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See also → Joseph and Aseneth; → Joseph (Son of Jacob)

Ashan

Listed among the towns in the Shephelah, Ashan (MT *ʾĀšān*) was first given to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:42), then later to the tribe of Simeon (19:7; 1 Chr 4:32), which was allotted territory within Judah’s (Josh 19:1, 9). A town by a variant name, Bor-Ashan (“Well of Ashan”), is where David sent spoil after defeating the Amalekites (1 Sam 30:30). 1 Chronicles 6:59 [MT 6:44] designates Ashan as one of the Levitical cities from the territories of Judah and Simeon, a tradition preserved in the Septuagint version of Josh 21:16 (Ἀσα in LXX^B).

Eusebius made a questionable distinction between the Ashan in Judah’s territory and Ashan of Simeon. He referred to the former as Ἀσαν and identified it with an unknown village called Beth-Ashan (βηθασάν), some 15 Roman miles west of Jerusalem (*Onom.* 26:4); the latter is rendered as Ἀσσηνα (*Onom.* 28:16).

Traditionally, Ashan is identified with Khirbet Asan (Abel: 52), located 8 km northwest of Beer-Sheba, though there is no archaeological support. Aharoni (262), followed by Kallai (386), suggests Tell Bet Mirsim as a better candidate because of its fortifications from the monarchical period.

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Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan

See also → Ain: In Judah

Asharelah

One of the four sons of Asaph (MT *Āšarʿelā*, *Yēšarʿelā*; LXX Εφραῖμ, Ισφραῖμ) who were set apart to prophesy in the house of YHWH with musical instruments (1 Chr 25:1–2).

Text-critically, scholars proposed to emend the phrase “and Asarelah” (*waʿĀšarʿelā*) to read “and Asarel – these four” (*waʿĀšarʿel ʿarbāʿā ʿellē* cf. BHS; Klein: 473). This specification of the number of children for Asaph matches that of Jeduthun (1 Chr 25:3) and Heman (1 Chr 25:5). However, in the MT, Septuagint, and Targumim, the phrase “these four” is missing (1 Chr 25:2). Furthermore, another variant name retains the similar form “Jesarelah” (*Yēšarʿelā*; 1 Chr 25:14), evidently the same person as “Asarelah” (1 Chr 25:2).

In reception history, the elevated status of these sons of Asaph was highlighted. Rashi thus underscored, “Out of all the Levites [David] separated only the sons of Asaph” (Rosenberg: 152). *Targum* indicates that Asaph prophesied with the Holy Spirit (cf. *Mezudath David*).

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Ashbea

→ Beth-Ashbea

Ashbel, Ashbelites

Ashbel (MT *ʾĀšbēl*) is a Benjaminite (Gen 46:21 [LXX Ασβηλ]) listed as the second-born (Num 26:38 [LXX Αουβηρ]; 1 Chr 8:1 [LXX Ασβηλ]) and the eponymous ancestor of the Ashbelites (MT *ʾĀšbēlī*). The meaning of the name remains obscure; Noth suggests the Arabic *ʿasbal* “with long upper lip” (227), while Brown derives the name from *ʿšbʿl* “man of Baal,” which, if correct, may help explain the variant genealogy of Benjamin in 1 Chr 7:6, where Jediael appears in Ashbel’s place.

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Ashdod

The site of Tel Ashdod is located in the industrial zone south of the modern city of Ashdod, 4.5 km east of the shoreline (map reference 118.129), near of the Nahal Lachish tributaries. Its ancient port was probably located in the nearby Tel Mor or Ashdod Yam. The identification of the tell as biblical Ashdod is quite certain since the Arab village *Isdud* retained the name.

Texts prior to the Old Testament referring to Ashdod include an Ugaritic text mentioning Ashdodites or ʿadaddy in relation to an Ugaritic merchant named *Šukuna*, and these were probably mer-

chants from Ashdod (Dothan/Freedman: 8; Dothan 1971: 19); in another document *Lady Asdadaya* is mentioned. Ashdod appears in the Old Testament mainly in relation to its being one of the major Philistine cities; also in another reference the “giants” from Gaza, Gath and Ashdod are mentioned (Josh 11:22). The most detailed reference is the story of the abduction of the ark of the covenant by the Philistines and its placement in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod, setting it by his statue (1 Sam 5:1–7). The story describes how in on the first day the image of Dagon fell before the ark, while on the second day his hands and head were also cut off; furthermore the people of Ashdod were then struck with tumors. This story and the reference to the Dagon temple may indicate that Ashdod was seen as the main Philistine city at a certain period. The passage describing Uzziah, king of Judah (785–733 BCE), making war against the Philistines, destroying the walls of Gath and Ashdod and building cities in the territories of Ashdod (2 Chr 26:6), clearly shows the strength of Ashdod during the 8th century. During the reign of Sargon II in 712 BCE *Yamani*, which was commoner, replaced the king of Ashdod and revolted against the Assyrians (Tadmor). *Yamani* is mentioned as a “Greek” as his name is reminiscent of the term Greek in Semitic languages. In retaliation Sargon II attacked the city in 712, leaving a basalt victory stele (Dothan: 192–97). This attack by Tartan sent by Sargon is mentioned in Isaiah (Isa 20:1) as a chronological marker. References to the inclusion of the territory of Ashdod in Judah (Josh 15:46–47) probably reflect a reality of the 7th century BCE. Ashdod is also mentioned in the prophetic texts in relation to destruction prophecies of various kingdoms, usually as one of the late Iron Age Philistine cities, together with Gaza, Ashkelon and Ekron (Jer 25:20; Amos 1:8, 3:9; Zeph 2:4; Zech 9:6). One of these references mentions the “remnants of Ashdod” (Jer 25:20), possibly indicating the weaker position of Ashdod during the 7th century BCE. Around the year 600 the Philistines cities of Ashdod, Ekron, Ashkelon and Gaza were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. A post-exilic passage in Nehemiah (Neh 13:23–24) mentions the non-Judaic nature of the Ashdodite women and language; furthermore, the Ashdodites are described as one of the peoples conspiring against the Jews during this period (4:7).

The tell of Ashdod is about 34–36 hectares in size (340–60 dunam) with an upper tell of 8 hectares (its elevation is 52 m, 15 m above its environments). Major excavations were conducted in seven seasons during 1962–72 on behalf of the Israel Departments of Antiquities and the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh and directed by M. Dothan, D.N. Freedman and J. Swager. In total 6500 m² were excavated in eight major areas (A, B, C, D, G, H, K and M) and several smaller sections (E, F). While

there was some ceramic evidence of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze periods, the earliest architectural remains are from the Middle Bronze IIC, reached only in Area G (Dothan/Porath 1993: 9, 19–26) and indicating that the site was then settled only on the acropolis, occupying an area of 8 hectares. The Late Bronze Age, especially the 13th century BCE, is represented in Areas A, B and H as well as in Area G Strata XX–XIV (ibid.: 10–13, 27–49; Dothan/Ben-Shlomo: 11–13). In Area H there was a limited exposure of Stratum XIV but this period is attested by at least three strata in a nearby trench and by finds which include imported Mycenaean and Cypriote sherds. During the Late Bronze Age II, Ashdod was apparently a fairly large settlement, distinguished by several remarkable Egyptian artifacts of the 13th and the beginning of the 12th centuries BCE (Dothan/Porath 1993: 9–11).

The Iron I period at Ashdod (ca. 1200–1000 BCE, Strata XIII–XI) is characterized by the appearance of new material culture brought by the Philistine immigrants arriving from the Aegean and/or Cyprus. This includes a new class of pottery named Philistine Monochrome (or Mycenaean IIIC:1b), which is locally produced at Ashdod (Asaro et al.) but illustrates forms (both closed and open ones), technique and decorative motifs typical of Mycenaean IIIC pottery appearing in the Argolid, the Dodecanese, Cyprus and other areas of the eastern Mediterranean (Dothan/Zukerman). Cooking vessels and female figurines attesting to similar connections were also found at Ashdod. The Iron I remains were evidenced in Areas A, C, G, H and possibly B and K (Dothan: 25–31). In Area G Stratum XIII includes a series of small rooms adjacent to a casemate wall or a thickened wall construction; in the southeast there is an open area/courtyard with installations. In Area H a well-planned layout comprising of two main blocks of structures facing a main street, which ran along the western slope of the tell. This general plan is preserved throughout the Iron Age and seems to allude to the prosperity of this Philistine quarter (Dothan/Ben-Shlomo: 13–20).

Stratum XII is better preserved both in Areas G and H, including complete buildings and floor levels. This level contains both Philistine Monochrome pottery and “Philistine Bichrome” pottery, which illustrates already a certain blend of Aegean/Cypriote and Canaanite ceramic traditions (Dothan/Porath 1982: 94–218). This Philistine Bichrome pottery appears in relatively large quantities in Strata XII–XI; some of it is very elaborately decorated. In Area G a courtyard house is adjacent to the casemate wall (?); in the courtyard (hall?) there were a clay tub and a fire installation (Dothan/Porath 1993: 70–72). In Area H several well-preserved buildings include a large courtyard and a unique apsidal structure located inside the courtyard (Dot-

han/Ben-Shlomo: 20–30). The other building north of the street is a pillared hall flanked by rooms on either side. This building yielded a rich assemblage of small finds including figurines, gold objects, ivories, jewelry and scarabs (ibid.: 26–28, 127–132). The building excavated south of the street was of similar plan although not so affluently furnished. The subsequent, and latest Iron I settlement is that of Stratum XI, which represents a certain architectural decline (ibid.: 30–37). On the eroded western edge of the excavated Area H a fragment of a massive wall was uncovered, possibly part a city wall that went out of use in Stratum XIa. Iron II city walls were revealed in Ashdod both in Area G, Stratum X (Dothan: 136; Dothan/Porath 1993: 92) and in Area M, Strata X–VII (Dothan/Porath 1982). Important finds from Stratum XI include a large assemblage of richly decorated Philistine Bichrome pottery, a complete Aegean-style seated female figurine (Dothan: fig. 91:1, nicknamed *Ashdoda*), a complete pomegranate-shaped vessel and several seals carved in a linear style recalling Cypriot seals (Dothan/Ben-Shlomo: 132–67). Stratum X marks a clear break in the material culture of Tel Ashdod, as red-slipped pottery almost totally replaces Philistine Bichrome pottery. The architectural remains in Areas H, G, and M are also relatively meager. An important find from this level is the Musicians' Stand (Dothan/Ben-Shlomo: 180–184), a rounded cultic pottery stand depicting a procession of five musicians.

Most of the Iron I settlement was located on the acropolis and its slopes, expanding to the east towards the beginning of Iron IIA (ca. 1000–900 BCE, Strata X–IX). During the late Iron IIA and IIB (Strata IX–VII) Ashdod becomes a larger and probably more important city. The city is expanded and fortified, as the remains in Area M show: a massive wall and gate were then erected in Area M, Stratum Xb, (Dothan/Porath 1982). During the 8th century Ashdod reaches its peak as the remains from Area D in the southern lower city with a large industrial potter's quarter and possibly cultic area illustrate. This area was destroyed during the late 8th century BCE, probably in relation to Sargon II campaign against the revolt of Yamani in 712 BCE (Dothan: 86–92) and includes evidence of mass burials. In Area M the fortification and the gate area is expanded to a six-chambered gate (Dothan/Porath 1982: 19–25). Stratum VIII in Area H shows complete buildings continuing the well-planned quarter of the Iron I, while in Area M there is a sequence of gates and fortifications from Stratum X to Stratum VIII (ibid.: 7–30). Strata VII and VI, representing the 7th century in Areas D, H, K and M illustrate a decline in architectural remains; the gate in Area M continues to survive with minor alterations is Stratum VII, but was destroyed afterwards (ibid.: 41). In this period Ashdod is probably reduced in

its area, the residential areas are less planned and indicate more outdoor agricultural activities. A distinct group of decorated pottery ware appearing during the Iron IIA–B (ca. 1000–700, Strata X–VIII) is defined as “Ashdod Ware” or “Late Philistine Decorated Ware” (Ben-Shlomo et al.). This ware, which is characterized mostly by Iron II “coastal” forms and a distinct decoration technique of thick red slip, meticulous vertical burnish and black and white linear decoration, was initially recognized at Ashdod and is still best represented at this site.

New salvage excavations north of Tel Ashdod conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed a massive brick construction, possibly an Assyrian palace or stronghold built (on a podium?) in the vicinity of the city (Kogan-Zehavi). The destruction of this complex is tentatively dated to the 7th century. According to pottery from constructional fills of the complex the area was probably also settled during the Iron IIA–B; at that stage this area could have been part of the lower city of Ashdod.

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Ashdod-Yam

Ashdod Yam is located on the Mediterranean coast, 2 km south of modern Ashdod (map reference 1140.1314). While the site is dominated by the ruins of a Crusader fortress, it was possibly the harbor of Tel Ashdod during the Iron Age or earlier. Ashdod-Yam is not mentioned in the Old Testament but is included in a list of cities captured by Sargon II in relation to the subjugation of Yamani's revolt at Ashdod. The limited probes at Ashdod-Yam (Kaplan) yielded remains of a 3.1 m wide brick wall, an outer glacis and Iron IIB–C Pottery (ca. 800–600 BCE). If the fortifications also date to the Iron IIB–C, then they could represent Yamani's activities anticipating the Assyrian assault.

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