

The Sons of Eli

1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-36

by Don Falkos

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According to the Law of Moses, whenever a fellowship offering was made at the Tabernacle, the fat of the animal was first burned on the altar, then the meat was boiled, after which, the person presenting the offering would give a portion of the boiled meat to the priests. Over the course of time a tradition had been established. While the meat was being boiled, a servant would thrust a three-pronged fork into the pot and whatever piece of meat was skewered would belong to the priests.

But the sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were wicked men; they had no respect for the Lord or for their duties as priests. Often their servant would come even before the animal's fat had been burned on the altar and demand raw meat, which could then be roasted instead of boiled. If denied, the servant would say, "Give it to me now, or I'll take it by force." This was a terrible sin; they were treating the Lord's offerings with contempt.

Eli knew what his sons were doing. And he knew they were having sex with the young women who assisted at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Eli mildly chastised them, but they ignored him.

One day a man brought Eli a message from God. "Why do you disrespect my sacrifices and offerings? Why do you give your sons more honor than you give me? The time is coming when members of your family will no longer serve as my priests. They will die before their time. Your two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, will die on the same day. Then I will raise up a faithful priest who will do what I desire. Then anyone from your family still surviving will bow before him, begging for food to eat."