

Week #:	198	Series:	God's Judgment	Title:	Judge #6 Tola and #7 Jair
Scriptures:	Judges 10:1-5				
Songs:	Heaven's Jubilee / I'll Fly Away (3:02)				
	Days of Elijah – Twila Paris (4:13)				
	My King Forever – Josh Baldwin (5:16)				
	Prayer	In Jesus' Name – Darlene Zschech (6:14)			
Videos:	Judges Song – What's in the Bible #4 (Time- 31:31-33:25)				

Judges #6 Tola and #7 Jair:

The first five judges in our study have been:

1. Othniel: He was Caleb's nephew. Israel lived in peace after him for 40 years.
2. Ehud: He was known for the physical feature of being left-handed. Israel lived in peace after him for 80 years.
3. Shamgar: He was known for killing 600 Philistines with a farm tool, an oxgoad.
4. Deborah: She was a female prophetess, whom God used to free the people from Jabin [Yavin], King of Hazor, and his commander Sisera.
5. Gideon: Called God's valiant hero. Israel lived in peace for 40 years, until he died.

Our last three lessons in the book of Judges were about the son of the fifth judge Gideon – a man named Abimelech. He was not a righteous man, and God brought judgment on him because of his idolatry and his killing innocent people.

This week we pick up with the next Judge.

As a preface to this short chapter let me mention that we probably could pause and study the book of Ruth at this point because this is about the time in history that the story of Ruth occurs (although it may have been as early as towards the end of Gideon's life). That's right; Ruth's adventures took place during the time of the Judges, before the most famous judge, Samson, came on the scene. But for the sake of continuity, we're going to stay in the book of Judges and then at its conclusion we'll immediately study the book of Ruth.

Chapter 10 begins by briefly introducing us to 2 of the 5 so-called minor Judges Tola and Jair. There is really very little detail about either.

Judge #6: Tola

Judges 10:1-2

¹ After Abimelech there arose to save Israel Tola the son of Puah, the son of Dodo, from the tribe of Issachar. He lived in Shamir, in the hills of Ephraim. ² He judged Israel twenty-three years, and when he died he was buried in Shamir.

Notice that there is one thing missing here that we have seen in the last five judges tales. There is no mention here of the cycle of apostasy that plagued the Israelites. We are told that Tola arose to save Israel, but that's about it. No other details are given as to how he arose to save, or judge, Israel.

It does list his father's name and tells us he was from the tribe of Issachar, but he lived, interestingly enough, in the hills of Ephraim. In other words, he did NOT live in the territory given by allotment to Issachar. This fits with the geopolitical map of those days in which Issachar only occupied a few cities and towns within their own territory and otherwise moved into and shared places in their brethren's territories. The reason for this is quite simple: the Canaanites that occupied their allotted land were just too strong for them to dislodge.

Tola ruled Israel as a Judge for 23 years. Tola resided in the general area where Abimelech operated, so that he "arose to save Israel" could have had something to do with dealing with the aftermath of the Abimelech debacle, but that's just speculation, as it does not say so directly in scripture.

After 23 years as judge, he died and was buried in the town where he lived.

Judge #7: Jair

Judges 10:3-5

³After him arose Ja'ir, from Gilead. He judged Israel twenty-two years. ⁴He had thirty sons who rode on thirty young donkeys. They owned thirty cities which are called Havot- Ja'ir to this day; they are in the territory of Gilead. ⁵When Ja'ir died, he was buried in Kamon.

Jair is only identified as being from Gilead, and no family heritage is given. Some think he was of the tribe of Manasseh, but that's only because Gilead was in the area of the 1/2 of Manasseh that was on the eastern side of the Jordan River. We have to be very careful with using these identifiers especially by this time in Israel's history. Much intermarriage among Israelite tribes had taken place, and much movement of families and whole clans from their allotted territory into another had also occurred. Being from Gilead could mean he was from the tribe of Gad, or simply that his family of whatever tribe was living in Gilead and thus he was identified more by where he lived than what tribe he belonged to.

What we do know is that Jair came from a high social status. He judged his area for 22 years (one less than Tola before him), and that he held sway over 30 cities, each one run by one of his 30 sons. If he had 30 sons he would have had at least as many daughters, meaning he had many wives. This also means he lived as royalty and that is further confirmed by the statement that his 30 sons rode on 30 donkey colts. Donkeys were highly esteemed as riding animals and often carried special recognition. So, we have pictured here in this scripture a well-known and large royal family, even though the patriarch Jair was only officially known as a Shophet, or a Judge, and not a king.

This small mention of Jair and his royal lifestyle gives us every reason to believe that he followed in the kingly lifestyle observed by Gideon and his sons, and then fully brought into play as overt royalty by Abimelech. This ought to help us see the significant change that occurred with Gideon, when he elevated himself into a status and lifestyle well beyond any Judge before him. Of course, this was prodded along by those who Gideon had delivered pleading with him to assume the role as their king. He refused to take on the title, but it is evident that he easily accepted the trappings of royalty. Jair therefore had a precedent and likely was also asked to be a king.

Jair was the first judge to operate in the Trans-Jordan – the area to the east of the Jordan River. There were fewer Hebrew people on the east side of the river and these were generally more isolated from the Ba'al worship centers that were more concentrated in Canaan where the nine and a half tribes lived. Very probably, the two and a half Israelite tribes who took up residence on the east side of the Jordan River [Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh] had considerably less temptation to fall into idolatry than their brethren on the west side.

Yet, the mere fact that Jair was raised up as a Judge says that idolatry eventually came to the Trans-Jordanian Hebrews. We also know that during Jair's time there was no oppression from a foreign enemy; so, the trouble that Jair dealt with was strictly in-house, so to speak. The Midianites had passed through this region, but they didn't stay or conquer it.

So, as we see, each Judge had different conditions to deal with than any of the others, and it's difficult to give a perfectly standard definition of a Shophet, or Judge, as we'll especially see with the most famous judge, Samson.