

LIVING GODS WILL

Vessel of God

ELI



Eli and Samuel by John Singleton Copley

Born: 1168 BC – Shiloh

Died: 1070 BC – Shiloh (98 years old)

Eli was a descendant of **Aaron**.

Hannah gave her son **Samuel** to **Eli** for **God** to use.

Eli was the **High Priest** of Israel.

Eli was the **Judge** of Israel for 40 years.

Eli in the Bible was a Jewish **priest** living in the days of the judges and serving **God** at the tabernacle in **Shiloh**, a city near the hill country of **Ephraim** (**1 Samuel 1:1, 3**).

Eli is best remembered for his blessing on **Samuel's** mother and for his part in Samuel's first prophecy. **Eli** had two wicked sons named **Hophni and Phineas**; they also served in the tabernacle but did not know the **Lord** (**1 Samuel 2:12**).

They violated the Law by keeping and eating meat from the sacrifices that was not allocated to them. They also had sex with the women who served at the doorway to the tent of meeting (**1 Samuel 2:22**).

The bad behavior of **Eli's** sons was apparently widely known (**1 Samuel 2:24**), and the report came back to **Eli**. When he found out about these things, he rebuked his sons but failed to make them stop, allowing them to continue to profane the tabernacle (**1 Samuel 2:25**).

Apparently, there was some lack of zeal on **Eli's** part; some part of **Eli's** heart was with his sons and not with the **Lord**. We know this because **God** sent a prophet to **Eli** to deliver a dire message concerning **Eli's** household:

"I will cut short your strength and the strength of your priestly house, so that no one in it will reach old age. What happens to your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will be a sign to you—they will both die on the same day" (**1 Samuel 2:31, 34**).

This was a terrible curse, because the Levites depended on the priesthood for their living (**1 Samuel 2:36**). **Eli's** family line would be supplanted by another, more faithful priest:

"I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who will do according to what is in my heart and mind. I will firmly establish his priestly house, and they will minister before my anointed one always" (**1 Samuel 2:35**).

The priest **God** raised up was a boy named **Samuel**, who was dedicated to the tabernacle by his mother, **Hannah**, a formerly barren woman who had prayed for a child. Hannah spoke her prayer in **Eli's** presence, and he had blessed her:

"Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him" (**1 Samuel 1:17**). **God** answered Hannah's prayer, and she had a son. After Samuel was weaned, she gave him to the **Lord's service** (**1 Samuel 1:24-28**).

The young Samuel lived in the tabernacle, under the tutelage and care of **Eli**. Each year, Hannah brought Samuel a robe for him to wear in the house of the **Lord** (**1 Samuel 2:19**).

Eli again blessed Hannah and her husband, asking **God** to give Hannah children to replace the one she had dedicated to the **Lord** (**1 Samuel 2:20**). Hannah eventually gave birth to three more **sons** and two daughters (**verse 21**).

Later, when Samuel was a little older and **Eli's** eyes were so weak that he could barely see, the **Lord** Himself spoke to Samuel. In the middle of the night, the **Lord** **"came and stood"** in Samuel's room (**1 Samuel 3:10**) and told the young boy to deliver to **Eli** the message that it was almost time for the prophesied judgment to fall upon his family (**verses 11-14**). **Eli** humbly accepted **God's** decree, and Samuel was confirmed as a prophet of the **Lord** in **Shiloh** (**1 Samuel 3:19-21**).

A short time after that, the Philistines came against Israel to attack them. **Eli's** sons, **Hophni and Phineas**, went to battle, and they brought with them the **Ark of the Covenant** thinking it would guarantee protection against their enemies.

However, **God** was not with them, and **Eli's** two sons were killed, along with about 30,000 foot soldiers of Israel. In addition, the Ark was captured by the **Philistines**.

When **Eli** heard the bad news, he fell off of his seat, and his neck was broken **"for he was old and heavy"** (**1 Samuel 4:3, 10, 17-18**).

Meanwhile, **Eli's** pregnant daughter-in-law, Phinehas's wife, went into labor; she died during delivery, but not before she named her son **"Ichabod, saying, 'The Glory has departed from Israel'"** (**verse 21**). Thus, **Eli's** grandson, born on a day of death and defeat, was given a name meaning **"No Glory."** **Eli** had been a **priest in Israel and a judge for forty years**.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

1Samuel 4:17-18 So the messenger answered and said, "Israel has fled before the Philistines, and there has been a great slaughter among the people. Also your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead; and the ark of God has been captured." Then it happened, when he made mention of the ark of God, that Eli fell off the seat backward by the side of the gate; and his neck was broken and he died, for the man was old and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.



**Hannah Giving Her Son Samuel to Eli
by Jan Victors**