

I Samuel 2:12-36
The Contrast between the Sons of Hannah and Eli

Introduction:

The Book of I Samuel opens with a narration about events that took place near the conclusion of the period where the judges led the various tribes of the Israelites. The following dates put the events recorded in I Samuel in their historical context:

- 1100 Birth of Samuel
- 1085 Death of Samson
- 1075 Death of Eli, Samuel takes Eli's place
- 1050 Saul becomes Israel's first king
- 1017 Death of Samuel
- 1010 David begins his reign in Judah
- 1003 David reigns over all of Israel

The central idea in the Book of I Samuel is to demonstrate a contrast between what God intended for His people on the one hand, and what the people of Israel wanted for themselves. This contrast is focused on two key ideas. First, it focused on what is important to Yahweh, the character of a person's heart, while the people of Israel tended to evaluate others based on external factors (such as a person's appearance). Second, the focus is on how Yahweh knew that the Israelites needed to learn to live obediently under His authority, while the Israelites longed for a king to unite them, one who would be like the rulers of the pagan nations that surrounded them.

In this passage specifically, we read about the contrast between Samuel and Eli's sons. In developing this part of the story, the narrator alternates between negative accounts of Eli's household (12-17, 22-25, 27-36) and brief observations about Samuel's growing relationship with Yahweh (18-21, 26). This culminates in the account of how Samuel becomes Yahweh's prophet, while Yahweh curses the descendants of Eli. It is a narrative that illustrated that God's people must be truly devoted to Him, and obedient to Him if they are to gain His blessing. The narrator's positive assessment of Samuel in this part of the narrative helps to establish Samuel's credentials for the role he will inherit, which in turn is an important part of the revelation that points to David, rather than Saul as God's chosen king.

In telling this story, this passage affirms that pedigree or social position are not a substitute for moral and spiritual purity. It also demonstrates the Yahweh is faithful in fulfilling His covenantal promises to bless those who believe and obey (those who are faithful to God's covenant). This passage also poignantly illustrates the theme of Hannah's song that is epitomized in her words that Yahweh "*brings low and lifts up*" (vs.7b). For it is under the auspices of God that ruin was determined for Hophni and Phineas, and that Samuel would be exalted to the position of prophet and judge over Israel.

I. The Wicked Sons of Eli: (2:12-17)

In chapter one and the earlier portion of chapter two we read about the human reason for the birth of Samuel; he came in response to a godly mother's prayer. In this passage the author will provide the Divine purpose in his birth. He was

ordained to bring spiritual change to Israel. This would relate to the reality pronounced in the Book of Judges *“In those days Israel had no king; everyone did what was right in their eyes”* (Jud.21:25). The nation of Israel needed someone to lead them in a different way, someone who would point them back to the God who had rescued them from Egyptian slavery, someone who would restore a proper devotion to Yahweh, Samuel would be that individual.

In chapter one we were told that Eli had two sons who served as priests before Yahweh (vs.3). Now the narrator tells us about the character of Eli’s sons. In verse twelve we read, *“Now the sons of Eli were corrupt; they did not know the LORD.”* First, we are told that they were *“corrupt”*. The literal expression is *“sons of Belial”*. The word *“Belial”* refers to that which is worthless or lacking in positive traits and conveys the idea of that which is rotten, evil, villainous, and good for nothing but destruction. This was a title that characterized Eli’s sons as perverse and wicked. In this characterization, the narrator used a double entendre equating Eli himself with Belial, because through indulging his sons he was failing to show due respect for God, and therefore was threatening the sanctity of Yahweh’s name in the community of Israel. This same designation was used by Hannah in chapter one (vs.16) when she said to Eli not to regard her as *“wicked”* in response to his harsh initial words to her when she was praying at the sanctuary. Ironically, Eli labeled Hannah falsely with a description that actually fit his own sons. Eli’s confusion regarding who and who was not wicked called into question his qualification to serve as a spiritual leader of Israel. And the narrator’s designation of Eli’s sons in this way is especially disconcerting when one realizes that the same expression was used of the men of Gibeah who threatened to gang rape a Levite and then violated and murdered his concubine (Jud.19:22). Second, we are told that Eli’s sons did not *“know”* Yahweh. Clearly, this could not mean that they were intellectually unaware of who Yahweh was since they were serving as priests in the sanctuary. Instead, the idea is that they did not acknowledge Yahweh in the sense of recognizing His authority, meaning they did not really have true faith in Yahweh, nor any real relationship with Him, despite serving as His priests at the sanctuary.

In verse thirteen we read, *“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.”* In this verse, the expression *“priests’ custom”* is meant in an ironic sense, distinguishing their normal practice from what was actually mandated in the Law of God. The narrator was distinguishing what the priests of that time were actually doing from the practices specifically prescribed in the Law (Lev.7:31-34; 10:14-15; Num.18:18; Deut.18:3). This verse indicates that Hophni and Phineas were forcibly taking the portion of meat that was meant for the meal of those making the sacrificial offering. Thus, they were involved in thievery and sacrilege. The Mosaic Law stipulated that the priests were to receive the breast and right thigh (Lev.7:28-36). However, instead it had become the customary practice to stick a large fork in and take whatever one pierced. The bronze implements referred to here were short handled with long, straight tines (like a pitchfork with a short handle).

In verse fourteen we read, *“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.”* In the last sentence of the verse, we are told that these things were taking place in *“Shiloh”*. *“Shiloh”* was a town in Ephraim that was the center of tribal administration and worship for the twelve Israelite tribes from the time of Joshua until its destruction by the Philistines about 1050 B.C. Originally it had been a Canaanite settlement that had apparently been abandoned for some time. Later, this site came to be occupied by Joshua soon after the entrance of the tribes into the land. The Israelites set up the tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant at Shiloh (Josh.18:1), and this remained the center of the worship of Yahweh during the period of tribal history recorded in Joshua and Judges (Josh.21:2; Judg.21:12). Additionally, the final division of the conquered lands was made at Shiloh: the whole community of the Israelites met together in the camp at Shiloh, and Joshua cast lots for them before Yahweh; and there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion (18:8-10). In Judges 18:31 we are informed that the Danites set up a second cult center in Dan, using the graven image made by Micah the Ephraimite, and that it continued to be used as a worship site as long as the Tabernacle was located at Shiloh.

The verse instructs us that the priest's portion of the offered meat was meant to depend on chance, rather than on them selecting specifically what they wanted. The intention seems to have been that the priests were to assume that the trident would land upon the portion of meat that God intended them to have. This was meant to be an expression of the priest's faith in God and their dependence upon His providential care, rather than them depending on their own resources (thus, the customary practice, though differing from the Law, had a theological rationale).

In verse fifteen we read, *“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’”*. The inclusion of the Hebrew word *“also”* indicates that what Hophni and Phineas were doing deviated both from the normal practice of the priests of that age and from what was right according to the Law of God. The Law of Moses gave specific instructions regarding what portions of the sacrificial meat that were to be given to the priests. However, it had become the normal practice at Shiloh for the priest to receive whichever part came up from the boiling pot on the end of the fork. Eli's sons took this deviation further, insisted on taking what they wanted, and when they wanted it. Their ritual offenses came in three areas:

1. their selection of the best parts for themselves
2. their preference for the meat being roasted rather than boiled
3. their refusal to yield the fat for burning on the altar (Lev 3:16; 7:25)

According to the Law, the fat of the meat that was sacrificed was understood to be God's portion (Lev.3:16), and the punishment for a person consuming this was death (Lev.7:22-25). Even the portion which would legally fall to the priest as his share was to be received after the fat portions of the sacrifice had been burned upon the altar (Lev.7:30-34). To take the flesh of the sacrificial animal and roast it before this

offering had been made, was a crime which was equivalent to robbing from God. Therefore, it is referred to here with the emphatic particle, as being the worst crime that the sons of Eli committed.

In verse sixteen we read, *“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’.* The assessment that was given of Israel’s secular leaders in the Book of Judges is basically repeated here in regard to their spiritual leaders, the priests. Eli, though apparently a moral man himself, had lost control of his priestly sons who went so far as to appropriate for themselves the choice meat of the sacrificial animals which rightfully belonged to Yahweh as His offering. Also, they were ensuring that they got the meat they wanted by taking their portion prior to the offering. The degeneration described here was so bad that the behavior of the priests even shocked the ordinary worshipper. And if the sensibilities of the ordinary worshipper were shocked by what was being done, there would be no excuse for the priests who were supposed to instruct the people in these very matters (Mal.2:7).

In verse seventeen we read, *“Therefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD, for men abhorred the offering of the LORD.”* The definite article before *“young men”* implies that this was not a reference to sin among young men in general, but to Eli’s sons. The serious nature of the sin committed here by these young men is emphasized by the use of the word *“very”*. The Hebrew word translated as *“abhorred”* means to despise or scorn something. The idea here was that the abuses of these priests was giving the worship of Yahweh a bad name. The implication is clear that the attitude of disdain for the offerings which these priests had was influencing others to have the same disregard for them, and this was the more serious sin. We are told elsewhere that to treat Yahweh or the things of Yahweh with contempt usually resulted in severe punishment (Num.14:23; 16:30; II Sam.12:14; Ps.10:13-15; Isa.1:4).

II. Samuel's Childhood Ministry: (2:18-21)

In verse eighteen we read, *“But Samuel ministered before the LORD, even as a child, wearing a linen ephod.”* In contrast to the villainous evil of Eli’s sons, we are told about the son of Hannah, who faithfully served Yahweh in obedience to the instructions of the Law of God. In the execution of his daily responsibilities, we are told that he was wearing *“a linen ephod”*. This was a garment reserved for priesthood, so this is an indication that at this point, Samuel had become involved in a priestly apprenticeship. This ephod was most likely a type of apron, with linen being the basic material from which all priestly garments would be made (though higher ranking priests would at times have gold thread woven into the fabric). As the story unfolds, there is no reference made to lower age limits for priestly service, which seems to emphasize the guilt of the sons of Eli, that even a younger child had a deeper sense of respect for God than these older more established priests.

In verse nineteen we read, *“Moreover his mother used to make him a little robe, and bring it to him year by year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice.”* The *“little robe”* referred to here was a long loose fitting outer

garment that was worn by individuals of rank or position. This robe is distinguished from the Ephod, because this robe was intended for more general use than that other garment. This garment was provided by Hannan for Samuel (most likely because in the interval Samuel would have grown). His mother likely brought new garments to her son when she and her husband came to make their customary offerings at Shiloh. The reintroduction of Elkanah and Hannah into the narrative at this point was to fill out the contrast between the family of Eli and that of Elkanah. It conveyed that the character displayed in Samuel's life was in part a result of the faith and godliness of his mother (as she, more than her husband, is set in contrast to Eli).

In verse twenty we read, "*And Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, 'The LORD give you descendants from this woman for the loan that was given to the LORD'. Then they would go to their own home.*" The Hebrew word translated as "loan" again picks up the theme of Samuel's name. Samuel's name in Hebrew means "*asked from God*", and Hannah's request for a child was bound up with her promise to present him for Yahweh's use. Eli's blessing of Samuel's family indicates Eli favorable approval of Samuel's service to him (yet another thing that makes Samuel a contrast to the sons of Eli).

In verse twenty-one we read, "*And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived and bore three sons and two daughters. Meanwhile the child Samuel grew before the LORD.*" What is written in this verse indicates that Eli's blessing was more than a simple wish but rather was used as an expression of God's intention to bless Hannah and Elkanah. Following a frequent pattern in the Old Testament, Yahweh's goodness is revealed in how He gave Hannah not only what she had prayed for, but much more than that. In Hannah's case Yahweh gave her three sons and two daughters in addition to the one child she asked for.

As this story unfolds, these two families are used to vividly demonstrate the principle of covenantal blessings (illustrated in Elkanah and Hannah) and cursings (illustrated in Eli). The implication here is that this was not merely a result of improved fertility, rather these additional children were blessings that were gained because of Hannah's godly request, her faith in Yahweh, and her faithfulness to do what she vowed.

III. Eli's Warning to His Sons: (2:22-26)

In verse twenty-two we read, "*Now Eli was very old; and he heard everything his sons did to all Israel, and how they lay with the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*" As we return to the narrative about Eli and his sons, we are told that Eli was very old. This notation is meant to convey to the reader that a significant amount of time has passed since the details recounted in the previous verses (vs.12-17). Here we read about another sin committed by Eli's sons. They were involved sexually with women who were serving at the Sanctuary. In the Ancient Near East there were many examples of women serving at temples in various capacities. They were engaged in activities that ranged from menial tasks to priestly duties, from celibacy to prostitution, from short-term periods as a result of vows to lifelong dedication—examples of all these are available from

historical records of the nations that surrounding Israel. It is therefore difficult to identify the nature of the service that the women mentioned here were performing. The indictment of the sexual misconduct of Eli's sons suggests that the women were either involved in some duty of piety, which they perverted or were supposed to be dedicated virgins, which were violated. It must be noted, however, that though this is a possibility based on comparative studies of other cultures at the time, there is no direct evidence of religiously motivated celibacy in Israel, and this text does not describe the women as virgins. The degenerate behavior of Eli's sons, while completely at odds with the holiness that was supposed to accompany the worship of Yahweh, would have been acceptable to the Canaanites who practiced cultic prostitution as a feature of their sanctuary worship.

Some scholars note that the statement about sexual activity here is not included in the Qumran version of this passage, nor in some other ancient editions. Because of this some have concluded that this reference is a later addition. It is further suggested that this conclusion is supported by the fact that the prophet who confronted Eli about the sins of his sons, did not refer to the sin described here (vs.27-29). Though this is an interesting suggestion, there is nothing definitive to favor those minority readings of the text over the traditional Hebrew text.

In verse twenty-three we read, *"So he said to them, 'Why do you do such things? For I hear of your evil dealings from all the people'."* Though Eli did at this point confront his sons verbally about their sins, it is also true that he did nothing further to prevent these abominations than to simply express his displeasure about them.

In verse twenty-four we read, *"No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the LORD's people transgress."* The Hebrew word translated as "report" that Eli used, conveys the sense of spreading something abroad, in other words, their conduct was becoming public knowledge. As a result, the immoral example of these priests was leading to immorality and impiety among the people in the nation.

In verse twenty-five we read, *"If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the LORD, who will intercede for him?" Nevertheless they did not heed the voice of their father, because the LORD desired to kill them."* Eli's point in this statement was that there was no mechanism for arbitration between Yahweh and the priests. In the case of one man's sin against another, Yahweh would settle the dispute as arbitrator through the proper authorities (meaning that God's mediation would take place through those offices and institutions of arbitration that God Himself had established in the Law of Moses); whereas, when a man sinned against God, no one could interpose himself as an arbitrator. Therefore, that sort of sin could not be dealt with by intercession. The sons of Eli had placed themselves in the unenviable position of being the opponents of God Himself. The narrator added that the reason why Eli's sons would not listen to this admonition, was because Yahweh had already given them up to the first manifestation of judgment, their hearts had been hardened. At this point God had already determined to judge these men for their sins. The implication of the narrative is that God had determined this because this wickedness of these priests

had gone on for a long time (they had already received ample opportunity to repent and did not). The expression “*the LORD desired*” refers to that which the Lord willed, what pleased Him. This response by God was rooted in His just nature. Though this is expressed as a sovereign act by God, there is also a reference to the willful choice of Eli’s sons, so that the result is presented as a balance of both God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. The fact that this judgment was a result of the Divine will does not mean that human beings are not accountable for their actions. On the contrary, in this text it is assumed that the cause of the downfall of Hophni and Phineas was their own sin and willful rejection of God.

In this verse there is another echo of Hannah’s godly prayer, where she noted that Yahweh both kills and makes alive (which came to fulfillment when He first caused Samuel’s birth and again later when He caused the deaths of Hophni and Phineas). The latter statement is expressed in an emphatic way, stressing that the pronouncement of judgment was irrevocable at this point.

In verse twenty-six we read, “*And the child Samuel grew in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men*”. What is written here is essentially the same idea that was expressed in verse twenty-one. It is repeated here for emphasis, with the intent of further marking the contrast between Samuel and the sons of Eli. The precise nature of the contrast presented here is that while the reputations of Eli’s sons grew ever worse, and they descended into ever deeper degrees of sin; by contrast not only was Samuel’s righteous reputation growing, but he was also growing in godliness as well. The significance of the narrator’s evaluation of Samuel should not be missed; this same assessment is made about Jesus in the New Testament (Lk.2:52).

The interweaving of the stories of Samuel and the sons of Eli leaves no doubt who had Divine approval and who stood under condemnation.

IV. Prophecy Against Eli's Household: (2:27-36)

In verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight we read, “*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? 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?’*” It is helpful for the reader to note that the prayer of Hannah, and the message of this unnamed prophet are the only recorded instances of prophecy since the time of Deborah. This indicates that Yahweh was showing renewed grace to Israel by raising up godly individuals to confront the nation in its sin, something that had not happened for a long time.

The designation “*man of God*” was normally used as a synonym for a prophet. And the “*father*” that God refers to through this prophet was Aaron, the first priest of Israel. The reminder that this family was selected to serve in this privileged role while they were still in Egyptian slavery emphasized that the reception of that role was purely an expression of God’s grace. From other references in this book, we learn that an Ephod was consulted for the purpose of obtaining oracular decisions,

which suggests a correspondence, in part or in whole, with the high priestly vestment (23:6; 30:7ff), indicating that this was Eli's role at the time to seek out responses from God to gain an understanding of Yahweh's will.

In verse twenty-nine we continue to read the unnamed prophet's confrontation of Eli, "*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?*" This was a rhetorical question meant to appeal to Eli's conscience. The prophet was challenging Eli with the facts that, despite the generous arrangements that Yahweh had made for the priests, he had willingly tolerated his sons unprincipled behavior. The reference to "*kicking*" was meant to call to mind the image of a domesticated animal, one that was well cared for by its master, which despite this refused to fulfill its master's purpose for purchasing it, but rather fought against the master's efforts (Deut.32:15). Though Eli confronted his sons about their behavior (although belatedly, vs.23-25), apparently, he was still experiencing the benefits of their actions, enjoying the food that his sons had taken from the people. The point in the contrast that is made here between Eli having honored his sons while despising Yahweh, conveyed that Eli should have given greater devotion to God than to anyone else (including his sons), the fact that he did not do this indicated that his priorities were the opposite of what they should have been. In effect, the prophet was saying that Eli loved his sons more than he loved God.

In light of the incredible privilege that Yahweh had given to Eli's family, his lax concern about his role made his sin an inexcusable crime.

In verse thirty, we continue to read about the prophet's confrontation of Eli, "*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.'*" The Hebrew phrase translated as "*forever*" refers to an indefinite period of time, one with no immediate end in view (Deut.23:3; I Sam.1:22; Isa.32:14; Jer.17:4). This phrase did not necessarily connote the idea of eternity. It was much like how a person in the present might speak of something lasting "*forever*" when they simply mean it took a long time. The phrase "*walk before Me*" does not refer to life, but to the priestly role that had been given to Eli's family. God was saying through the prophet that the flagrant sins of Eli's sons, and his acquiescence to them had forfeited the gracious promise God had made to establish the perpetuity and blessing of Eli's house through Ithamar, Aaron's fourth son. In this statement we receive an important revelation, for here what originally was given as a seemingly unconditional promise assumed a fragile conditionality. This reflects the conditional nature of the entire covenant made with Israel through Moses. The sins of Eli and his sons represented a breach of the terms of that covenant, and therefore God was no longer bound by the terms and promises of the covenant. The Hebrew word translated as "*despise*" means to blatantly disobey (II Sam.12:10). By honoring the enemies of Yahweh (in this case, Eli's own sons), Eli had demonstrated that he despised Yahweh. It is made clear here that Yahweh

would not continue to bless those who refused to honor and obey Him. This is a key statement for understanding the primary theme of this chapter, the contrast between Samuel and the sons of Eli.

In verses thirty-one and thirty-two we read, “*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. 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.*” The reference to cutting off of an arm was a Hebrew idiom that meant to remove someone’s strength or power. Part of God’s judgment upon Eli’s family was that he would be the last old man in his family line. Soon, God would carry out His judgment against Eli’s sons. But beyond that, this curse indicates that in general, Eli’s later descendants would also die untimely deaths.

The Hebrew phrase translated here as “*you will see an enemy in My dwelling place*” would be better translated as “*you will see a reduction in my dwelling place*”. This would have significant meaning in that culture. In the ancient world, the prosperity and condition of the central place of worship normally was indicative of that for the overall society. Therefore, this statement would indicate that the space devoted to the sanctuary and that which was controlled by the nation would experience a decline. The enemy that Yahweh was referring to here was the Philistines at whose hands Eli’s sons would die, and in that battle. Additionally, the Philistines would capture the Ark of the Covenant in that battle (4:12-18).

In verse thirty-three we read, “*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.*” If read from a modern perspective, the language of this verse gives the impression that Eli would be around to see God’s judgment on his descendants. However, he was nearly one hundred years old at this time (4:15) and would die soon (4:18). He did not personally witness all that this prophecy spoke about. Rather, this prophecy was expressed through a dramatic rhetorical device that was common in that time. It assumed the principle of corporate solidarity, according to which an ancestor experiences later events through his offspring (Gen.3:15; 28:14). Therefore, the idea is that these were things Eli’s descendants would experience. The actual Hebrew wording indicates that only one person would be left to serve as priest after the death of the rest of the family. This would then probably refer to Abiathar, who escaped when Saul killed the priests at Nob who were all descendants of Eli (22:17-20). The language of this verse is strongly evocative of the curse formula of Leviticus 26:16, which speaks of the morbid effects of certain diseases threatened on the community should it turn aside from God’s statutes and commandments.

In verse thirty-four we read, “*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.*” Eli did live to see the deaths of Hophni and Phinehas, though he did not survive very long after that (I Sam.4:17 ff). This sight was to be the sign to him that the predicted punishment would be carried out to its fullest extent.

In verses thirty-five and thirty-six we read, “*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. 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.’*” Through the prophet, Yahweh made it clear that he would not eliminate the priesthood itself. Rather He would raise up a faithful priest to replace Eli, whose line of succession would be firmly established and who would minister before His anointed one (i.e., the king) forever. In human terms this was fulfilled when the priesthood was taken from Abiathar, descendant of Aaron's son Ithamar, and given to Zadok, descendant of Aaron's son Eleazar (1 Kings 2:27,35). In the ultimate sense, the faithful Priest and the Anointed One are the same person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfills the roles of being both the ultimate High Priest and the ultimate King (Ps 110; Heb 5:6; Rev 19:16). There is likely also an intermediate sense in which Samuel would replace the sons of Eli, becoming the spiritual leader of the nation in the short run.

The expression “*according to what is in My heart and in My mind*” refers to what one intends and desires. The heart and mind referred to both the seat of the intellect and will, as well as the seat of desire and the appetites. Therefore, the expression means that God would raise up an individual who would act in harmony with God's desires, purposes and will.

The pronouncement in verse thirty-six refers to future descendants of Eli seeking out the opportunity to do menial tasks as a manifestation of the humiliation that would be the lot of his descendants. Their poverty would be a living proverb about the consequences of not appreciating the good gifts of God. What is described here is a type of retributive justice, where a punishment is designed to fit the sin. In this case, as a judgment for the way the sons of Eli were gorging on meat that did not belong to them, their descendants would one day need to beg for food.

Conclusion:

This passage teaches three things. First, it teaches just how far astray Israel had gone during the age of the judges. Even their most significant spiritual leaders were corrupt and sinful, pursuing their lusts rather than genuinely serving Yahweh in love and devotion. Second, it teaches that though those who sin might get away with it for a while, eventually a time will come when one answers for their sin, and it is a bitter thing when that happens. Third, it teaches that a parent's devotion to his or her children must not outweigh their devotion to God. One cannot always prevent one's children from pursuing a lifestyle of sin, but a godly parent must never ignore when their children become involved in sin, but must confront it out of loyalty to God and also out of concern for the well-being of one's children.