

# Joshua 21:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

## Analysis

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### **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 (משָׁל) 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 (עֲבָדָן) derives from eved (עָבֵד, "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

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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

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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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

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וּמִמֶּט הַיְמִינָה אֶשְׁר אֶת מִשָּׁאָל אֶת מִגְּרָשָׁה:  
And out of the tribe of Asher H853 Mishal H853 with her suburbs H853  
H4294 H836 H4861 H4054

מִגְּרָשָׁה: אֶת עַבְדֵי אֶת  
Abdon H853 with her suburbs H4054

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