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BIB 102 OA/OB Old Testament Literature (Online)

02 February 2022

Life of Eli (1Samuel 1-3)

Eli was a high priest and servant to the Lord in the city of Shiloh. He had two sons whose names are Phinehas and Hophni. He served (in lay terms) as a middle man between the Lord and the people of Shiloh. He would bless the people for their offerings and sacrifices. He was a character that made good and bad decisions.

Eli did a few good things during his time as a priest in the bible. One good thing is that he showed kindness to Hannah, and blessed her in her pursuit of trying to conceive. He aided her by giving her instructions on how to reach God and petition for a child. This can be conveyed in 1 Samuel 1:17, the following is spoken by Eli. "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grants your petition which you have asked of Him." (NKJV). That verse shows how Eli counseled Hannah in her endeavors. Another action Eli did which can be perceived as good is by him trying to educate and warn his sons about their evil doings, while not supporting their behavior. This can be displayed in 1 Samuel 2: 24-25, the following is said by Eli. "No, my sons! For it is not a good report that I hear. You make the Lord's people transgress. If one man sins against another, God will judge him. But if a man sins against the Lord, who will intercede for him?" (NKJV). This depicts that Eli did not support his sons' actions and wanted them to heed his warning. Another good thing Eli did was help Samuel hear the Lord when the Lord initially called on

Samuel. This can be shown in 1 Samuel 3:9, the following is spoken by Eli. “Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.’ So Samuel went and lay down in his place.” (NKJV). This shows how Eli in a way counseled Samuel on how to hear God.

Eli also had some wrongdoing in his time as high priest of Shiloh. One thing Eli did wrong was when he first saw Hannah he assumed that she was drunk; because no words could be heard coming out of her mouth. The following interaction is displayed in 1 Samuel 1:13-14.

“Now Hannah spoke in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, “How long will you be drunk? Put your wine away from you!” (NKJV). Eli was wrong for so quickly judging and scolding Hannah in the way that he did before having the chance to understand why she was acting in the manner she was.

Another major bad thing Eli did was knowing that his sons were taking the roasted meat from the offerings of the Israelites and keeping it for themselves, as well as not stopping his sons from laying with women who come to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. All this is described in 1 Samuels 2:15 and 2:22. “ Also before they burned the fat, the priest’s servant would come and say to man who sacrificed, “Give meat for roasting to the priest, for he will not take boiled meat from you, but raw.” “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.” (NKJV). Eli is responsible for the wrongdoings of his sons and not holding them accountable for their many bad actions.

Overall I believe that Eli was not a bad person at heart; he just made questionable decisions as a high priest. I do not believe that anyone is truly all good, everyone sins and makes mistakes. I believe that everyone should have a chance at salvation and redemption. I believe the goods that Eli did outweigh the bad. His goodness can be shown by him blessing Hannah, helping Samuel hear the Lord's word, and not interfering with God's plan. When Eli was faced with the weight of his bad decisions he accepted God's will and the rise of Samuel. This can be shown in 1 Samuel 3:18, the following is said by Eli." It is the Lord Let Him do what seems good to Him." (NKJV). This shows that in the end, Eli accepted his demise.

The lessons which I have learned from the story of Eli that I can use as an application for my Christian walk today are, developing my faith is an ongoing process that never ends. Also, to not lose sight of the word of the Lord. I have learned that obedience and faith in the Lord are of the utmost importance in my Christian walk. Most importantly I've learned not to turn a blind eye as Eli did to others' wrongdoings and to not honor others above the Lord.

In conclusion, Eli did bad things in his time as a priest, but he also did some good. He helped Samuel hear the Lord's word. He also tried to warn his sons about the evil things they were doing to the Israelites. Ultimately Eli was a good person at heart, but lost his faith along the way, and failed the people of Shiloh. This story is a great representation of how important it is to be obedient to the Lord, and not stray from his plan.

Works Cited

Keener, Craig S. *NKJV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture*. Edited by John H Walton, Zondervan, 2017.