

Joshua 21:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

Analysis

And out of the tribe of Asher, Mishal with her suburbs, Abdon with her suburbs,

The Gershonite allocation continues with cities from Asher, the northernmost western tribe along the Mediterranean coast. Mishal (מִשָּׁל) is listed as Mashal in 1 Chronicles 6:74, demonstrating common spelling variations in ancient Hebrew manuscripts. Its exact location remains uncertain, though it was somewhere in Asher's coastal territory. The name may derive from mashal (מָשַׁל, "to rule" or "have dominion"), though this etymology is speculative.

Abdon (עַבְדֹּן) derives from eved (עַבֵּד, "servant"), possibly meaning "servile" or "service." The name appears multiple times in Scripture—a judge of Israel (Judges 12:13-15) and a Benjamite (1 Chronicles 8:23) bore this name. The city has been identified with Khirbet Abdeh near the Mediterranean coast. Asher's coastal location placed these Levitical cities at the interface between Israel and Phoenician maritime culture—requiring wisdom to maintain covenant distinctiveness while engaging neighboring nations.

Asher's tribal blessing emphasized richness and favor: "his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties" (Genesis 49:20). The coastal plain's agricultural productivity and access to Mediterranean trade routes made Asher prosperous. Levites stationed here would teach that prosperity comes with covenant

responsibilities—abundance should lead to generosity, not self-indulgence (Deuteronomy 8:11-18).

Historical Context

Asher's territory extended along the Mediterranean coast from Mount Carmel northward into modern Lebanon. The tribe bordered Phoenician city-states like Tyre and Sidon, creating constant cultural and religious pressure. Phoenician Baal worship, with its fertility cults and temple prostitution, posed particular temptation to Israelites in this region. Levitical presence countered this influence through faithful teaching of Yahweh's law.

Judges 1:31-32 records that Asher failed to drive out Canaanite inhabitants from many cities, instead dwelling among them—a pattern of compromise that later bore bitter fruit. The tribe's mixed success in conquest may explain why Asher receives relatively little mention in biblical history. Yet faithful Levites in Asher's cities maintained covenant witness even when surrounding population proved unfaithful. Anna the prophetess, who recognized infant Jesus at the temple, came from Asher's tribe (Luke 2:36-38)—evidence that faithful remnants persisted despite widespread compromise.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does Asher's coastal position between Israel and pagan nations challenge you to maintain faithful witness while engaging secular culture?
2. What does Asher's pattern of compromise teach about the danger of dwelling among rather than displacing cultural influences contrary to God's word?
3. In what ways does prosperity test covenant faithfulness differently than adversity?

Interlinear Text

וּמִמֵּט הַ	אֲשֶׁר	אֶת	מִשְׁאֵל ל	וְאֶת	מִגְרָשָׁהּ:	אֶת
And out of the tribe	of Asher	H853	Mishal	H853	with her suburbs	H853
H4294	H836		H4861		H4054	
וְעַבְדֵּי וְ	וְאֶת		מִגְרָשָׁהּ:			
Abdon	H853		with her suburbs			
H5658			H4054			

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