:3). Alcimus' introduction in 2 Maccabees does not necessitate priestly lineage, as Menelaus becomes high priest despite not being qualified (4:25). Josephus is the only source to explicitly state that Alcimus was «not of the family of high priests» (οὐκ ὄντι τῆς τῶν ἀρχιερέων γενεᾶς) (*Ant.* 12.387). First Maccabees affirms Alcimus' ancestral pedigree, 2 Maccabees is ambiguous, and Josephus rejects it. For the author of 1 Maccabees, it is strategically desirable to present Alcimus as having an equal claim.³³

How will Alcimus treat these scribes who have identified him as a son of Aaron?

Alcimus spoke peaceable words to them and swore this oath to them, «We will not seek to injure you or your friends.» So they trusted him.

καὶ ἐλάλησεν μετ' αὐτῶν λόγους εἰρηνικοὺς καὶ ὤμοσεν αὐτοῖς λέγων Οὐκ ἐκζητήσομεν ὑμῖν κακὸν καὶ τοῖς φίλοις ὑμῶν. καὶ ἐνεπίστευσαν αὐτῷ (7:15-16).

However, Alcimus quickly breaks his oath:

He seized sixty of them and killed them in one day, in accordance with the word that was written, «The flesh of your faithful ones and their blood they poured out all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them».

32 It is debated whether Alcimus had a priestly or high priestly lineage. Babota states that his claim was legitimate, arguing that Alcimus «had all the prerequisites in order to legitimately occupy the high priestly office» (2014: 95). However, Grabbe makes the important observation that the validity of Alcimus' genealogical claim is less relevant than the fact that he was accepted by the majority of the people. For Grabbe, Alcimus' acceptance shows that most people were primarily concerned with freedom of worship which had been restored with the appointment of Alcimus and were not interested in the nationalistic goals of the Hasmoneans. He summarises by stating, «The leadership of the Maccabean resistance by no means embodied the aspirations of the nation as a whole» (2020: 381f). As a result, Judas is forced to return to guerilla tactics; he has lost control of the Judean population. Lanzinger suggests that Alcimus «probably had more silent supporters than Judas» (2015: 94).

33 Lanzinger highlights the benefit of Alcimus' priestly lineage to the Hasmoneans. Because of Alcimus' subsequent traitorous and violent actions, 1 Maccabees shows that one shouldn't trust a priest just because of his lineage; his actions are more important. For a family with a weak claim to the high priesthood like the Hasmoneans, this argument is particularly effective (2015: 95f).

καὶ συνέλαβεν ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐζήκοντα ἄνδρας καὶ ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτοὺς ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ κατὰ τὸν λόγον ὃν ἔγραψεν αὐτὸν Σάρκας ὀσίων σου καὶ αἷμα αὐτῶν ἐξέχεαν κύκλῳ Ἱερουσαλημ, καὶ οὐκ ἦν αὐτοῖς ὁ θάπτων (7:16-17).³⁴

The quotation is taken from Ps 79:2-3,³⁵ and in this psalm, the group responsible for the slaughter is the Gentiles:

O, God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

Ὁ θεός ἤλθοσαν ἔθνη εἰς τὴν κληρονομίαν σου ἐμίαναν τὸν ναὸν τὸν ἅγιόν σου ἔθενετο Ἱερουσαλημ εἰς ὀπωροφυλάκιον (Ps 79:1).

The author of 1 Maccabees attributes this destruction and turmoil to Alcimus.³⁶ His violence marks him as a traitor, an oath breaker, and equates him with the nations who destroyed Jerusalem and defiled the sanctuary.

Alcimus' violence continues after he is installed as high priest. He is forced to fight to maintain the high priesthood, and «all who were troubling their people joined him» (καὶ συνήχθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ ταρασσόντες τὸν λαὸν αὐτῶν) (7:22). Eventually they gain control over Judah, but not without doing «great damage in Israel» (πληγὴν μεγάλην ἐν Ἰσραηλ) (7:22). This statement only implies violence against Israel, but once again it is presented negatively. The violence that Alcimus uses to restore stability in the land is described as destructive and harmful to Israel. The following verse escalates the negative assessment further:

Judas saw all the wrongs that Alcimus and those with him had done among the Israelites; it was more than the Gentiles had done.

καὶ εἶδεν Ἰουδας πᾶσαν τὴν κακίαν ἣν ἐποίησεν Ἄλκιμος καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτοῦ ἐν υἱοῖς Ἰσραηλ ὑπὲρ τὰ ἔθνη (7:23).

34 Both the historicity and the potential motivations for Alcimus' actions have been questioned by scholars. Grabbe speculates that his actions may be an attempt to settle old political scores despite the instability it could create for the Seleucids (2020: 382). For Honigman, the historical probability of this meeting between the Hasidim and Alcimus is extremely low (2014: 322). Lanzinger speculates «that the massacre was invented for the purposes of propaganda». At the very least, he argues that «the author of 1 Maccabees probably ascribed a massacre to Alcimus for which – if it even took place – he was not in fact responsible» (2015: 96).

35 «They have given ... the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth. They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them» (τὰς σάρκας τῶν ὀσίων σου τοῖς θηρίοις τῆς γῆς ἐξέχεαν τὸ αἷμα αὐτῶν ὡς ὕδωρ κύκλῳ Ἱερουσαλημ, καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὁ θάπτων) (Ps 79:2-3).

36 Honigman 2014: 318.

Verse 17 has already equated Alcimus with the Gentiles; now the narrator describes him as worse than them. Honigman describes how Alcimus and his followers are portrayed as «the foes from within» and are deemed worse than the enemies from without». ³⁷ This comparison includes the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. ³⁸ Significantly, Judas does not fight against Alcimus in a struggle for the high priesthood; it is a rebellion against an evil ruler. ³⁹ Chapter 7 recounts the only direct confrontation between Judas and Alcimus in 1 Maccabees. Both sides carry out violence against the people, but that is where the comparison ends. Judas kills traitors and lawbreakers and does so only to save Israel. Alcimus kills to gain political power and with an intensity that not even the Gentiles used. Ultimately, Judas prevails, and Alcimus flees to the Seleucid king.

Alcimus returns with Bacchides to launch the campaign that results in Judas' death. He re-establishes his position in Jerusalem and those who have supported him begin to carry out violence on the friends of Judas. They located them and brought them to Bacchides, «who took vengeance on them and made sport of them» (καὶ ἐξεδίκα αὐτοὺς καὶ ἐνέπαιζεν αὐτοῖς) (9:26). Even though they are not directly inflicting violence on the Hasmonean supporters, they both instigate and facilitate it. However, Alcimus is not directly involved in these acts. Instead, his violence is directed against the Temple:

Alcimus gave orders to tear down the wall of the inner court of the sanctuary. He tore down the work of the prophets! But he only began to tear it down, for at that time Alcimus was stricken and his work was hindered; his mouth was stopped and he was paralysed, so that he could no longer say a word or give commands concerning his house. And Alcimus died at that time in great agony.

ἐπέταξεν Ἄλκιμος καθαιρεῖν τὸ τεῖχος τῆς αὐλῆς τῶν ἁγίων τῆς ἐσωτέρας καὶ καθεῖλεν τὰ ἔργα τῶν προφητῶν καὶ ἐνήρξατο τοῦ καθαιρεῖν ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ ἐπλήγη Ἄλκιμος καὶ ἐνεποδίσθη τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπεφράγη τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ καὶ παρελύθη καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἔτι λαλῆσαι λόγον καὶ ἐντελῆσθαι περὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀπέθανεν Ἄλκιμος ἐν τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ μετὰ βασάνου μεγάλῃς. (9:54-56).

Alcimus begins to defile the sanctuary but is struck down before he can complete it. There is a slightly sadistic quality in the description. The narrator lingers over the details of his suffering and presents his pitiful death as God's judgement. God

37 Honigman 2014: 317.

38 Borchardt 2014: 85.

39 Babota 2014: 95.

is never an active agent within the book of 1 Maccabees. However, the description of his death is the closest that the narrator comes to claiming direct divine intervention. Despite all the cruelties and defilements of the Gentiles in 1 Maccabees, the only person deemed wicked enough for God to strike down is Alcimus. The author's decision to present the sole rival to the Hasmonean high priesthood in these terms is not accidental.⁴⁰

The author uses Alcimus to create a contrast with the righteous Hasmoneans. His wickedness is overemphasised to highlight the Hasmoneans' virtue. The portrayal of violence is an essential part of the author's strategy. The violence of the Hasmoneans is a zealous demonstration of their religious devotion and commitment to the Torah. In contrast, Alcimus' violence is politically motivated, treacherous, and he stands for the ungodly in Israel. Alcimus' violence creates an effective argument for why the high priesthood should pass from Alcimus to the Hasmoneans. The strategy used by the author of 1 Maccabees is clear from a comparison with 2 Maccabees, where Alcimus is a defiled high priest (2 Macc 14:3) and a political schemer (2 Macc 14:26) but nothing more. He is ineffectual. The friendship established between Judas and Nicanor stops him from gaining control of Jerusalem and he complains to Demetrius. After that, he is not mentioned again. There is no slaughter of his people, no defilement of the Temple.⁴¹ There is certainly no indication that he caused more harm than the Gentiles. The presentation of Alcimus in 2 Maccabees is significant, since elsewhere 2 Maccabees emphasises the evil of high priests other than Onias. It is surprising that the author elaborates on the evil of Jason and Menelaus but excludes the acts of Alcimus. The most likely explanation for this difference is that the author of 1 Maccabees has inflated the evil of Alcimus to create a stronger contrast with the Hasmoneans.

40 Grabbe suggests that it is unlikely that Alcimus was carrying out anything controversial within the Temple precinct but that the timing of his death allowed the author of 1 Maccabees to capitalise on his misfortune to claim divine intervention (2020: 390). Lanzinger goes even further and claims that the work carried out by Alcimus was an attempt to repair the damage caused when Judas and his followers were besieged within the sanctuary by Lysias in 6:48-54. By claiming that Alcimus was punished for doing something sacrilegious, the author of 1 Maccabees delegitimises the Hasmoneans' rival and prevents any accusations that Judas himself defiled the sanctuary by fighting there (2015: 98f).

41 Bartlett 1998: 81.

3. Conclusion

This study has identified how the author of 1 Maccabees uses differing presentations of violence to legitimate the Hasmonean high priesthood and to disparage the Hasmoneans' political opponents. Hasmonean violence is presented as analogous to the violent act of Phinehas whereas the violent acts of Alcimus are presented as analogous to the violence of the nations against Israel.

1 Maccabees creates an extensive analogy between Phinehas and the Hasmoneans. In chapter 2, Mattathias acts almost identically to Phinehas in Num 25. There are no other examples of a zealous priest who inflicts violence upon his own people because of their disobedience of Torah. The plot parallel provides the justification for the acts of violence that Mattathias subsequently carries out against renegade Israelites. However, the analogy between Mattathias and Phinehas lacks two important elements from Num 25. First, Mattathias does not turn God's wrath away from Israel. Despite his violent reprisals, his mission remains incomplete at his death. Second, he is not rewarded with the eternal priesthood. Instead, he commissions his sons, Judas and Simon, to complete what he started. They complete his mission and the analogy with Phinehas. In chapter 3, Judas takes away the wrath from Israel. Then his brother Simon receives the eternal high priesthood in chapter 14. The extension of the analogy with Phinehas to Judas and Simon is important for two reasons. First, it creates a connection between the Hasmoneans and Phinehas' covenant of eternal priesthood. Second, it provides a clear justification for the Hasmoneans' violence against their own people. Phinehas' actions are justified and praised by God, and the Hasmoneans make the same claim for their own actions.

In contrast, Alcimus' actions are not praised by God, but rather condemned. Alcimus is the only non-Hasmonean high priest in 1 Maccabees and is therefore the only rival to their claim. Yet the author casts him as a deplorable traitor, who kills his own people in a manner worse than the Gentiles. The inflated portrayal of Alcimus' wickedness demonstrates that he is unworthy of the office of high priest.⁴² Honigman describes how «the author spares no detail to paint him as the embodiment of wickedness.»⁴³ He kills those who are faithful to the Torah (and

42 As Goldstein notes, «The Hasmoneans had to face Alcimus' rival claims to authority which our author endeavours to discredit: at every phase of his tenure of the high priesthood, Alcimus was unfit» (1976: 75).

43 Honigman 2014: 315.

by extension pro-Hasmonean) and desecrates the Temple. The author portrays Alcimus as the arch villain within the story of the Maccabean revolt. As Ehud Ben Zvi has argued, a villain is not necessarily supposed to be a direct mirror of the hero. Instead, «What makes them important is that they embody that which the community finds most threatening.»⁴⁴ In 1 Maccabees, Alcimus is a treacherous Seleucid pawn who defiles the Temple; he represents the perfect villain to contrast with the heroic Hasmoneans. However, comparison with 2 Maccabees demonstrates the extent to which the memory of Alcimus has been adapted by the author of 1 Maccabees. In 2 Maccabees he is weak, ineffectual, and irrelevant. The presentation of Alcimus and his followers as wicked, ungodly men in 1 Maccabees is an effectual way of dealing with a rival. A pro-Hasmonean stance and a pro-Torah stance become so intertwined that to oppose the Hasmoneans is to oppose the Torah.⁴⁵ As Lanzinger states,

The heart of the matter is thus not so much that Alcimus did something wrong but that he was the wrong man. The author consistently follows his strategy of delegitimisation. Whatever Alcimus might have done in the temple, our author would present it as an outrageous and evil action with a fatal end.⁴⁶

Historical fact becomes irrelevant, and memory of the event is shaped to achieve the political ends of the author. Alcimus' greatest fault was not his treachery and wicked violence against his fellow Israelites. His biggest flaw was that he was not Hasmonean.

When these contrasting presentations are woven alongside each other in the narrative of 1 Maccabees, readers are left with a clear choice: Is it better to have a leader who kills for God's Law and in order to purify Israel, or to have a leader who kills those who protect God's Law in order to further his political aspirations? The author of 1 Maccabees construes the memory of these events to such an extent that there is no true choice. The Hasmoneans are the only viable option for the office of high priest.

44 Ben Zvi 2019: 334.

45 Babota 2014: 95.

46 Lanzinger 2015: 102.

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Abstracts

Dieser Aufsatz untersucht wie der Autor vom 1. Makkabäerbuch die Darstellung von inner-israelitischer Gewalt verwendete, um die Hasmonäer zu legitimieren und ihre Gegner zu delimitieren. Die Gewalt der Hasmonäer wird analog zur Gewalt des biblischen Phinehas dargestellt, dessen Gewalttat gegen einen anderen Israeliten den Zorn Gottes abwendet und durch das ewige Priestertum belohnt wird. Im Gegensatz dazu zeigt die innerisraelitische Gewalt des Alcimus, eines Rivalen der Hasmonäer, ihn als einen Verräter, der Israel mehr Schaden zufügt, als es die Völker tun würden. Diese literarische Strategie hat zwei Folgen: 1. Sie legitimiert den hasmonäischen Anspruch auf das Hohepriestertum und beseitigt einen bedeutenden Gegner; 2. Sie rechtfertigt hasmonäische Gewalttaten gegen das eigene Volk.

This article examines how the author of 1 Maccabees used acts of inner-Israelite violence to legitimise the Hasmonians and delegitimise their opponents. The violence of the Hasmonians is made analogous to Phinehas whose violence against a fellow Israelite turns away God's wrath and is rewarded with the eternal priesthood. In contrast, the inner-Israelite violence of Alcimus, a rival of the Hasmonians', shows him as a traitor who inflicts more damage on Israel than the Gentiles. This literary strategy has two effects. First, it legitimises the Hasmonian claim to the high priesthood while simultaneously removing a key opponent. Second, it justifies any violent actions carried out by the Hasmonians against their own people.

Jonathan Woods, University of St Andrews

