

JUDGES

was a prediction which he evidently made in the form of a curse, contingent upon the will of God.

TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 9

1. Where did Abimelech's mother live?
2. How many sons of Gideon did Abimelech slay?
3. What was the name of the one son who escaped?
4. What tree was first asked to rule over the trees in the fable?
5. What other tree was asked to be the ruler?
6. What kind of a plant was the third to be asked?
7. To what plant was Abimelech compared in the fable?
8. Who led the men of Shechem in their revolt against Abimelech?
9. What was the name of the god in whose house the men of Shechem hid?
10. How many men and women were killed when the tower of Shechem was burned?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 10

- Vv. 1- 2 *The judgeship of Tola.* The career of Tola is described very briefly. He was of the tribe of Issachar. His era was one of twenty-three years in length. Nothing much is recorded about him except for the unusual fact of his dwelling in Shamir which was in Mount Ephraim although he was from a different tribe.
- Vv. 3- 5 *The judgeship of Jair.* Jair was a Gileadite. This kind of identification indicates he lived east of the Jordan. His judgeship was one of twenty-two years in length, and his family was deemed worthy of special notice. His thirty sons each had an ass colt upon which he

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rode, and their jurisdiction was over thirty cities. For that reason, this area was known as Havoth-jair even until the time of the writing of the book.

- Vv. 6- 9 *Apostasy and servitude.* The children of Israel continued on the course which they had followed throughout the preceding years. God was good to them and gave them leaders, but they rejected His mercies. They turned away to serve pagan gods. As a result, the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and the Philistines were allowed to dominate them. In addition, the Ammonites invaded their territory, and Israel was "sore distressed" (verse 9).
- Vv. 10-18 *The repentance of Israel.* In their sore distress Israelites turned back to God. God reminded them of their past history, the times when He had delivered them from those who oppressed them. The children of Israel realized this and made a confession of their sin. They brought forth fruit meet for repentance, as John the Baptist urged people in his day to do (Matthew 3:8), and began to search for a man who could lead them to fight against their oppressors.

LESSONS FOR LEARNING

1. *Evil companions corrupt good manners.* Pagan nations on every side presented temptations to Israel. The Philistines on the west were worshipers of a god called Dagon as we learn in the history recorded in the Books of Samuel. The Ammonites, the Moabites, the Assyrians, and the Zidonians all had different gods to whom they gave worship. These are all lumped together

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into the two words, Baalim and Ashtaroth. Some of these gods are known by different names in later periods; Chemosh was the god of the Moabites; Molech was known as the god of the Ammonites. All of these were an abomination to the children of Israel and a violation of the First Commandment given to Israel whereby they were enjoined to have no other gods before them. It was because of this sore temptation which these people would pose to Israel that God had ordered their extermination. The cup of iniquity of the Amorite was full, and they were to be driven out of the land. Christians today find temptations befall them when they continue to live in an exceedingly sinful environment without the strength which fellowship with other Christians brings.

2. *We have sinned!* These are perhaps the hardest words for a man to utter. It is easy to blame others for sins which we have committed. In the Garden of Eden, Eve said the serpent had beguiled her; Adam said that the woman whom God had given to be with him had encouraged him to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 3:12, 13). From the beginning of man's history he has always found excuses for his sinful ways. Only when the person cries out in a full confession of faith, "I have sinned," is he in a position to receive fully God's forgiving grace. The people of Israel came to this realization and cried out, "We have sinned" (verse 15).
3. *Fruit meet for repentance.* John the Baptist called for the Jews of his day to bring forth fruit meet for repentance (Matthew 3:8). The repeated cries of Israel as they said they were sinful may leave the reader with the impression they only talked about their repentance. In this case, however, they put away the strange gods

from among them. They did something about their sin: they got rid of the images which they had set up as objects of worship. Whenever a man repents, he should not only express sorrow for his sin but should manifest such a reformation of character as to make clear his sincerity.

CHAPTER TEN

Tola and Jair Judge Israel 10:1-5

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.

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

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

4 And he had thirty sons that rode on thirty ass colts, and they had thirty cities, which are called Havoth-jair unto this day, which are in the land of Gilead.

5 And Jair died, and was buried in Camon.

1. Who was Tola? 10:1

Tola is described as the son of Puah. Nothing more is known of this man. He evidently made his home in the hill country of Ephraim in a village called Shamir. Tola judged Israel for twenty-three years and then was buried in the inheritance of his father in Shamir. In his case there is no indication of the people seeking out a leader. On the contrary, it is said that after Abimelech Tola arose to defend Israel. This man must have seen the conditions which prevailed in his beloved homeland and his righteous soul became vexed within him. In an effort to change the situation, he offered himself as a champion for his people.

2. *Where was Tola's home?* 10:2

The town of Shamir was a location in the mountains of Ephraim. It was a different place from the Shamir in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 15:48), but its exact situation is still unknown. It may have been actually in the territory of Issachar; or since Issachar and Ephraim bordered each other, Tola may have chosen to live outside the boundaries of his own territory in a town which was a part of the inheritance of Ephraim, their neighbors to the south.

3. *Who was Jair?* 10:3, 4

Jair was a Gileadite. He is the first of the judges to have a residence east of the Jordan, and this seems to be one of the most significant things about him. In addition, we learn an interesting detail about his family. He had thirty sons, and each had an ass colt on which he rode. These men also each possessed a city, and the group of cities and the territory in which they were situated became known as Havoth-jair. The fact that it is said the land was known as Havoth-jair is not a contradiction of the fact that in the time of Moses the Manassite, Jair, gave the name of Havoth-jair to the towns of Bashan which had been conquered by him (Numbers 32:41 and Deuteronomy 3:14). It is not stated here that the thirty cities which belonged to the sons of Jair received this name for the first time from the judge, Jair, but simply that this name was brought into use again. It was applied to these cities in a peculiar sense.

4. *Can we locate Camon today?* 10:5

After Jair judged Israel for twenty-two years, he died and was buried in Camon. Josephus (*Antiquities*, V, i, 6) describes it as a city of Gilead. This is probably because of his assuming that it would not be likely for Jair, the Gileadite who possessed so many cities in Gilead, to be buried outside Gilead. Keil and Delitzsch in their *Biblical*

Commentary on the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, say that Jair was probably from the tribe of Issachar. They base this on the assumption that he followed Tola in the judgeship, and Tola was from Issachar. Other commentators, however, take a more likely view that Camon is on the east of the Jordan, and Jair was not only buried in Gilead but lived there.

Jephthah of Gilead 10:6—12:7

Israel Humiliated 10:6-18

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

5. *What kinds of gods did the surrounding nations serve?*
10:6

Once again, the pagan gods of Israel's neighbors are grouped under the heading of Baalim and Ashtaroth. Baalim is the masculine plural form of Baal and stands for all the male deities which these people worshiped. Ashtaroth is the feminine plural form of the root for the name of the goddess Astarte and signifies a host of female deities whom Israel's neighbors worshiped. The Assyrians, the Zidonians, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Philistines all had their favorite gods and goddesses. Some were national deities; some were symbols of fertility; and the multiplicity indicates the unending deviations and per-

versions into which men fall when they turn their backs from the revealed way of God.

6. *Who oppressed Israel in these days ? 10:7-9*

The Philistines living along the west coast of Palestine are singled out for notice as leaders in the attacking and oppressing of Israel. They were not alone in their harassment of God's people. The Ammonites who lived on the extreme eastern border across the Jordan River are also mentioned as those who troubled Israel in this time of apostasy. These two nations brought trouble out of which God delivered Israel under the hands of two of the best known judges, Jephthah and Samson. As a result, this passage of Scripture forms something of an introduction to the forthcoming judges. It is noted especially that the oppression of the Ammonites was so severe that they did not confine their attacks to the tribes living east of the Jordan, but crossed over the Jordan River to fight against Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim. Beset on the east and on the west, Israel was really sore distressed.

7. *When had Israel been delivered from the Sidonians?*
10:12

God reminded Israel of her past glorious history. The glory had been theirs because God Himself had delivered them from their many oppressors. They well knew how they had been brought out of Egypt and delivered from the slavery in Egypt. The Amorites were the Canaanites, and under Joshua they had been victorious over thirty-one different kings of the Canaanites. The Ammonites had oppressed Israel along with the Moabites in the time of Ehud (3:12 ff.). The Philistines had been vanquished by Shamgar (3:31). The Amalekites had attacked Israel at Horeb (Exodus 17:8 ff.) and God had wrought a great victory as the people were first led to battle by Joshua. The Midianites were the oppressors whom Gideon had driven

out of the land (Judges 6, 7). We never read specifically of the Israelites having been attacked by the Sidonians. This is probably a reference to the war which was brought on by the northern Canaanites under Jabin, since Sidon appears to have had some kind of principality or protectorate over the northern Canaanites (Judges 18:7, 28). Deborah and Barak had brought deliverance on one occasion from these people, and earlier Joshua had defeated the northern coalition of kings who attacked from the same area.

8. *Why was Israel told to go and cry to other gods? 10:14*

When God saw that the people of Israel had turned their backs on Him, He chided them for serving other gods. At the same time he reminded them that He had cared for them as a father cares for his children. In sarcasm He told them to, "Go and cry unto the gods which you have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation" (verse 14). This kind of an injunction put Israel's condition in the kind of perspective which they could understand. They knew, when they stopped and thought about it, that no other god could deliver them. They had forsaken God, and God was forsaking them.

9. *What was the meaning of Israel's confession? 10:15*

When the children of Israel realized the desperate plight into which they had fallen, they made a confession of their sin. In the simplest terms they couched it by saying only, "We have sinned." At the same time they threw themselves completely upon the mercy of God. They asked Him to do unto them whatever seemed good unto Him. Their only petition was that God would deliver them from the oppressors who were besieging them.

10. *Why was God's soul grieved? 10:16*

The people of Israel tore down the idols which they had erected. They changed their ways and began to wor-

ship God in the manner which He had prescribed. When God saw this kind of complete about-face on the part of His people, it is said, "His soul is grieved for the misery of Israel." Their misery was not only the oppression brought on them by the Philistines and the Ammonites, but it was a misery of soul which had brought about their repentance. Of course, this kind of statement is anthropomorphic. The writer has put God's feelings in the form of men's feelings. After all, man is made in the image of God; and he can understand his Maker best when God's ways are described in man's language.

11. Where was Israel's camp? 10:17

The Ammonites assembled in the part of Gilead which they had possessed. The Israelites assembled and encamped at Mizpeh. This cannot be the Mizpeh of Samuel of a later time (I Samuel 7:12, 16), but was probably Ramath-mizpeh (Joshua 13:26; 20:8). This spot was on the site of the modern *Es salt*. This was the Mizpeh which commemorated the parting of Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:49).

*12. Why did Israel look for someone to begin the fight?
10:18*

It was imperative for the Israelites to assemble in order to challenge the Ammonites, who had gathered in Gilead. At the same time, they were not prepared for battle; because they did not have a recognized leader. When Tola judged, it was said that he arose to defend Israel (10:1); but in this case there was no one to rise to the occasion. It was necessary for the people through their recognized leaders, their princes, to select one to be their captain or head. Until they had such a recognized leader, it was impossible for them to make a united effort against their oppressors.

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TEN QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 10

1. Who was the seventh judge?
2. Of what tribe was he a member?
3. How long did he judge Israel?
4. Who was the eighth judge?
5. Where did he live?
6. What five countries or cities had false gods whom Israel worshiped?
7. Into whose hands did God sell Israel?
8. What three tribes were attacked by Israel's enemies?
9. From what seven groups of people had God already delivered Israel?
10. What people brought the oppression to its height in the days after Jair?

A DIGEST OF CHAPTER 11

Vv. 1-11 *Jephthah made leader in Gilead.* Jephthah was a mighty man of valour, but he was an outcast from his family since he was born of a harlot. When the Ammonites oppressed the people, they turned in desperation to him to give them the necessary leadership. Since the people had assembled and were looking for a leader as described in chapter ten, it is apparent they were in urgent need. The fact that the people chose him and that Jephthah agreed to lead them is not as important as the fact that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him (verse 29).

Vv. 12-28 *Jephthah's attempt at negotiations.* Jephthah demonstrates rather full knowledge of Israel's past history, and he sent to the king of the children of Ammon to ask what possible reason they had for attacking Israel. He reminded