

Participant Notes for The Covenants of the Priesthood: The Fall of the House of Eli

The first time the scripture records the transgression of a priest was about the sons of Eli.

1 Samuel 2:12-17 NKJV 12 Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD. 13 And the priests' custom with the people was that when any man offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fleshhook in his hand while the meat was boiling. 14 Then he would thrust it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; and the priest would take for himself all that the fleshhook brought up. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites who came there. 15 Also, before they burned the fat, the priest's servant would come and say to the man who sacrificed, "Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw." 16 And if the man said to him, "They should really burn the fat first; then you may take as much as your heart desires," he would then answer him, "No, but you must give it now; and if not, I will take it by force." 17 Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.

Corrupt: #1100: בליעל bel-e-yah'-al meaning without profit, worthlessness.

Abhor: na-ats" נאץ #5006 meaning to scorn, abhor, contemn, blasphemy, provoke.

Moses implies that eating the sin offering brings atonement for the people.

Leviticus 10:17 NKJV 17 "Why have you not eaten the sin offering in a holy place, since it is most holy, and God has given it to you to bear the guilt of the congregation, to make atonement for them before the LORD?"

The role of the priesthood in bringing the offering is clarified in Numbers 18.

Numbers 18:1 NKJV 1 Then the LORD said to Aaron: "You and your sons and your father's house with you shall bear the iniquity related to the sanctuary, and you and your sons with you shall bear the iniquity associated with your priesthood.

The conduct expected of the priests was outlined in Leviticus 21 and summarized in verse 6.

Leviticus 21:6 NKJV 6 "They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they offer the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God; therefore they shall be holy.

Discussion Question: Read 1 Samuel 2:1-11. Contrast how Hannah views service to God with how the sons of Eli view service to God. How are Hannah's words a spoken judgment against the sons of Eli?

The scripture relates the devotion of Samuel.

1 Samuel 2:18 NKJV 18 But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.

1 Samuel 2:26 NKJV 26 And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the LORD and men.

The book of Proverbs describes how to "grow in stature" with God and men.

Proverbs 3:1-4 NKJV 1 My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; 2 For length of days and long life And peace they will add to you. 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart, 4 And so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man.

Yeshua also found favor in the sight of God and man.

Luke 2:52 NKJV 52 And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Discussion Question: Although Yeshua did not act as priest during His time on Earth, how does His ministry compare with that of the sons of Eli and with that of Samuel?

God sent two prophets to proclaim judgment against the house of Eli.

1 Samuel 2:27-30 NKJV 27 Then a man of God came to Eli and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Did I not clearly reveal Myself to the house of your father when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28 'Did I not choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be My priest, to offer upon My altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before Me? And did I not give to the house of your father all the offerings of the children of Israel made by fire? 29 'Why do you kick at My sacrifice and My offering which I have commanded in My dwelling place, and honor your sons more than Me, to make yourselves fat with the best of all the offerings of Israel My people?' 30 "Therefore the LORD God of Israel says: 'I said indeed that your house and the house of your father would walk before Me forever.' But now the LORD says: 'Far be it from Me; for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed.

God warned the children of Israel against rebellion through Moses before they entered the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 32:15-19 KJV 15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. 16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. 17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. 18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. 19 And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.

The prophet proclaimed that God would cut off their strength and the strength of their father's house.

1 Samuel 2:31-33 NKJV 31 'Behold, the days are coming that I will cut off your arm and the arm of your father's house, so that there will not be an old man in your house. 32 'And you will see an enemy in My dwelling place, despite all the good which God does for Israel. And there shall not be an old man in your house forever. 33 'But any of your men whom I do not cut off from My altar shall consume your eyes and grieve your heart. And all the descendants of your house shall die in the flower of their age.

They would see an enemy or adversary in the dwelling place of God.

- A competitor or adversary would hold the position high priest instead of descendants of Eli.
- An enemy would possess the dwelling place of God.

1 Samuel 2:34-35 NKJV 34 'Now this shall be a sign to you that will come upon your two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die, both of them. 35 'Then I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who shall do according to what is in My heart and in My mind. I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before My anointed forever.

The Philistines defeated the children of Israel in battle, killed Eli's sons, and captured the ark of God.

1 Samuel 5:2-3 NKJV 2 When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the temple of Dagon and set it by Dagon. 3 And when the people of Ashdod arose early in the morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again.

The next day, the idol fell with its head and hands broken over the threshold.

1 Samuel 5:4 NKJV 4 And when they arose early the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face to the ground before the ark of the LORD. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon's torso was left of it.

We will see that this is a rejection of an implied threshold covenant the Philistines tried to impose on God.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2 NKJV 1 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, 2 "and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

Henry Clay Trumbull, in [The Threshold Covenant](#) explains the significance of trampling on the threshold:

To step over or across the blood, or its substitute, on the door-sill, is to accept or ratify the proffered covenant; but to trample upon the symbol of the covenant is to show contempt for the host who proffers it, and no greater indignity than this is known in the realm of primitive social intercourse.ⁱ

Discussion Question: How did God preserve His sanctity of holiness even though the Ark of the LORD was taken into captivity?

The faithful priest that rises to replace Eli is Zadok who officiated as high priest under Solomon. The prophecy concludes with a statement that seems to be a mere detail but has interesting implications.

1 Samuel 2:36 NKJV 36 'And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left in your house will come and bow down to him for a piece of silver and a morsel of bread, and say, "Please, put me in one of the priestly positions, that I may eat a piece of bread.'"

There are three specific community bread offerings that every priest had the right to eat:

Minchat ha-Omer: The meal offering of the Feast of Firstfruits during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Leviticus 23:12-14 NKJV 12 'And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. 13 'Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a

sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 'You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

Shtai ha-lechem: The two loaves baked with leaven from the new wheat harvest at Shavuot.

Leviticus 23:17 NKJV 17 'You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.

Lechem ha-Panim: The bread before God's presence, the showbread, which was changed each Sabbath.

Leviticus 24:8-9 NKJV 8 "Every Sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. 9 "And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place; for it is most holy to him from the offerings of the LORD made by fire, by a perpetual statute."

These priests would beg for a priestly position so they could eat of the community bread offerings!

Any man of priestly lineage with a physical defect can't bring the bread, but he can still receive it.

Leviticus 21:21-22 NKJV 21 'No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. 22 'He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy.

The significance of these community bread offerings is revealed in a vignette related in the Talmud about Shimon HaTzaddik who was high priest and governor of Israel right after the death of Alexander the Great. Shimon's righteousness before God and God's pleasure with His people is affirmed through five miracles that occurred each year. One of the five was that every priest was able to receive a small portion of each of the community bread offerings and was satisfied.

Discussion Question: How does this miracle about every priest eating of the community bread offering shed new light on Yeshua feeding the five thousand and the four thousand?

The prophecy about the fall of the house of Eli is confirmed through a prophecy delivered to Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:11-14 NKJV 11 Then the LORD said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. 12 "In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. 13 "For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them. 14 "And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

Solomon exiled Abiathar, the descendant of Eli and took away his office of high priest fulfilling the prophecy about the fall of the house of Eli.

¹ Trumbull, H Clay. The Threshold Covenant. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1896. P 9-10.