

## TOLA AND JAIR AND THE FURTHER DECLINE OF ISRAEL

Introduction:

1. In a previous study, we noticed that there are six judges about whom little is recorded in Scripture.
2. Shamgar had only one verse in the book of Judges written about him.
3. The record of Tola consists of two verses, while the record of Jair consists of three.
4. Yet, as with Shamgar, much can be learned from these very short accounts.
5. They serve to bridge the time between the travesty of Abimelech's reign and the rise of the next major judge, Jephthah.

I. Tola – A Family of Leaders (10:1-2)

- A. The name "Tola" conveys much information about the man who was judge.
- B. The origin of the name is interesting.
  1. Tola was the name given to a crimson or scarlet worm known in Palestine.
  2. It was also used of a red dye made from a certain species of beetle.
  3. This word is translated as "crimson" in Isaiah 1:18 and as "scarlet" in Lamentations 4:5.
  4. It was also used in describing the furnishings for the tabernacle.
- C. His name ties him to a lineage of leadership in Israel.
  1. Tola was of the tribe of Issachar and the son of Puah.
    - a. Both of these names were well known in Israel.
    - b. Tola was one of the leaders of the tribe of Issachar (Genesis 46:13; Numbers 26:23-25).
    - c. Puah was a tribal leader as well, second to Tola.
  2. So, both Tola and his father were named for great leaders in their tribe.
  3. Later, during the reign of David, the Tolaites – 22,600 of them – were some of David's "mighty men of valor" (1 Chronicles 7:1-2).
  4. The tribe of Issachar was known for great wisdom and understanding (1 Chronicles 12:32).
  5. Thus, Tola was part of a lineage of great leadership in Israel.
- D. The record of Scripture indicates Tola's notable leadership.
  1. First, he "arose to defend Israel."
    - a. This indicates that he volunteered his service to the nation.
    - b. Previously, God had "raised up" the judges of Israel (2:16).
    - c. Following the ruinous rule of Abimelech, God seems to have left Israel to their own devices (10:13-14).
    - d. Still, Tola saw a need and acted to serve his people.
  2. Also, he arose to "save" Israel (ASV).
    - a. The Hebrew words translated "defend" do not refer to a battle against an aggressive invading force.
    - b. In fact, they mean, "to preserve the existence of something; protect, defend."
    - c. Thus, Tola seems to have been a watchman and guardian rather than a military leader.

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- II. Jair – A Man of Protection (10:3-5)
- A. The name Jair means, “shining, splendid; one who gives light or enlightens.”
1. Jair the judge was named after one of his ancestors who was the son of Manasseh (Numbers 32:41).
  2. This Jair conquered the country of Argob on the east side of the Jordan River, consisting of 60 cities (Deuteronomy 3:14; Joshua 13:30; 1 Kings 4:13; 1 Chronicles 2:22-23).
  3. Jair the judge is the first from the eastern side of Jordan.
- B. Jair was a man of prestige.
1. This is seen in the fact that he had 30 sons, each of whom governed a city.
  2. This arrangement makes him appear almost like a prince.
  3. However, we should keep in mind that polygamy was likely involved for him to have so many children.
- C. Jair was a man of prosperity.
1. This is seen in his large family and his ability to provide his sons with colts to ride.
  2. To ride on a donkey was a sign of wealth and status in those days.
- D. Jair was a man of peace.
1. It is said that the horse was ridden in times of war, and the donkey in times of peace.
  2. As with Tola, it seems that Jair judged during a time of peace.
  3. There is no indication of corruption in him or his sons as they governed the land (cf. Josephus – “*He was a man happy in other respects also, but particularly in his children, who were of a good character.*”).
- E. Jair seems to have judged Israel in a way that protected their peace.
- III. Israel – A Nation in Decline (10:6-18)
- A. In spite of nearly 50 years of peace, the Israelites turned against God and back to idolatry. – *Not just one false god, but any false god!* –
- B. Thus, God allowed them to suffer at the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites for 18 years.
- C. This time, when Israel cried out to God for deliverance, He declared, “I will deliver you no more.”
- D. Israel put away their idols and God was grieved over their misery, but still He left them to their own devices – God had given them up (cf. Romans 1:24ff).
1. It is sad when man forsakes God.
  2. It is frightening when God forsakes man.
- E. Israel proved their stubbornness by vowing that whoever would lead the armies against Ammon would be made ruler of Gilead.
1. They are still seeking a king.
  2. “Had the princes of Israel called a prayer meeting instead of a political caucus, they would have accomplished more.”
- F. Thankfully, God still had a faithful servant in Jephthah who could be used to deliver Israel once again.

Conclusion: *This chapter emphasizes the need for leaders who are willing to follow God!*