

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Tola judges Israel twenty-three years, Judges 10:1, Judges 10:2. Jair is judge twenty-two years, Judges 10:3-5. After him the Israelites rebel against God, and are delivered into the hands of the Philistines and Ammonites eighteen years, Judges 10:6-9. They humble themselves, and God reproves them, Judges 10:10-14. They put away their strange gods, and gather together against the Ammonites, Judges 10:15-17. The chiefs of Gilead inquire concerning a captain to head them against the Ammonites, Judges 10:18.

Verse 1

Tola the son of Puah - As this Tola continued twenty-three years a judge of Israel after the troubles of Abimelech's reign, it is likely that the land had rest, and that the enemies of the Israelites had made no hostile incursions into the land during his presidency and that of Jair; which, together continued forty-five years.

Verse 4

He had thirty sons, etc. - It appears that there was both peace and prosperity during the time that Jair governed Israel; he had, it seems, provided for his family, and given a village to each of his thirty sons; which were, in consequence, called Havoth Jair or the villages of Jair. Their riding on thirty ass colts seems to intimate that they were persons of consideration, and kept up a certain dignity in their different departments.

Verse 6

And served Baalim - They became universal idolaters, adopting every god of the surrounding nations. Baalim and Ashtaroth may signify gods and goddesses in general. These are enumerated:

1.The gods of Syria; Bel and Saturn, or Jupiter and Astarte.

2.Gods of Zidon; Ashtaroth, Astarte or Venus.

3.The gods of Moab; Chemosh.

4.Gods of the children of Ammon; Milcom.

5.Gods of the Philistines; Dagon.

See 1 Kings 11:33 (note), and 1 Samuel 5:2 (note). These are called gods because their images and places of worship were multiplied throughout the land.

Verse 7

The anger of the Lord was hot - This Divine displeasure was manifested in delivering them into the hands of the Philistines and the Ammonites. The former dwelt on the western side of Jordan; the latter, on the eastern: and it appears that they joined their forces on this occasion to distress and ruin the Israelites, though the Ammonites were the most active.

Verse 11

And the Lord said - By what means these reproofs were conveyed to the Israelites, we know not: it must have been by an angel, a prophet, or some holy man inspired for the occasion.

Verse 15

We have sinned - The reprehension of this people was kind, pointed, and solemn; and their repentance deep. And they gave proofs that their repentance was genuine, by putting away all their idols: but they were ever fickle and uncertain.

Verse 16

And his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel - What a proof of the philanthropy of God! Here his compassions moved on a small scale; but it was the same principle that led him to give his Son Jesus Christ to be a sacrifice for the sins of the Whole world. God grieves for the miseries to which his creatures are reduced by their own sins. Be astonished, ye heavens, at this; and shout for joy, all ye inhabitants of the earth! for, through the love whence this compassion flowed, God has visited and redeemed a lost world!

Verse 17

The children of Ammon were gathered together - Literally, they cried against Israel - they sent out criers in

different directions to stir up all the enemies of Israel; and when they had made a mighty collection, they encamped in Gilead.

Verse 18

What man is he that will begin to fight - It appears that, although the spirit of patriotism had excited the people at large to come forward against their enemies, yet they had no general, none to lead them forth to battle. God, however, who had accepted their sincere repentance, raised them up an able captain in the person of Jephthah; and in him the suffrages of the people were concentrated, as we shall see in the following chapter. In those ancient times much depended on the onset; a war was generally terminated in one battle, the first impression was therefore of great consequence, and it required a person skillful, valorous, and strong, to head the attack. Jephthah was a person in whom all these qualifications appear to have met. When God purposes to deliver, he, in the course of his providence, will find out, employ, and direct the proper means.