

1 Samuel 2:28-36 + 3:20

How Priests Go Wrong

A passage about Eli's two evil sons Hophni and Phinehas, connecting this to **Leviticus 10** about Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu.

Hophni = "pugilist"

Phinehas = Pîyn^echâç, pee-nekh-aws - "mouth of brass" or "mouth of a serpent"

His namesake, Phinehas a grandson of Aaron, averted a plague on Israel through his zeal and gained the promise of the Lord of an everlasting priesthood in his family (**Numbers 25:6-13**).

The first Phinehas was a "mouth of brass" in judgment against sin

This other Phinehas had the mouth and thinking of the serpent.

For defiling the priest's office, God arranged they should die by the hand of the Philistines (**1 Samuel 4:11**).

1 Samuel 2:12 - "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD."

Targum: "they did not know to fear before the Lord."

Eli's sons defiled the Peace Offering. Besides taking their own lawful portion, they took more from the offerer. They also did not allow the fat to be burned on the altar for the Lord, and even demanded heir choice of meat while still raw. They treated the Lord and the people with equal contempt.

1 Samuel 2:17 - "Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD."

The took advantage of Eli's age, and also committed adultery.

1 Samuel 2:22 - "Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel; and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation."

The Targum says these women were assembled to pray, and that they were devout women; who came there in large numbers, for the word used has the signification of armies; to perform religious exercises in fasting, and praying, and bringing sacrifices to be offered for them as was Anna the prophetess, **Luke 2:37**.

1 Samuel 2:25 - "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him?. Notwithstanding they hearkened not

unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them."

"the judge" = *'elohiym* - God

"judge" and "entreat" = *palal* - mediate, pray for, intercede for

- **1 John 2:1** - "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous"

1 Samuel 2:28 - "And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel?"
(See **Exodus 28:1**)

1 Samuel 2:29 - "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honorest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people?"

Targum: "why do ye use force with the holy offerings?" - that is, to take them away by force, when there was such a sufficient quantity allowed them for their support.

Eli apparently also took some of the stolen meat from his sons - he was certainly literally fat. (**1 Samuel 4:18**)

1 Samuel 2:30 - "Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Recall the promise to Abraham:

- **Genesis 12:3** - "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (I will bitterly execrate those who treat you lightly)

1 Samuel 2:31 - "Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house."

"arm" = i.e. the strength and authority to perform the office of priest, as well as children (see **Genesis 49:3** - "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength...")

"there shall not be an old man in thine house" - There were none when he died, and his two sons, the same day; and the children they left were very young, and Ahitub, who was one of them, could not die an old man, since Ahimelech his son was priest in the time of Saul, who with eighty five priests were slain by his order; and Abiathar his son was deprived of his priesthood in the time of Solomon.

The Talmud interprets it also that there should be none of his family a senator, or a member of the great sanhedrim, or court of judicature.

1 Samuel 2:32 - "And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever."

"an enemy in my habitation" - "thou shalt see the affliction of the tabernacle" as when the Philistines captured the Ark

1 Samuel 2:33 - "And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age."

Targum: "they shall be killed as young men" - it is more than once said in the Talmud (T. Bab. Roshhashanah, fol. 18. 1. & Yebamot, fol. 105. 1.), that there was a family in Jerusalem, the men of which died at 18 years of age; they came and informed Juchanan ben Zaccai of it; he said to them, perhaps of the family of Eli are ye, as it is said, **1 Samuel 2:33**.

1 Samuel 2:34 - "And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas; in one day they shall die both of them."

(See **1 Samuel 4:11**)

1 Samuel 2:35 - "And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever."

Targum: "that shall do according to my word, and according to my will"

Not Samuel, but Zadok, as it is commonly interpreted, who was the first that officiated in the Temple as a legal priest, who was put into the office of the high priest by Solomon when he came to the throne, in the room of Abiathar, of the line of Eli; who was an upright man. Zadok then was also a type of Christ, faithful to do the will of the Father.

"walk before mine anointed" - i.e. before Solomon and the kings of the House of David. But it can be translated "before my Messiah" as the high priests did; they were types of Christ, and represented him, and acted under him, and in his stead, and prefigured and pointed at what he was to do, when he came in the flesh, and now does in the most holy place in heaven. - *Gill's Exposition*

1 Samuel 2:36 - "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me, I pray thee, into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a piece of bread."

Priests who somehow were degraded from their office, were therefore reduced to

poverty and want, because they had no inheritance in the land; and therefore, that they might be kept from starving, would solicit the high priest in those days, and beg that he would put them in some inferior post under the priests, to do the meanest offices for them, slay the sacrifices for them, wash their pots, open and shut up doors, and the like, so they might have a living, though a poor one; and this may reasonably be thought to be the case of Eli's posterity. - *Gill's Exposition*

This was a just outcome for the posterity of those who had forcefully stolen the meat of the offerings, keeping the best and the fat for themselves.

But Israel was not left without spiritual guidance:

1 Samuel 3:20 - “And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD.”