

Judges Chapter 10 Part 1

This week we start a new chapter in the book of Judges. Chapter 10 is mostly about Jephthah. But this chapter doesn't start with Jephthah. Instead it makes mention of two "minor" judges. Just like there are major and minor prophets, so we have in the book of Judges major and minor judges.

Dale Ralph Davis explains this about Tola and Jair (the next minor judge), "Tola and Jair are minor judges because they receive less ink, less space in the story, a fact which does not mean they were of no importance. In fact there was probably little difference in function between the major and the minor judges."

We already encountered the first "minor judge" in Judges chapter 3:

Judges 3:31 After him came Shamgar the son of Anath, who struck down six hundred Philistines with an oxgoad; and he also saved Israel.

He was likely not even a Hebrew but an Egyptian commando. He is never said to be a judge. So, he can't technically be called a minor judge. He did deliver Israel. The point of that story was that God acted even when there was not an Israelite man to accomplish the task. God acted because He is faithful to His people even when they are not faithful toward Him. God acts. God provides. Please, walk by faith to avoid being "whipped." As Phil reminded us:

Proverbs 3:11 My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His reproof,

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Proverbs 3:12 For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

Referred to by the writer of Hebrews:

Hebrews 11:5 and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him;

Hebrews 11:6 For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives."

This exhortation is for us today. Remember the history of Israel in the book of Judges. The principles that led to their discipline still apply today to us. Walk by faith, please.

Judges 10:1 Now after Abimelech died, Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar, arose to save Israel; and he lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim.

Judges 10:2 He judged Israel twenty-three years. Then he died and was buried in Shamir.

After Abimelech died. Perhaps we are expected to see a contrast with what follows. What we get is the mention of two minor judges. Little is said about them. But they are important because God has acted in history in order to protect His people, even when He disciplines them.

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Arose. It does not mention God's actions. Certainly God was involved, but the emphasis is just that Tola arose.

To save Israel. The word for save is from the same root that is used for Jesus name, "Yeshua." Judging and saving are themes that run all through the book of Judges.

Let's look back at the description of the cycle of sin, deliverance and return to sin given in chapter 2:

Judges 2:14 The anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.

Judges 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had spoken and as the Lord had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.

Judges 2:16 Then the Lord raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.

Various people have commented on that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Many of these comments are based upon a quote from George Santayana, a philosopher from the early 1900's. "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it." [https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/56610.George_Santayana]. This is what the Bible says in the just quoted verses from Judges chapter 2. The Israelites kept repeating their abandonment of God only to

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be disciplined, cry to God, be delivered by a judges and repeat the cycle. If only we could keep the cycle stuck on trusting on God...

He judged Israel. There is no extended narrative for Tola.

He died and was buried in Shamir. Like some of the other judges, his burial place is identified. Here it is located in Shamir. Unfortunately, we do not know with certainty where this is. But like other judges, a burial site would have been a reminder to those with some spiritual sense of what God did. National monuments are reminders to following generations of the struggles of those who preceded them.

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Previously I made a list of those judges whose burial site is mentioned:

Burial Sites Identified in the Book of Judges

Chapter / Verse	Judge	Burial Site
2:9	Joshua (leader like Moses, not judge)	in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
8:32	Gideon	in the tomb of his father Joash, in Ophrah of the Abiezrites
10:2	Tola	in Shamir
10:5	Jair	in Kamon
12:7	Jephthah	in <i>one of</i> the cities of Gilead
12:10	Ibzan	in Bethlehem
12:12	Elon	at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun
12:15	Abdon	at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites
16:31	Samson	between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of Manoah his father

You notice that all five of these minor judges have burial sites identified.

So, you are thinking, why even mention Tola, a minor judge? Perhaps this helps those who put chronologies together to account for the time of the Judges.

Here are some extended quotes from Robbie Dean. He is an expert on the book of Judges. He is conservative, doctrinally oriented. He did his Master's Thesis on Jephthah's "sacrifice." He has taught the book of

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Judges multiple times. The quotes are from his 2000 series. He is currently teaching Judges again, but has not yet gotten this far.

"After Abimelech there arose to deliver Israel, Tola, the son of Puah, the son of Dodo," now we don't know who Puah and Dodo were, Issachar was one of the sons of Jacob and one of the tribes of Jacob, so he is an Issacharite who is living down in the central part of Israel, "in the hill country of Ephraim." We don't know who Puah or Dodo were, but the writer is emphasizing the fact that this is a real historical individual. If you were a Jew reading this about the time in which it was written you probably knew who those people were. So this is an indication this is not just some mythical figure somebody made up but this is a person who is located in space/time history and he has a specific genealogy. Now it tells us that he "arose to save Israel," to deliver Israel.

“Notice the verbs, he saved Israel, he lived in Shamir, which was in the central part of Ephraim, we don't know exactly where it was, probably in the central part of Ephraim. He delivered, he lived, he judged for twenty three years, so there's specificity in terms of the time frame there, he died and he was buried. Now the interesting thing is, when you look at these verbs, they emphasize a regularity, a consistency and a stability to his reign; he delivered, he reigned, he judged, he died, he was buried. There's a pattern there, it's a normal pattern. So what we can infer from this is after the instability of the period of Abimelech that there was a period of stability brought in under Tola. Now Tola's name means worm, so the emphasis here is on the fact that he's of somewhat lowly birth or lowly presence, it may indicate that he has a level of humility and this would be in contrast to Abimelech and Abimelech's arrogance and desire for tyranny. Also, Ephraim is located across the border; Ephraim is located in this central highlands area just south of the area of Shechem.”

“So the writer wants us to notice certain things in contrast to what has been going on before us, that God has raised up a judge, this is the first

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judge since Gideon, and he brings a level of stability to the nation. And that's about all that we can say about Tola.”

Now as I read about Tola, the “worm,” I was reminded that someone else in Scripture is likened to a worm, Jesus Christ on the cross. Here is perhaps another oblique reference to our Savior in the book of Judges. I want so much to spend some time looking at these oblique references to Jesus Christ in the book of Judges. Here is a “worm” who Robbie Dean says could refer to his humility. Who had more humility than our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross? I am referring, of course, to Psalm 22.

Psalm 22:1 My God, my God, why have You forsaken me? Far from my deliverance are the words of my groaning.

Psalm 22:2 O my God, I cry by day, but You do not answer; And by night, but I have no rest.

Psalm 22:3 Yet You are holy, O You who are enthroned upon the praises of Israel.

Psalm 22:4 In You our fathers trusted; They trusted and You delivered them.

Psalm 22:5 To You they cried out and were delivered; In You they trusted and were not disappointed.

Psalm 22:6 But I am a worm and not a man, A reproach of men and despised by the people.

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Psalm 22:7 All who see me sneer at me; They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,

Psalm 22:8 “Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver him; Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”

Here is a comment by the NIV Study Bible concerning Psalm 22, “No other psalm fitted quite so aptly the circumstances of Jesus at his crucifixion. Hence on the cross he took it on his lips (see Mt 27:46 and parallels), and the Gospel writers, especially Matthew and John, frequently alluded to it (as they did to Ps 69) in their accounts of Christ’s passion (Mt 27:35,39,43; Jn 19:23-24,28). They saw in the passion of Jesus the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. The author of Hebrews placed the words of v.22 on Jesus’ lips (see Heb 2:12 and note). No other Psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT.”

The point I am making is Tola could introduce himself as “I am Worm.” Jesus, although not specifically identified as a worm, could point to Psalm 22 through his quotes from it (My God My God why hast Thou forsaken me?) and say “I am Worm” crushed for your sins.

Judges 10:3 After him, Jair the Gileadite arose and judged Israel twenty-two years.

Judges 10:4 He had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havvoth-jair to this day.

Judges 10:5 And Jair died and was buried in Kamon.

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Havvoth-jair. Per Trent Butler, “The region is referred to as Havvoth Jair. The strength of each of the villages was most likely small, the name Havvoth Jair (חַיִּתַּיִר) meaning an encampment of tents or tent villages (HALOT).” So, Jair’s sons each had a city. Collectively they were called the villages or encampments of Jair.

There are two “minor” judges at the beginning of the Jephthah narrative and three at the end of the narrative

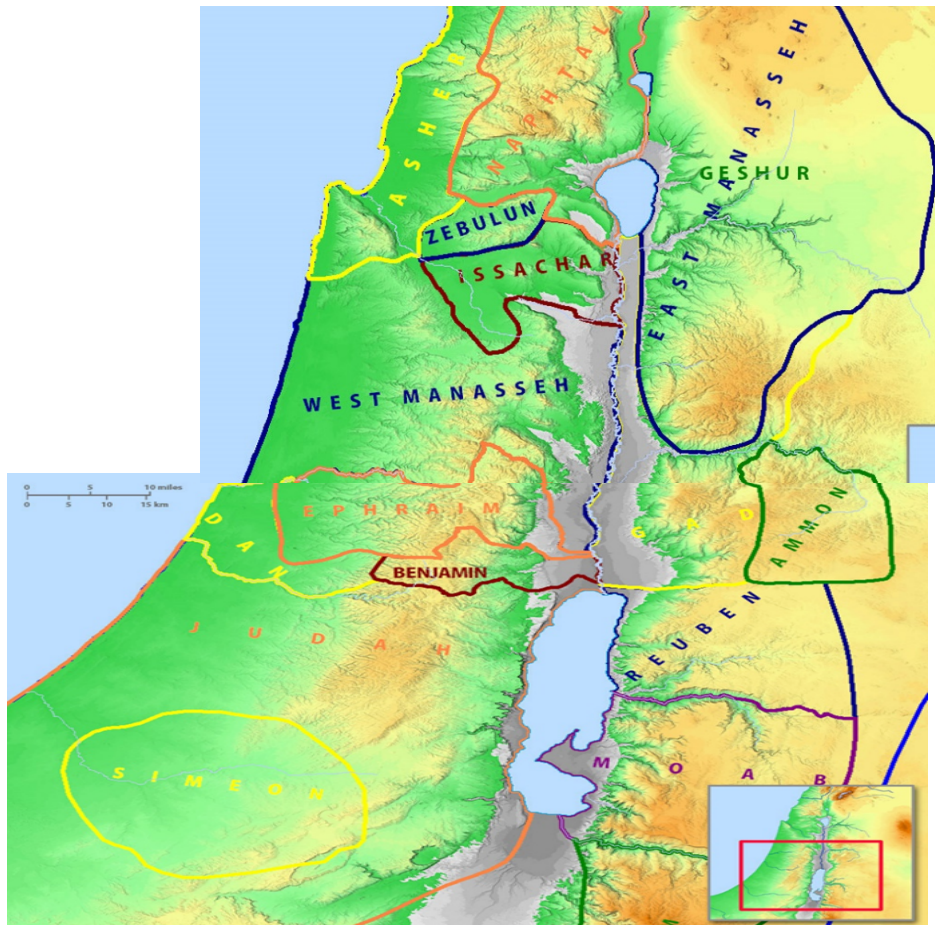
Here is a comment by Robbie Dean:

“What is interesting is just from a literary standpoint is that you have these five minor judges, two and three, two at the very beginning of the Jephthah episode and three at the end that sort of frame it. And they're going to tell us something about...the reason the author has included that is just to emphasize a couple of points about what's happening among the leadership in Israel at this time. One of the points in terms of looking at this entire scheme is that these men are not raised up by God. Nothing is said about God raising these men up; nothing is said about their devotion to God; nothing is said about their spiritual life at all or their judgeships being related to God at all, but they do deliver Israel. So it de-emphasizes the spiritual aspect of these men while at the same time it emphasizes that God, in His providential care of Israel, is still raising up men who are providing some sort of protection and leadership for the nation, despite the fact that the nation is in full-blown apostasy and rebellion against God. So the emphasis throughout this section is on the faithfulness of God in delivering Israel and bringing about His plan despite the continuing and increasing reversionism of the nation. It is a testimony to God's grace.”

“Then we have a second judge, a second judge who is called Jair, and he is a Gileadite. His name, Jair, means "may God enlighten." And he is a descendant of Manasseh; the tribe of Manasseh has settled across the

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Jordan in the area indicated... Gilead really extends from up north near the Sea of Galilee up in this area where you have the tribe of Manasseh located on the Transjordan, and it goes south down to the Dead Sea, to the border of Moab which is located in this general vicinity. So there is about sixty miles from north to south in the region known as Gilead which is comprised of...you have both Gad in the south, Manasseh is the tribe in the north, are settled into this area of Gilead. And this begins to shift our attention away from what's happening in central Israel. All the judges that we have seen up to this point have been operating, for the most part, in this central area. Now we're going to move across the Transjordan and we're going to see the problems and the pressures that have been brought to bear on the tribes across the Jordan.



**Tribal Map of Ancient Israel
From FreeBibleImages.org**

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Judges 10:3, "And after him, Jair, the Gileadite arose, and judged Israel twenty-two years." So now we have a period of 22 and 23, a 45 year period of relative stability. And he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys," now the word here for donkey in the Hebrew, there's a couple of different words, and this is the word *'amiyr*, not the word *chamowr*, and they both refer to a donkey but an *'amiyr* donkey is a donkey that is ridden as opposed to one that is a pack animal. And so the image here is of someone who is wealthy enough to not only have donkeys but to ride them rather than using them for pack animals and that indicates wealth. Furthermore, notice he had thirty sons; that would indicate, first of all, he probably had more than one wife; either that or she was an extremely exhausted woman. But the picture reminds us of Gideon and Gideon's attempts to act like an ancient Near Eastern monarch. He took numerous wives and he had seventy sons. We don't know how many daughters he had as well, but he had seventy sons. So the idea of multiple wives and large numbers of children was something that was indicative of a person trying to act as a powerful influential person, if not trying to act as a monarch. So once again we see the judges are not acting as servants to the people but they are trying to develop their own power base. We see once again the shift towards tyranny from these local leaders that are raised up.

“So we are told, Judges 10:4, "he had thirty sons who rode on thirty donkeys, and they had thirty cities in the land of Gilead that are called Havveth-jair to this day." That is, the towns of Jair to this day, that is the time in which this was written. Then we're told, "And Jair died and was buried in Kamon," which is one of the villages in Gilead in the Transjordan. Now the emphasis here is a little bit of a contrast to Tola. Tola has nothing negative said about him; he is said to deliver Israel, to save Israel and we saw that the word there indicates deliverance or salvation, which is a positive term. We don't even have that said about

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Jair; some of the things we can pick up from this deal with what's not said. It's not an argument from silence.”

“What we see here is that the writer of Judges is emphasizing the spiritual decadence of the nation, so the absence of any indication that God raises them up, the absence of any words that carry a positive connotation to them tells us something—that there was nothing positive to say and the absence of a positive statement really says a lot about these particular judges. There wasn't a lot positive to say about them and the only thing he wants us to notice, because of his emphasis on the thirty sons and the thirty donkeys in the thirty cities is he's establishing a bit of a dynasty, it seems, and he's building his own power base. And this is what becomes indicative of any kind of pagan society. We studied this under the doctrine of tyranny when we were studying Abimelech, is that when God is removed as the absolute authority then man seeks to move into that vacuum, he creates his own standards, and then some institution in the human realm seeks to move in to be that absolute controlling authoritative force, and usually it is the state under some form of dictatorial tyranny.

“And this is exemplified in the ancient world because if you went out from Israel, all over the ancient world, whether you went south, west to Egypt, whether you went towards the east in Syria, Babylonia, those nations, whether you went to the Hittites, what you saw is men rising to power who either claim to be deity in the case of the Egyptians or the mouthpiece of the gods in the case of the Mesopotamian nations and they exercised a form of authority and tyranny that would put anything that we are familiar with in modern times to shame. They were absolute dictators in their time. Not even the greatest dictators of our time, for example, Saddam Hussein or going back a little bit to Hitler or Stalin, or Lenin, none exercised the kind of absolute authority these ancient leaders exercised. So what we see here is that the influence of paganism on the

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concepts of leadership and authority in the nation are fairly profound. So these leaders are operating on these pagan concepts and they're not seeking to really serve the nation.

Since I mentioned the other minor judges, let us read about them before we move on:

Judges 12:8 Now Ibzan of Bethlehem judged Israel after him.

Bethlehem. Is this another oblique reference to Jesus?

Judges 12:9 He had thirty sons, and thirty daughters whom he gave in marriage outside the family, and he brought in thirty daughters from outside for his sons. And he judged Israel seven years.

Judges 12:10 Then Ibzan died and was buried in Bethlehem.

Judges 12:11 Now Elon the Zebulunite judged Israel after him; and he judged Israel ten years.

Judges 12:12 Then Elon the Zebulunite died and was buried at Aijalon in the land of Zebulun.

Judges 12:13 Now Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite judged Israel after him.

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Judges 12:14 He had forty sons and thirty grandsons who rode on seventy donkeys; and he judged Israel eight years.

Judges 12:15 Then Abdon the son of Hillel the Pirathonite died and was buried at Pirathon in the land of Ephraim, in the hill country of the Amalekites.