

Judges

Chapter 10

Tola

After the time of Abimelech a man of Issachar, Tola son of Puah, the son of Dodo, rose to save Israel. He lived in Shamir, in the hill country of Ephraim. ² He led Israel twenty-three years; then he died, and was buried in Shamir.

10:1–5 *save*. No foreign oppressor is mentioned, nor is any description offered of how Tola and Jair discharged their duties. They may have been military leaders or judicial arbiters. The good news is they served Israel rather than spending their energies on personal vengeance. *Tola*. Second of the so-called “minor” judges. *Shamir*. West of Shechem. Centuries later, King Omri chose Shamir as the site for his capital and called it Samaria. Cf 1Ki 16:23–24. (TLSB)

10:1 *a man of Issachar, Tola son of Puah*. Tola and Puah bear names of two of the sons of Issachar (Ge 46:13; Nu 26:23; 1Ch 7:1). (CSB)

Jair

³ He was followed by Jair of Gilead, who led Israel twenty-two years. ⁴ He had thirty sons, who rode thirty donkeys. They controlled thirty towns in Gilead, which to this day are called Havvoth Jair. ⁵ When Jair died, he was buried in Kamon.

10:3 *Jair*. Since Jair came from Gilead (the territory assigned to Manasseh) and since a descendant of Manasseh bore the same name (Nu 32:41; Dt 3:14; 1Ki 4:13), it appears that Jair was a Manassite. (CSB)

10:4 *thirty sons ... thirty donkeys ... thirty towns*. Evidence of wealth and position. (CSB)

Israelites did not ride horses or have chariots at this time. Hbr features a clever wordplay, which could be rendered: “He had thirty boys who rode thirty burros and owned thirty boroughs” (New Jewish Version). (TLSB)

Havvoth Jair. See NIV text note. (CSB)

“Tent villages of Jair,” east of the Jordan, south of the Sea of Chinnereth. (TLSB)

10:5 *Kamon*. Probably Qamm in modern Jordan.

10:1–5 Following the discredited kingship of Abimelech, the Lord provides rescue and safety through two “minor” judges (see note, v 6). Even good judges like Jair are affected by the sins of the culture—polygamy and a thirst for wealth. How blind we may be to the besetting sins of our

culture! God's grace stepped into our world in the person of Jesus, who rode a donkey in humility so that He might teach and serve the people. • We praise You, O Lord, for the many blessings we enjoy through men and women who remain little known to us. We rejoice in the way Your Word focuses on the One we need to know most: Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)

Jephthah

⁶ Again the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD. They served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, and the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines. And because the Israelites forsook the LORD and no longer served him, ⁷ he became angry with them. He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites, ⁸ who that year shattered and crushed them. For eighteen years they oppressed all the Israelites on the east side of the Jordan in Gilead, the land of the Amorites. ⁹ The Ammonites also crossed the Jordan to fight against Judah, Benjamin and the house of Ephraim; and Israel was in great distress. ¹⁰ Then the Israelites cried out to the LORD, "We have sinned against you, forsaking our God and serving the Baals." ¹¹ The LORD replied, "When the Egyptians, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Philistines, ¹² the Sidonians, the Amalekites and the Maonites oppressed you and you cried to me for help, did I not save you from their hands? ¹³ But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. ¹⁴ Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!" ¹⁵ But the Israelites said to the LORD, "We have sinned. Do with us whatever you think best, but please rescue us now." ¹⁶ Then they got rid of the foreign gods among them and served the LORD. And he could bear Israel's misery no longer. ¹⁷ When the Ammonites were called to arms and camped in Gilead, the Israelites assembled and camped at Mizpah. ¹⁸ The leaders of the people of Gilead said to each other, "Whoever will launch the attack against the Ammonites will be the head of all those living in Gilead."

10:6–12:7 Israel now turned to Jephthah, a social outcast whom they had driven from the land and caused to become an outlaw without an inheritance in Israel. The author notes this to Israel's shame. The account of Jephthah's judgeship balances that of Deborah in the story of the judges (see note on 4:1–5:31; see also Introduction: Literary Features). (CSB)

10:6 *again did what was evil.* Suggests that Tola and Jair may have helped restore or sustain Israel's devotion to the Lord. Unfortunately, the spiritual influence of Tola and Jair did not extend beyond their lives. Though the Ten Commandments call for complete loyalty to the Lord, Israel sank deeper into polytheism and religious syncretism. (TLSB)

served. Worshiped. The number of false gods increased in Israel. Perhaps the 45 years of leadership under Tola and Jair allowed increased trade, exposing the people to new peoples and religions. (TLSB)

Baals and the Ashtaroth. Canaanite deities. (TLSB)

gods of Aram. The chief gods were Hadad (Baal), Mot, Anath and Rimmon. (CSB)

gods of Sidon. The Sidonians worshiped essentially the same gods as the Canaanites (see notes on 2:11, 13). (CSB)

Principally their version of Ashtaroath.

gods of Moab. The chief deity of Moab was Chemosh. (CSB)

gods of the Ammonites. Molech was the chief Ammonite deity (see 1Ki 11:7) and was sometimes worshiped by the offering of human sacrifice (Lev 18:21; 20:2–5; 2Ki 23:10). This god is also called Milcom (see NIV text notes on 1Ki 11:5; 2Ki 23:13). Both Molech and Milcom are forms of a Semitic word for “king.” (CSB)

Cf Lv 18:21. (TLSB)

gods of the Philistines. While the Philistines worshiped most of the Canaanite gods, their most popular deities appear to have been Dagon and Baal-Zebub. The name Dagon is the same as a Hebrew word for “grain,” suggesting that he was a vegetation deity. He was worshiped in Babylonia as early as the second millennium B.C. Baal-Zebub was worshiped in Ekron (2Ki 1:2–3, 6, 16). The name means “lord of the flies,” a deliberate change by followers of the Lord (Yahweh) to ridicule and protest the worship of Baal-Zebul (“Baal the prince”), a name known from ancient Canaanite texts (see Mt 10:25; 12:24 and NIV text notes). (CSB)

The writer lists seven groups of deities. Vv 11–12 list seven nations from whom the Lord delivered Israel. (TLSB)

forsook ... did not serve Him. People commonly multiplied the number of gods they worshiped, seeking greater favor by every means. E.g., an inscription from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud pairs Yahweh, the God of Israel, with Asherah, a Canaanite goddess. (TLSB)

10:7 *sold.* See note, 2Ki 17:17. Religious apostasy and political degeneration went hand in hand. (TLSB)

Philistines. The account of Philistine oppression is resumed in 13:1. (CSB)

One of the many Sea Peoples who infiltrated Canaan from the west and southwest during the second half of the second millennium BC. (TLSB)

Ammonites. As Israelites sought out false gods on all sides, the Lord sent oppressors from all sides. (TLSB)

10:10 *cried out.* The method for approaching the Lord is not specifically described but is characteristic of “inquiring of the Lord” by speaking with a priest or the high priest at the

tabernacle (cf 20:27–28). The tabernacle and the priesthood are explicitly featured in Jgs until the last story (chs 17–21), which heightens the sense of lawlessness and false religion throughout the Book. Chs 17–21 illustrate that even the priests and Levites were falling away until the Lord called the nation to repentance, which is the dominant theological theme of the Book. (TLSB)

10:11 *The LORD replied.* See note on 2:1. The Lord rebuked Israel for forgetting that he had delivered them from their oppressors in Canaan (see notes on 2:16–19; 6:8). (CSB)

We are not told where, how, or through whom the Lord revealed this message, but it appears not to have been through the angel of the Lord (cf 2:1–3) or through a prophet (cf 6:8–10). (TLSB)

Did I not save you. The past three centuries had been filled with instances in which the Lord rescued His people from their oppressors. (TLSB)

10:12 *Maonites.* See NIV text note; or perhaps the same as the Meunites, who along with the Philistines and Arabs opposed Israel (2Ch 26:7). (CSB)

10:13 *I will save you no more.* Even divine patience can be exhausted. Cf Gn 15:16. (TLSB)

10:15 *We have sinned.* In response to their great spiritual distress (v 10) and the Lord’s withering sarcasm (v 14), Israel’s remorse seems genuine. (TLSB)

do to us. In their answer, they seem willing to accept whatever disciplinary pain the Lord deemed suitable for their spiritual correction. (TLSB)

10:16 *they put away the foreign gods.* The people appealed to God only when circumstances became truly dire. Yet the repentance here may be genuine. The Lord responds to them by sending Jephthah (chs 11–12). (TLSB)

10:17 *Gilead.* Southeast of the Sea of Chinnereth. Ammonites hoped to follow their initial success (vv 7–9) with a second campaign against Israel. (TLSB)

Mizpah. Means “watchtower.” Several places bore this name. Jephthah’s headquarters was a town or fortress in Gilead (11:11) called “Mizpah of Gilead” (11:29). It may have been the same as Ramath Mizpah (Jos 13:26), located about 30 miles east of Beth Shan. (CSB)

“Watchpost.” OT mentions several Mizpahs in this general area, and it is uncertain which Mizpah is meant. Mizpah in Gilead offered a rallying place that may have best served this purpose. (TLSB)

10:18 The Gileadites wanted to resist the Ammonite incursion but lacked the courageous military leadership to press their cause. (CSB)

Israel rallied not to muster troops but to address their lack of leadership. (TLSB)

people. Fighting men. (CSB)

10:6–18 Israel’s spiritual well-being deteriorates after the death of Tola and Jair. During oppression from the Ammonites, Israel is left to beg for a leader to repulse this latest threat. Spiritual gullibility leads people to believe anything that suits their desires. God is remarkable in His persistent mercy and in His willingness to begin anew with us. • All that was written in the Scripture was written to teach us. Enable us to learn and grow, dear Jesus. Amen. (TLSB)