

# 1 Samuel 4:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man, and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

## Analysis

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Eli's death comes specifically at 'mention of the ark of God' - not at news of his sons' deaths but at the Ark's capture. This reaction reveals what mattered most to him. He falls backward, breaks his neck, and dies. The descriptors - old, heavy, forty-year judge - seem almost obituary-like. The phrase 'he had judged Israel forty years' provides formal closure to his ministry. Whatever his failures, Eli's final moments show his heart was oriented toward God's honor, not merely personal loss.

## Historical Context

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Eli's death by falling backward fulfills the judgment pattern while suggesting his instinctive reaction to devastating news. The forty-year judgeship places him among the major judges in terms of tenure, despite his compromised record.

## Related Passages

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**John 3:16** — God's love and salvation

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

## Study Questions

1. What does Eli's reaction to the Ark's capture versus his sons' deaths reveal about his priorities?
2. How should we assess Eli's overall ministry given both his failures and his final response?

## Interlinear Text

וְיָהִי	כִּי-זָפִיר וְזָ	אָתָה	יְמִים אָרָוֹן	בְּאֵלָהָה
H1961	And it came to pass when he made mention	H853	of the ark	of God
	H2142	H727		H430
that he fell	from off the seat	backward	by	the side of the gate
H5307	H3678	H322	H1157	H3027
brake	and his neck	and he died	for he was an old	man
H7665	H4665	H4191	H2204	H3515
וְיָהִי	שָׁפֵט	לֹא תִּשְׁרָאֵל	שָׁנָה:	אֶרְבָּעִים
H1931	And he had judged	H853	forty	years
	H8199	H3478	H705	H8141

## Additional Cross-References

**Psalms 69:9** (Parallel theme): For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.