

Judges 10:1 ¶ And after Abimelech there arose to defend Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, a man of Issachar; and he dwelt in Shamir in mount Ephraim.

Judges 10:2 And he judged Israel twenty and three years, and died, and was buried in Shamir.

Though one might think by the wording that the writer is identifying Abimelech as a defender of Israel, I believe the wording is just providing a time marker. After the death of Abimelech, a man named Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, of the tribe of Issachar arose to defend Israel. This man lived in Shamir in mount Ephraim; Gill notes that this was a central location near the tabernacle at Shiloh. Tola judged Israel for 23 years before he died and was buried in Shamir.

Judges 10:3 And after him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years.

Judges 10:4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havothjair unto this day, which *are* in the land of Gilead.

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

After the death of Tola, a man named Jair, a Gileadite arose to judge Israel for 22 years. It is noted that he had 30 sons that rode on 30 ass colts that ruled 30 cities in Gilead (east of Jordan) that were known as Havothjair, "hamlets of Jair." In other words, his family wielded great influence in the area. When Jair died, he was buried in Camon.

Note that these last two judges "arose," but it doesn't say that God raised them up. Between them, however, it would seem that Israel was at peace with the LORD for 45 years before the record declares that Israel turned to false gods yet again.

I think it is significant to note the spiritual influence that the leadership of one man can make in a nation.

Judges 10:6 ¶ And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him.

Judges 10:7 And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and he sold them into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hands of the children of Ammon.

Judges 10:8 And that year they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel: eighteen years, all the children of Israel that *were* on the other side Jordan in the land of the Amorites, which *is* in Gilead.

Judges 10:9 Moreover the children of Ammon passed over Jordan to fight also against Judah, and against Benjamin, and against the house of Ephraim; so that Israel was sore distressed.

Baal = storm and fertility god per Eerdman's Dictionary. "In a land dependent

upon rain-fed agriculture, the storm-god is the most significant deity in the culture.” The worship of the fertility god always included immorality and sexual rituals.

Ashtaroth = “the feminine equivalent of “foreign (male) gods” per Eerdman’s.

This people of Israel once again embraced the worship of the false gods of the surrounding nations and stopped worshipping the LORD. Baalim and Ashtaroth are both plural names that could be used as representative of them all. Commentators identify others as:

- Bel & Saturn or Jupiter & Astarte – Syria
- Astarte or Venus – Zidon
- Chemosh – Moab
- Milcom or Molech – Ammon
- Dagon, Beelzebub, Marnas, Derceto – the Philistines

In anger, the LORD gave His people over to the Philistines (west of Jordan) and Ammonites (east of Jordan). For the next 18 years these nations persecuted and oppressed the people of Israel that lived east of the Jordan River in Gilead, the land that had been taken from the Amorites. The Ammonites even crossed over Jordan to attack the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim.

The NIV Commentary notes: “that year” (v8) “can be placed about 1096 BC.”

Judges 10:10 ¶ And the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, saying, We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.

Judges 10:11 And the LORD said unto the children of Israel, *Did not I deliver you from the Egyptians, and from the Amorites, from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines?*

Judges 10:12 The Zidonians also, and the Amalekites, and the Maonites, did oppress you; and ye cried to me, and I delivered you out of their hand.

Judges 10:13 Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more.

Judges 10:14 Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.

The Israelites finally became so depressed that they called out to the LORD in repentance and acknowledgement of their sin of rejecting Him to worship false gods.

Though we don’t know how the LORD responded (another unnamed prophet, the high priest?), He reminded them of how He had delivered them from the Egyptians, Amorites, Ammonites and Philistines. He reminded them that when they called out to Him for deliverance from the Zidonians, Amalekites, and Maonites (or Midianites), He delivered them. Still they had chosen to forsake Him and serve other gods. He declared that this time He would not deliver

them. He told them to let the gods they had chosen to serve deliver them out of their trouble.

As is clear throughout scripture, the LORD doesn't force people to worship Him. They are allowed to choose. That choice, however, produces very different outcomes.

1 Chronicles 28:9 "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever."

Galatians 6:7-8 "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

Judges 10:15 And the children of Israel said unto the LORD, We have sinned: do thou unto us whatsoever seemeth good unto thee; deliver us only, we pray thee, this day.

Judges 10:16 And they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD: and his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.

The people of Israel were desperate and persisted in their repentance and cry for help. They begged for the LORD to punish them in any way He so chose but to please deliver them. They put actions behind their words by getting rid of their false gods and serving the LORD. As with any good father, His soul was grieved at the misery of His children in light of their repentance.

Guzik made a good observation: "Israel finally discovered that the *worst* of serving God is better than the *best* of serving idols."

Judges 10:17 Then the children of Ammon were gathered together, and encamped in Gilead. And the children of Israel assembled themselves together, and encamped in Mizpeh.

Judges 10:18 And the people *and* princes of Gilead said one to another, What man *is he* that will begin to fight against the children of Ammon? he shall be head over all the inhabitants of Gilead.

The Ammonites gathered once again and made camp in Gilead. The people of Israel gathered and made camp in Mizpeh. They asked for a man to volunteer to lead them in their fight against the Ammonites and promised to make him the ruler in Gilead.