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'Eli's Ineffective Rebuke of His Sons First Samuel 2: 22-26

'Eli's ineffective rebuke of his sons DIG: Leviticus 7:25 states that any who violate God's offerings should be "cut off from His people." Why did 'Eli fail? How did Hannah's relationship with her son compare with 'Eli's relationship with his sons? How did it affect their children? Why did 'Eli distinguish between the sins mentioned in verse 25?

REFLECT: Is your example to your children like that of Hannah or 'Eli? How so? How can you prepare your children (or those who look up to you) for a life "ministering before ADONAI?" How important is it to discipline children today? What does it mean to be a "Hannah parent?" An "'Eli parent?" What can you do if your children are already adults?

The hardening of their hearts was a sign of God's judgment.



Hophni and Phinehas not only showed disrespect for the sacrifices to **ADONAI** (to see link click [Ar](#) - 'Eli's Wicked Sons), worst of all was the contempt **they** showed toward **God's** holiness. **Their** abuse went so far that **they** had **sex** with **the women who served at the door to the Tabernacle** (see [Ae](#) - **The Tabernacle at Shiloh**). How great was the violation of **the priests' sexual sins** in that sacred place! Those **women** had donated **their mirrors** to make **the bronze basin** in the Tabernacle courtyard (see the commentary on **Exodus** [Fh](#) -

The Bronze Basin: Christ, Our Cleanser). **They** should have been treated with the utmost respect; but instead, **they** were treated like common temple prostitutes of pagan shrines.

This conduct by **the high priest’s sons** could have only the worst effect on both the spiritual and moral character of the nation, just like **sins** of greed and **sexual** infidelity among religious leaders today. After all, if the religious leaders think so little of **the Lord**, why should anyone else revere **Him**? Not only that, given the tendency of our **sinful** nature to commit these kinds of **sins**, the sordid example of **the priests** would inevitably provide an incentive for a widespread tolerance of similar **sins**. How often is it today that we see religious leaders, who use ministry for personal gain, end up disgracing themselves in **sexual sins**.⁷⁷

Samuel is not only contrasted with ‘**Eli’s** wicked **sons**, but also with **the high priest himself**. **Verse 21** tells us that **the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor in the presence of God**, and immediately adds: **Now ‘Eli was very old. He** comes across as a well-meaning and personally godly **man**, but was an ineffectual spiritual leader and a failure as a father. Even though ‘**Eli heard about everything his sons were doing to all Isra’el (2:22)**, he merely talked to **them** about **their** behavior, but did nothing to curb **their** wicked actions.

We can easily imagine that this pattern had characterized **Eli’s** parenting all through **his sons’** upbringing. **His** first error was in failing to supervise **their** **priestly** service. The result was that instead of intervening and correcting **his sons** on the spot, ‘**Eli** just came to **them** later to discuss what **he** had heard. **His** second, and greater error, was that **his** rebuke did not lead to immediate **discipline**. According to the Bible, the failure to **discipline** our **children** is the surest way of ruining their souls (**Proverbs 13:24**). It will later be said of **David** that **he** never **disciplined his sons**, holding **them** accountable for **their** actions (**First Kings 1:6**); as a result, the treachery, murder, rape, and treason committed by **his sons** bear testimony to **David’s** failure as a parent.⁷⁸

There was another **Phinehas**, in an earlier time (see the commentary on **Numbers Ea - Taking a Stand for God**), who was outraged with a **Levite** also having blasphemous **sex** at the entrance to **the Tabernacle**. That was **Phinehas, the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron the high priest**. He saw a **Levite** named **Zimri** and a **Canaanite woman** having **sex** right where **the sons of ‘Eli** would eventually do the same thing. In contrast to **them**, however, **he jumped up, took a spear in his hand** (probably from a nearby soldier), and **pursued the**

Levite right into the inner part of his vaulted canopy, where he thrust his spear all the way through both of them - right through the Levite and into the woman's stomach! His display of righteousness was something that the sons of 'Eli did not possess.

Being so distraught, 'Eli continued to press **his sons**, pleading: **Why are you doing things like this, the evil things that I hear from all the people?** However, 'Eli's rebuke, justified in the light of widespread public reports of **his son's** evil deeds, fell on deaf ears. **The high priest** wasn't much of a godly father or spiritual leader, and **his sons** totally disregarded **his** warnings. Few things are more vital to **children** than humility in receiving parental correction. When the fifth commandment says to **honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the Land (Exodus 20:12)**, it teaches that receiving correction from parents and succeeding in life go hand-in-hand. Filled with sadness, 'Eli's voice trailed off: **I don't hear ADONAI's people saying a single good thing about you (2:23-24)!**

Hophni and Phinehas had no respect for **God** or for the office of **their father the high priest**, so all **Ha'Shem** could do was replace **them** with faithful servants. With much regret, 'Eli got to the heart of the matter: **If a person commits a sin against another person, the judges can mediate between them. But if a person commits a sin against YHVH, who can intercede for him?** Evidently, not even **the high priest**. **They** simply **wouldn't pay attention to what their father said**. **The two sons** could not plead ignorance, **their** arrogance had reached the point of no return. Like **Pharaoh** who said **he** had no intention of listening to the voice of **YHVH**, and thereafter became increasingly obstinate until **God hardened his heart (Exodus 9:12)**, so **Hophni and Phinehas** sealed **their** own fate by **their** refusal to listen to **their father (Romans 1:18-32)**. Such **hardening of their hearts** was a sign of **God's** judgment and **Ha'Shem decided to kill them (2:25)**.⁷⁹

As a result, **their disobedience** ended the authority of **the house of 'Eli** (see [Au - God's Rejection of 'Eli's House](#)). Humanly speaking, **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** anticipated **the priesthood** of **Zadok**, **"the faithful priest who will do whatever is in God's heart and mind. ADONAI will make his family faithful, and he will serve in the presence of My anointed One, the Messiah, forever"** (2:35). Ultimately, in **the far eschatological future**, because of **his obedience**, **Zadok** would not only be elevated to the position of **high priest** in Solomon's Kingdom (see [the Life of Solomon Am - The Party's Over](#)), but **he**

and **his descendants will also serve in the Temple** during the Messianic Kingdom. **“The Zadokites are to come near to minister before Me; they are to stand before Me to offer sacrifices of fat and blood, declares Adonai ELOHIM” (Ezeki’el 44:15-31).**



At the last, the **sins of Hophni and Phinehas** are contrasted with the righteousness of **Samuel**. **Meanwhile, the child Samuel kept growing physically in stature, and spiritually in favor both with ADONAI and with all the people (2:20-21 and 26)**, an appropriate description of **a son**, who, like **Mary’s Son** (see **The Life of Christ Bb - Jesus Grew in Wisdom and Stature, and in Favor with God and Other People**), had to recognize **the Father’s** way in an evil world, and resist temptation. We are told nothing of **Samuel’s** relationship with **Hophni** or **Phinehas**, but surely **they** hated **him**. For by **his** godly walk, **he** was constantly accusing **them** of **their sins**. But **Samuel’s** relationship with **ADONAI** protected **the boy**.⁸⁰

‘Eli must have spent many sleepless nights wondering how things had gone so wrong with **his children**. We can imagine that **his** thoughts of what **he** would have done differently, given the chance to raise **his sons** again, would make for interesting reading. When our own **children** are grown, what will we wish we had done differently? Will we wish we had been more diligent in teaching and discussing **God’s Word**? After all, **Deuteronomy 6:7** tells us that we are to **teach** our **children diligently**. We are to **teach them** about **His Word** continually, **when we sit at home, when we are traveling on the road, when we lie down and when we rise up**. Will we regret that we were not more determined and consistent in correcting **sin**? Will we wonder why we didn’t make the effort to set a better example of faithfulness and godliness? Will we question the priorities we demonstrated by our lifestyle choices, or wish we had made the time to be more involved in our **children’s** lives? The problem is that once our **children** are grown,

it will be too late to act on any such reflections. For **'Eli**, all that remained was the downfall of **his house**, while **ADONAI** worked behind the scenes to prepare **Samuel** for the leadership of **His people**. Parents who may feel that they have failed in raising their **children** should redeem the remaining time by praying for **God's** intervening grace and seeking all godly means to do good to their **offspring**.⁸¹

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, praise **You** that are all-knowing, though the world situation sometimes looks bleak and dark, **You** are still in control. **'Eli** should have taken action to prevent **his sons** from profaning **Your** sacrifices. Praying for **Your Mighty Arm of Righteousness** to judge and correct the situation is powerful, but we need to be active in **righteousness** ourselves. Praise **You** that as the future of the world looks pretty bleak now, **You** have already worked out the details of **Messiah Yeshua's** return to rapture **His Bride, the Church (First Thessalonians 4:15-18)** and then to reign with **Him** for **a thousand years**. How wonderful it is to know that **You** have the future all worked out, and nothing can thwart **Your** plan. Someday **You** will take all who love **You** to heaven to live with **You** forever in **Your** home of eternal joy and peace. In **Messiah Yeshua's** holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*