

Cerberus Slab of Hatra  
by Vladimir S. Tuman  
(see page 10)

# NINEVEH

*Voice of  
The Assyrian Foundation of America*



*Established 1964  
Dedicated to the  
Advancement of Education  
of Assyrians*

VOLUME 4 NO. 3



*The Seventh Day of August  
The  
Assyrian Martyrs Day*

*In honor and memory of countless  
thousands of Assyrian noble  
heroes who sacrificed their lives on  
the altar of freedom, national  
cause and human rights; so that  
their people, their race, their  
nation, will preserve their  
Assyrian identity.*

*His Holiness Mar Benjamin Shimun XXIX  
Patriarch of the Assyrian Church  
of the East (1885-1918)*

CULTURAL—EDUCATIONAL—SOCIAL

# NINEVEH

THIRD QUARTER 1981

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NO. 3

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## Assyrian Periodicals

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# A SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF MAR BENYAMIN SHIMUN XXI

by Rev. Joel E. Werda, B.D.

(Author of *The Flickering Light of Asia or the Assyrian Nation and Church*)

## Cover Story . . .

## PROFILE

Mar Benyamin Shimun, the Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East, was thirty-three years of age at the time of his assassination. He had succeeded his predecessor at the age of eighteen, and for fifteen years had occupied the patriarchal See of Qoodchanis. His mother's name was Asyat, the daughter of Kambar of Eill, an Assyrian Malik and also a deacon in the Church of the East. His father's name was Eshai (Jesse), a blood member of the patriarchal family. He received his early education under a prominent scholar from Tkhooda, by the name of David, who was first a deacon in the Church of the East, and was later elevated to the office of a bishop and named Bishop Aprim (Ephraim). In addition to his great scholarship, Bishop Aprim was also known for his piety and devotion. The future Patriarch of the East therefore, could have been educationally and spiritually reared by no better instructor. He also took advantage of the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission representatives in Qoodchanis, and gained not a little knowledge from those learned missionaries. His great office, besides its requirements in theological and ecclesiastical training, made it incumbent upon him to make himself familiar with political science and world's diplomacy. He was fortunate in this realm of study, by having able English tutors who were deeply interested in the natural aspirations of his people, as well as in the spiritual welfare of his church. It has been conceded that, with the exception of "Mar Shimun the second," known by the distinguishing name of "Bar Sabbaee," and whose incumbency and martyrdom took place during the reign of Shapur the Magi, in the fourth century, a greater man than Mar Benyamin has not occupied the Patriarchal See of the Assyrian Church of the East. He possessed a most wonderful personality, which inspired both fear and love at the same time. It was his great magnetism that impelled both reverence and allegiance from all sectarian elements of his people, who had for more than a generation left their former fold, and affiliated themselves with other religious beliefs. His personality became thus a center, around which all the Assyrians rallied and presented a united front, both in the emergencies of the war, and in the pursuit of their national aspirations. Had he been spared the bullet of the assassin, and had the promises made to the Assyrians by their allies been fulfilled, Mar Benyamin, by common consent of all the people, would have been proclaimed either as a king or as the first president of the Assyrian nation.

All truly great men are humble and meek. Such was the young Patriarch of the East. The Russian generals gave him the homage of a king, and the little children would run to him as to a loving father. He elicited the admiration of the Grand Duke of Russia, who in conversing with his visitor felt as if he was in the presence of a crowned king, and he made himself the idol of his people, by the attention he paid

to the poorest and the humblest of his flock. He rode in the imperial carriage and received the welcome given to a Czar, when he visited Tiflis, and he, at the sight of the weary refugees of his people, whom he found limping on the roads, took their place by walking afoot and gave them the horse he had mounted. He was considered the most handsome man in the Assyrian nation; and yet, back of those charming features there lay the beauty of his character. The constant smile of his face radiated the sunshine of his soul. As a sincere Christian he commanded with authority, and yet his rebukes were fatherly, mingled with kindness and mercy. Undoubtedly, it was the sweet charm of his character that endeared him to all classes and all religious colors of the Assyrian nation. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants revered and loved him for his noble and love inspiring traits, and were forced to acknowledge him as their leader.

He possessed a most liberal mind. With the authority of a Patriarch he could have preserved the ecclesiastical fence, which for centuries had protected his church against intrusion and proselyting efforts; but with his democratic tendencies and broadmindedness he removed the fences, and gave freedom of thought and belief to his flock. One intense desire of his heart was that his people should be educated and enlightened; and with a most generous heart he removed all obstacles in the path of the various missionary bodies. The early custom of the Assyrian Church of the East was to select for the office of bishop-worthy men from monasteries and theological schools; but with the conquest of Islam, which destroyed both the monasteries and schools, and with the retreat of the Assyrians into the vastnesses of the mountains for self-preservation, the ancient custom inevitably ceased. And in order to maintain the religious system and carry on the church work, the existing bishops selected their successors from among their own kin, and dedicated them for the sacred office from their infancy. Mar Benyamin, however, installed a new system, by which the most worthy and capable men were selected for the office of a Bishop, irrespective of their degrees or family affiliations. During his incumbency as a Patriarch, he had prevented one of his own nephews from being dedicated to become his successor, making known his desire that even the Patriarchs of the Church of the East should thereafter be made the choice of the flock, and be selected by the church.

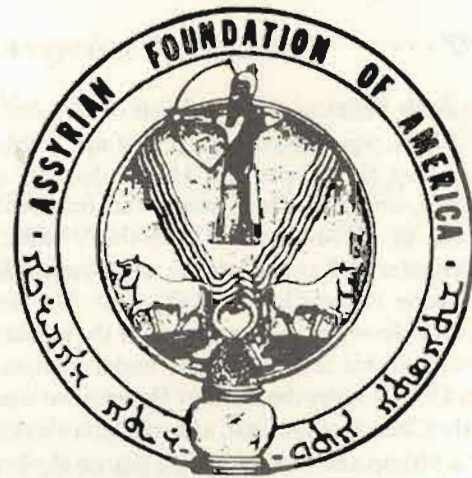
Notwithstanding his youthful age, he towered over all the leaders of his people in wisdom and statesmanship. Ever conscious, however, of his better judgment he never failed to consult his inferiors. He was open to conviction and ready to receive counsel and advice from others. He was barren of pride, and a living example of unselfishness. By his conduct he taught service and sacrifice. He thought immeasurably more of the relief and the uplift of his people than of all the honors that were heaped upon him. Human nature is suscep-



tible to the perils of applause, and the greatest of men have often succumbed to the allurements of praise; but Mar Benjamin always emerged like the Hebrew exiles from such pits and furnaces, untouched by lions, and unscathed by fire.

His love of humanity gave him the tenderest heart toward his enemies. His constant advice to his officers and men was, to acquit themselves like Christians, and not return evil for evil. In the fearful whirlpool of the great war he never forgot to demonstrate the reality of the Christian religion, as well as its superiority over the superstitions of Islam. The great love of his heart made him believe all men; and it was his credulity that led him to his assassination and death.

Thus, the great Patriarch, like his great predecessor, laid down his life upon the altar of his Christian faith, and for the salvation of his afflicted people. Mar Shimun Bar Sabbaee, as the first Mar Shimun of the Church of the East, received his crown of martyrdom at the hands of the Persian Magi, who had sworn to eradicate the name of Christianity from the face of their empire, on the last Friday in the month of March, in the year 340, and in a southern province of Persia; while Mar Benjamin Shimun, as the sixteenth incumbent of the same See, and with the same name, drank the same cup, which was now prepared by the Moslems of Persia, who had likewise sworn to exterminate the followers of the same faith in Persia, on the first Saturday in March, in the year 1918, and in a northern province of Persia. And yet how incomprehensible, even though infallible, the wondrous ways of God! An ungodly nation still remains like an unbroken rib in the giant body of the wild beast of Islam, while a Christian nation of numberless martyrs, barely retains its national existence! There is but one solution, and only one. It is not the present possessions that count, but rather, the everlasting armies of the redeemed, gathered and prepared for the glorious and certainly not distant day, when the rightful owner of the earth shall descend with his saints to challenge the authority of Satan, bind the great enemy of God and mankind, and transform a Paradise lost into a Paradise regained!



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11-15-81	Commemoration of All Saints	Sunday	Qurbana	9:00 a.m.
11-29-81	First Sunday of Advent	Sunday	Qurbana	9:00 a.m.
12-24-81	Thursday before Christmas	Thursday	Service	7:00 p.m.
12-25-81	Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Christmas)	Friday	Qurbana	9:00 a.m.

**Note:** All Sundays of the year not mentioned above are the morning service, and begin promptly at 11:00 a.m.



# ASSYRIAN FAMILY PATTERNS AFTER CHRISTIANIZATION

By Semiramis Jacob Hermes

*Continued from last issue.*

## *Customs of Engagement and Wedding Ceremonies*

In describing the traditions concerning the marriage, a translation from the book *Lehrbuch der Neusyrischen* by I. Rosenberg is applied here. The book is meant to teach the Assyriac language. However the customs discussed are such as those practiced not very long ago. In an interview with an old lady, Mrs. Nazlo Elia Warda\* born in 1858 and whose wedding took place in 1872 in Urmia, Iran, I found her description the same as described by the author. I have added comments that she had made.

If a girl is from the same village, the boy would see her and talk to her secretly, but if she is from another Assyrian village the boy's relatives would tell him of her, that such and such a girl is a good and respectable girl: her parents are respectable, important, and wealthy people. The girl can cut and sew well. No one has heard her voice in the street. She is a member of the church and she is educated.

The boy would try to see her one way or another, or he would visit her home for some business or she would come to be seen by him. He might even talk to her and ask her. If he liked her he would send a woman to talk to the girl and her relatives. If the parents indicated their approval then another day two or three men would go to get more definite word. The girl's parents would set a date a month later to give their answer. When the month is passed the men go again and say, "The month is passed. What do you say?" If the parents are willing, their answer would be positive; if they are not willing, they would say that this year they have no daughter to give in marriage. The girl's parents would ask about the boy and his home or they would go to his home and see it.

Now if the answer is positive, the engagement date would be set. The boy's parents would pay for all the expense that occurs. They buy the jewelry. On the engagement night seven to eight men would dine at the boy's home then they would go to the girl's home. The girl's parents would be gathered. They would eat and talk. The boy's people would bring with them candies or chick peas, raisins mixed, a cake of sugar, a little money for tradition's sake, a veil for the bride and a pair of shoes. After they are served they would open the subject. One man would be appointed as the leader from the boy's side and he would say, "We have come to ask for the hand of your daughter for the son of so and so." Someone from the girl's relatives would say that the person in charge of the girl is so and so (referring to a far relative). This would refer to somebody else until all the girls' relatives are asked each one in turn referring to another until they reach the nearest relative, the father, mother or brother. They would say, "We give her." One of the boy's people would kiss the hand of the father and all would clap. Then the priest would say, "We should ask the girl herself." They would choose two men and two women who are trustwor-

thy. These would take the ring to the girl and tell her, "Your parents and all your relatives are willing and if you accept, then you should wear this ring." These four people would bring back the word that she has accepted. Again all would clap and say, "She may be blessed." The priest would say a prayer, then he would break a little from the cake of sugar. The best man would take a little from the sugar cake, free or with money, or he would buy it with a cock. Then he would either sell the cock or give it to the groom, who would invite some of his friends. Then candy would be offered to the people. Each one would take and say, "Congratulations, she may be blessed."

When leaving, the boy's relatives would kiss the bride and would place some money in her hand. In the days that follow they would visit the girl's home and take breakfast and cakes, etc., with them. They would visit on specific days. The groom and his friends are called as guests.

I am not sure whether this means that the boy could see the fiancée but Mrs. Elia said that she had been engaged for six months, and she hadn't seen her fiancée until the day of the wedding. Meantime some women relatives of the boy would visit the girl's home taking cakes with them. Then they go and buy the materials.

The author does not mention about the dowry. Mrs. Elia said that a dowry was paid to her father who put the money into a chain and hung it around her neck. (I did not get the occasion on which that was done.)

Then the wedding preparations would be made. The boy's parents would pay all the expenses of the wedding. The time would approach when they come to take the bride to her future home. A group of people would come to the bride's home and eat. The women who are the bride's attendants to take money. While taking the bride out of the house one of the bride's men relatives, brother or cousin, would stand at the door and would not let the bride get out until he receives a sum of money. On putting her on horseback or in a carriage, her parents would kiss her and cry. The groom's relatives would throw raisins or money on her head. A rider would leave earlier and announce the news to the groom's household. The groom with his friends would be standing on the roof with a stick about a yard square all decorated with dates, pomegranates, apples and all kinds of fruits (jimlana).

When the bride would arrive she would be stopped at a distance below. The best man would take an apple and give it to the groom. He would make the sign of the cross with the apple, kiss it and would throw it at the bride. He would be given wine by the best man. The throwing of the apple would be repeated three times. Mrs. Elia said that making the sign of the cross meant the groom was swearing that the bride was for him only.

\*Mrs. Nazlo Elia Warda is the mother of Ewan E. Warda of Turlock.

*Continued on page 5*



Then the bride would be brought in with clapping and dancing to the door of the home. From there she would be invited to the home of the woman who was attending her.

Next morning before breakfast the wedding ceremony would take place. Mrs. Elia said that in the morning the bridal party would go to the church. After that they would return to the groom's house where the ceremony would be performed by the priest. Mrs. Elia said that during that ceremony the bride's face was covered and the dress was not necessarily white. After the ceremony the women would come and kiss the bride. The men would kiss the groom and put their hand on the bride's head and congratulate her. Gifts would be brought by people. Money (*sabakhta*) would be collected for the groom. It was the habit that the priest and the deacons would be served "*hasida*" (made of butter, flour and molasses cooked together).

The best man should always sit next to the groom. If he would go for a while he should leave his hat in his seat, because if others would sit in his place they would not leave it until they receive money.

The bride's trousseau would be opened. A relative of the bride would not accept the opening of the chest unless she received money. The trousseau would usually contain one rug, clothes and "*simawar*." One woman would say aloud what the bride had brought.

The celebrations would continue for three days. There would be eating, drinking and dancing. The entertaining music was "*davoola* and *Zoorna*" (drum and flute). On the seventh day the bride's parents would come to bathe their daughter. Then they would visit her regularly on specific days. After a few nights they 'steal' her. They invite the groom and give a present to the bride.

Mrs. Elia said that after the wedding she did not go out for some time. There was a religious festival. Friends and relatives came and took her out to the forests where they were having festivities like a picnic. They brought her back home with dancing and singing. The second day she could go out to the stream and get water. She also said that till she had her first child she was not allowed to uncover her head and part of her face. When she would have a child, her mother with some other women would come and bring a crib with all its equipment.

### *Other Evidences of Continuous Customs*

Among the old pre-Christian customs there was the habit of using ancient magical arts. Nearly every village inhabited by the Assyrians would have an old person who had knowledge in the matter of spells. In addition to this way of foretelling the future there was the way of the "numbers of the name." There were ways of ascertaining whether the course of true love would run smoothly. One fashionable way was the method of fasting. The young man would fast for three days. He would not eat or drink anything. The "Rogation of the Ninevites" was a favorite time as the fast mentioned lasted three days. After the fast the person would eat but not drink. He must eat three handfuls of parched

barley, mixed with a like amount of salt, and then sleep, if he could. Under such circumstances he was pretty sure to dream of the water for which every cell in his body was craving and it was to be hoped that the damsal who was his destiny would come in his visions and give him to drink. Young people today still do this. I know it from my own observations.

Medicine was mostly magical. There was also the belief in the "Evil Eye." This belief still exists amongst the Assyrians.

Another practice that existed in the ancient pre-Christian days and was kept up by the Assyrians is that of animal sacrifice. The animal was taken to the church. The ceremony was somewhat parallel to a sacrifice of the Old Testament habit. In my interview with Mrs. Nazlo Elia Warda she said that the sacrifice was offered in an elaborate ceremony. It was a family centered festivity. Old and young people, men, women, the whole family together used to attend the '*shara*.' The animal was slaughtered and the meat distributed to the poor. From my own observation the offering of animal sacrifice is still practiced nowadays, though not in the same elaborate way. The trend is that the animal is not necessarily taken to the church but is slaughtered at home and the meat distributed amongst the poor families. However, it still continues to be a family centered activity.

In an ordinary house the ways of life in the year 1900 were still those of the scripture. Every house had its own oven, the center of the household, where the daily bread was baked. To have to use another's oven was shame and disgrace for any self-respecting housewife. The oven was a deep pit in the floor, with the fire at the bottom of it, so that the sides on which the dough was stuck for baking in big flaps would naturally be impregnated with soot, however high polished they might be for cleanliness sake. I have known families who have used this kind of oven but not so much importance is given to it now. There was cooperation between families in using their ovens. Now this oven is being replaced. The families buy their bread instead of baking it at home.

In my interview with Mrs. Nazlo Elia Warda, I obtained the following description of some of the family patterns and customs fashionable at her time toward the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The people were very religious. They used to go to church very regularly. They fasted and carried it willingly. They fasted before annual feasts, e.g., the fifty-day fast before Easter. Most of their entertainments were religious festivals. As mentioned before the '*shara*' was a big occasion for entertainment.

There were strong family ties. Families were usually big. All the sons with their wives used to live with their parents. It was a disgrace for the son to leave his parent's house even after marriage. The father was the head of the family. All the sons and the daughters-in-law used to obey him. They used to say that God is mighty up in the heaven and the husband is mighty on the earth. The wife should not disobey him. They rarely punished the children as children used to obey, but if punishment was needed the father did that. Both mother and father worked together in disciplining the children. The



mother as a homemaker enjoyed a high degree of reverence and love. She was respected by her husband and children.

The family used to live on the farm. There was plenty of food. The sons used to give the money to the father and the mother who would spend the money for all the family including the daughters-in-law and the grandchildren.

The most important characteristics of the young girl were that she respect and serve her in-laws. She would know sewing, handicraft and cooking. There was respect between fellowmen also. One should not say 'fool' to another because it is not respectful in God's eye. The family used to enjoy visiting and singing.

Divorce was very much despised. There was no divorce. But if it so happened that the wife divorced her husband the people put her on a donkey facing backward, she holding his tail. Her face would be covered with black. It was a big disgrace.

They used to believe that the church would cure them from their illness. The priest used to pray and tie a knot in strings, then he would tie the knot on the wrist of the patient. Mrs. Nazlo E. Warda ascertained me that all her life she had not been to a doctor. She does not believe in them.

One of the questionnaires was filled by an elderly lady through the help of her grandson, Mr. Ashur Jamliel. In a note he writes, "... this questionnaire has been so filled in as to depict the state and views of an Assyrian middle-aged woman living in Turkey around the year 1914." I have recorded this lady's answers separately from those of the others because of the difference of age between her and the other subjects. This lady, Mrs. Jamliel, was born about the year 1860 in Qudchanis, Turkey. She belongs to the Assyrian Church of the East. She had no schooling.

Her wedding took place around the year 1874 at the age of 13. She did not know her husband before marriage. It was not necessary that the young people love before marriage. Their marriage was arranged by their parents in the old manner. There was no religious ceremony associated with their engagement. The news was announced and spread quietly among the villages. The engagement was concluded in a gathering of their parents and a small circle of close relatives. The dowry paid was 5 goats, one ox and one golden coin (Ottoman coin).

The wedding ceremony was performed by the village priest and three deacons. It took place at the church and was attended by near relatives and friends. Celebrations to which all members of their villages were welcomed, besides relatives and friends invited from neighboring villages, followed and continued for three days. Food and drink (wine and arak) were offered. The entertainment music was "davoola and Zoorna" (drum and flute) assisted by songs in Assyrian, Kurdish and Turkish languages. They expected the wedding celebrations of their children to be in the old Assyrian manner as well and to last for at least three days.

The subject had seven children, five sons and two daughters. Of those only four had survived. She indicates her preference to educate their children to the highest level then available. They expected their children to be farmers.

She lived with her in-laws and her brothers and sisters-in-law. They used to depend on the joint family's income. All the elders of the family shared in planning the expenditure, but it was the husband alone who did the actual purchasing, including the wife's needs. The total income of the family was about 300 golden coins (Ottoman coins).

The family had three employees who helped in farming and cattle rearing. The housework was done by the wife assisted by her mother-in-law, sisters-in-law and her own children. The husband helped too.

For the leisure time they spent the evenings in family gatherings at which songs in Assyrian, Kurdish were sung; tales were narrated and stories from the Old Testament were read, etc.

Divorce regulations were very strict. There were not many divorces then. The authority and control seems to have been in the father's hand. There was complete obedience and respect from both the wife and children.

One of their beliefs is that one would fall seriously ill if he or she bathed or did non-essential housework on the eve of the Sabbath or a religious holiday or during such days.

Their health was very good (if not excellent). In the treatment of illnesses they used to follow an elderly relative's advice. For curing colds the subject described what they used to do: make the patient sweat well, dry the body and change the clothes. Then give patient hot fruit soup or hot milk and other specially prepared hot vegetable and fruit recipes.

They used to eat three meals during the day. All the family would eat together regularly. They had a short prayer before eating. They used to observe the religious restriction of excluding meat from their food on Wednesdays and Fridays and they used to adhere to it absolutely.

In conclusion the subject had given her opinion as to whether the Assyrian family is happier now than two or three generations ago. She had said, "True that a good many of the Assyrian families are materially better off now, but their status is regrettably that of an unsettled, homeless people totally uncertain of what the future has in store for them."

In this description, we have pictured the family as a joint, stable family. Christianity was from the outset the champion of strict monogamy. Against all plural marriage, and sex outside marriage, the Church took a decisive stand. Also, it early declared its stand against divorce and in favor of the indissolubility of marriage. We have seen the continuous parental responsibility for children's marriage. There was increased strictness in association of boys and girls of marriageable age. The family was patriarchal but with more respect for the wife. She shared the responsibility in training and disciplining the children. There was continued importance given to education and training of both boys and girls. The family social activities mainly centered around their religion.

The migrations the communities were forced to undergo were probably responsible for the simplification of engagement and wedding ceremonies but probably increased rather than decreased the strength of the family bonds and the necessity for the complete dominance of the father.



## Assyrian Recipe

### LAWASHA

*The traditional bread of the Near East and an Assyrian favorite is Lawasha. It is a flat, round, crispy bread that can be kept for at least a month without becoming moldy and without losing its freshness. In the "old country," Lawasha was baked in an open pit in the ground ("Tanooora"). The recipe for Lawasha comes by way of Turlock, Calif., from Mrs. Bato Elias.*

3 cakes compressed yeast  
1 tablespoon salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
2  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups milk, scalded  
3 eggs  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup shortening  
6 cups flour

Combine yeast, salt, and sugar and let stand until yeast liquefies. Scald milk, add shortening and let cool until lukewarm. Make a depression in the center of the flour and gradually work in dissolved yeast and lukewarm milk to make a stiff dough. Knead well, place in a bowl and cover. Let rise for about 1 hour.

Pinch off pieces of dough about the size of a small lemon. Let rise again.

Sift flour over a large board or table top and spread evenly over surface. With a rolling pin, roll out piece of dough into a large sheet. Dough should be about  $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick. Place on a cookie sheet. Bake in a 450-degree oven about 3 minutes. If desired, place under broiler to brown the top lightly; watch carefully to keep from burning.

Repeat this process until all the dough has been used. Store in a dry place and use as needed. If a soft Lawasha is preferred, then sprinkle with water and wrap in a damp cloth for about one hour before serving. This recipe makes 15 Lawashas.

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*At the Picnic*

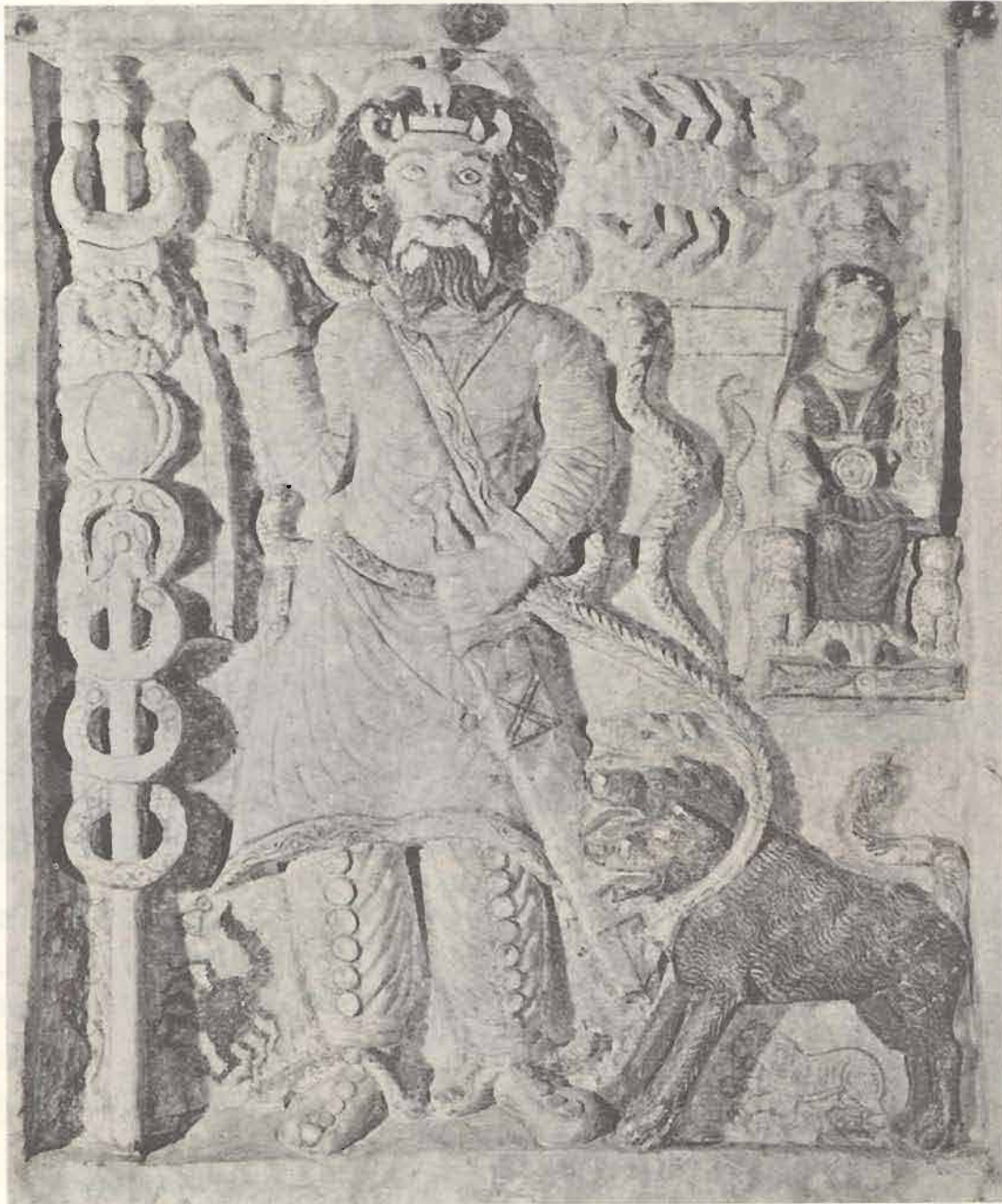


*At the Picnic*



*At the Picnic*





*Cerberus Slab of Hatra*



# Cerberus Slab of Hatra May Represent Important Astronomical Events

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## Summary:

The slab relief which is discussed in this paper, is a painted limestone slab of 80 cm by 75 cm. It was discovered in the first half of this century in Room 13 of the first shrine of the temple of Hatra. Presently the slab is in the Mosul's Museum of Iraq. The temple of Hatra is 37 miles west-northwest of the ancient city of Assur and 93 miles southwest of the present city of Mosul. The slab is called the Cerberus slab of Hatra, and was interpreted as a purely religious iconography of the Parthian era, about first or second century A.D. by Harold Ingholt.<sup>1b</sup> The slab contains two important features, namely "Semeions." The term "Semeion" was introduced in literature by Lucian of Samosate (an Assyrian scholar) about the middle of the second century A.D. The "semeion" on the left side of the slab has seven emblems representing the seven known planets—stacked on a pole. A smaller "Semeion" is placed in the hand of the Lady sitting in the chair on the right hand side of the slab. This "Semeion" represents only six planets. It is believed that two "Semeion" represent two important planetary alignments, and features of the slab represent the constellations with bright stars to indicate the coordinates of the planetary alignments. With the aid of a computer at Jet Propulsion Laboratory of California Institute of Technology, we have determined the date of the planetary alignments (Semeion) and thus we speculate that the slab of Hatra was carved about the middle of first century A.D. It is speculated that the slab of Hatra represents two important astronomical events, which were introduced into astral religion of the Parthian time.

## 1. Introduction

The Cerberus slab was discovered early this century in one of the well preserved temples of Hatra in Iraq. Up to now it has been interpreted to represent a religious slab of the Parthian era, with the center figure being "Ahriman"<sup>1a,b</sup> (the Devil) (Fig. 1). Such an interpretation leaves a large portion of the slab relief unexplained. In light of the syncretic nature of the Hatra culture and religion, a consequence of the intermingling of the Semitic, Greek, and Iranian peoples of the Near East, T. Tuman<sup>1c</sup> has suggested the identification of this figure in addition to those just mentioned, with Erra-Ares on the one hand, and tentatively with Mithra on the other. It is this last possibility which has prompted the following study of the slab with an astronomical interpretation. Before examining the picture of the slab in detail a brief summary of the astronomical knowledge at the time of the

Parthian era will be presented below. This we hope will help the reader to appreciate our speculations. However, it must be realized that the survey of some 2000 years culture of the Bet Nahrain and cultural interaction with the Greeks and Persia will be sketchy and superficial.

Some 6000 years ago, a class of priests of the Mesopotamian civilization constructed observational terraces above the ground to study the stars and the motion of the planets. In this article we shall use Bet Nahrain, the local name of the region, instead of Mesopotamia. From the time of the invention of cuneiform writings these astronomical observations were gradually recorded. By 1800 B.C. the science of arithmetic and mathematics was fairly well developed to the extent that it was gradually used in astronomy.<sup>2</sup> The observational astronomy was not a mere curiosity, but it was utilized to establish a calendar. The solar year was divided into 12 lunar months during which the sun dwelt in different regions of the sky. From 1800 B.C. to 400 B.C. we find that the ecliptic circle is subdivided into 360° and 12 Zodiac constellations each extending 30°. These constellations are associated with a specific month of the year.<sup>3</sup> However, it was soon discovered that 12 lunar months are equal to 354 days and are short by 11.25 days from a solar year. Consequently, a 13th month was intercalated over every three years and sometimes more often. This technique to correct for discrepancy between 12 lunar months and one solar year was practiced during Hammurabi's kingdom. Thus Hammurabi speaks, "Since the year is not good, the next month must be noted as a second Ululu. Instead of delivering the tithes to Babylon on the 25th of Tishritu, have them delivered on the 25th of Ululu."<sup>4</sup> The months of the calendar starting from the vernal equinox were called: 1 — Nissanu, 2 — Aiaru, 3 — Simmanu, 4 — Duzu, 5 — Abu, 6 — Ululu, 7 — Tishritu, 8 — Arach Sammu, 9 — Kislimu, 10 — Tebitu, 11 — Sabatu, and 12 — Adaru. Frequently the intercalary month was introduced at the end of the year by introducing a second Adaru.

In the great Epic of Creation in the early time of the Bet Nahrain civilization, we note that "Marduk" is introduced as a supreme god after destroying the monster Tiamat. Later on we note that Tiamat is the mythology for the constellation "MUS," which is known today as Hydra, the nine-headed Monster. The epic states about "Marduk":

"He made the stations for the great gods.  
The stars, their images, the constellations he fixed;  
He ordained the year and into sections divided it;  
For the twelve months, he fixed three stars  
(constellations)."<sup>5</sup>

Continued on page 11



During the Hammurabi dynasty, the beginning of the official year was highly irregular, because of the intercalary month. To remedy the difficulty the Bet Nahrain astronomers connected the names of the unified Babylonian calendar month with the rising of the stars. According to Van der Waerden<sup>7</sup> the formula for this connection can be found in the epic of Creation: Marduk fixed the stars (constellations) for each month of the year. In the Astrolabe texts, we find that astronomers have subdivided the entire celestial globe into three regions. The Northern Hemisphere with twelve constellations and stars corresponding to the Zodiac are the domain of the god Enlil; while the god Anu controls the region of the Zodiac constellations to be spread over  $\pm 17^\circ$  latitude around the ecliptic. The god Ea controlled the southern observable hemisphere where 12 constellations and stars were identified and named. Ea is also considered the god of underworld, thus constellations in the domain of Ea are associated with bad omens and evils. As an example we have the constellations of Gir-tab (Scorpius), Mus (Hydra), and Siru (Serpens). We also find that the length of day is divided into 12 "Beru," each equal to two percent-day hours. Each Beru is also divided into 30 "Us"; each "Us" equal to four minutes.<sup>8</sup> From Greek and Babylonian sources we know that a water clock was used by these astronomers; the passage of time was measured by outflow of water.<sup>9</sup> In these Astrolabes we find that for each month, a sexagesimal number is located in every segment of the global hemisphere. One number is in the section of Enlil, right below it another number appears in the ecliptic region of Anu and finally a third number appears in the southern section of Ea. If we take the sum of these numbers and convert them to our present day time scale and plot them against the month of the year, we find a linear cyclic graph representing the length of daylight for the entire year.<sup>10</sup> This is one of the first evidences of using mathematics in astronomy. This technique of linear cyclic (known as "zigzag") was also used to describe the motion of the known planets, as the stars of gods,<sup>11</sup> namely "Sin" (the Moon), "Shamash" (the Sun), "Nebo" (Mercury), "Ishtar" or "Dilipat" (Venus), "Nergal" (Mars), "Marduk" (Jupiter), and "Ninib" (Saturn).

By about 800 B.C., during the Assyrian empire, the Bet Nahrain priest astronomers were able to predict the eclipses of the Moon. A very careful study of planetary motions and their positions was observed and recorded periodically. These astronomers were interested in phenomena close to the horizon. The appearance and disappearance of the planets was closely observed and recorded. Quoting Prof. O. Neugebauer, "It seems that opposition of a planet was defined as rising or setting at sunset and sunrise respectively. Only eclipses and occultations will usually be observable under favorable conditions."<sup>12</sup> According to Ptolemy, 150 A.D., a complete list of eclipses was available for him from the reign of Nabonassar, 747 B.C.

In the Assyrian era the astronomical observations were also used for astrological purposes. Today we have a large volume of tablets with astronomical observations and predictions with astrological interpretation.<sup>13</sup>

"To the King, my Lord, I sent: An eclipse will take place. Now it has not passed, it has taken place. In the happening of this eclipse it portends peace for the King my Lord."<sup>14</sup>

Ashurbanipal (668-626 B.C.), one of the famous Assyrian kings, sent his scholars and astronomers throughout his empire to collect old tablets, or to copy them for his library. Ashurbanipal was a unique king with interest in scholarship, and he boasts about his ability not only to read and write in cuneiform but to do arithmetic in the sexagesimal system.

The list of stars and constellations of Astrolabe and numerous other astronomical tablets along with some other 20,000 tablets were dug and recovered from the Ashurbanipal library.<sup>15</sup> From 600 B.C. to the beginning of the Seleucid Era, after the conquest of Alexander, Bet Nahrain astronomers had fully developed the lunar and planetary theory. They had fairly precise information of the periods of planets. They were able to calculate very precisely the ephemerides of the planets and the planetary conjunctions and oppositions. The fact that 19 years are equivalent to 235 lunar months was well established by 380 B.C. Nightly observations of planets and their locations with Zodiac constellations had become a standard routine. For Seleucid year 178 (133 B.C.), we find: IV 30, Venus and Mars in the twins; Mercury in Cancer; and Saturn in Sagittarius. However, more important is the ability of these astronomers to prepare an almanac and ephemerides and to check and recheck them. Hence we find that planetary motions, the eclipses, conjunctions and oppositions were the main problems of theoretical astronomy.<sup>17</sup>

The early Greek culture (900-700 B.C.) may be called the Homeric Period, in which scientific knowledge of astronomy was lacking but the language was well developed in a poetic sense. The next great step came during the sixth century B.C. with the Ionian development. It was believed that Thales (624-548 B.C.) laid the scientific basis for the Ionian astronomy and geometry. It is also claimed that in 585 B.C. he predicted an eclipse of the Sun during a war between Lydians and Persians. There is, however, no scientific evidence indicating the Ionian ability and the "Babylonian know how," to predict a Solar eclipse. There is no doubt that considerable cultural interactions took place among the Greeks, the people of Bet Nahrain, and the Egyptians. It is known for example, that Pythagoras of Samos (who was well-known in 532 B.C. and died in 497 B.C.) took a trip to Egypt and Babylon. There are cuneiform tablets which indicate the Babylonian knowledge of advanced algebra and geometry, including the Pythagorean Theorem, which dates probably more than a thousand years before Pythagoras. In fact, we know that Bet Nahrain scientists were extremely skillful in numerical calculations. There are tablets showing tables of squares and square roots, of cubes and cube roots, sum of squares and cubes needed for numerical solutions and exponential functions used for compound interest (Neugebauer, page 32).

Later on, we note Theophrastus (the successor of Aristotle who died in 322 B.C.) saying that the Chaldeans during his time were able to predict not only the weather from the



Heavens, but also life and death of all persons (another historical indication of Babylonian cultural awareness by the Greeks).<sup>18</sup>

During the Seleucid era, a Babylonian priest called Berosus (about 270 B.C.) went to the island of Cos as a teacher and historian of Babylonian science and culture.<sup>19</sup> The Greek residents in Bet Nahrain learned the observational and theoretical astronomy of the region and took it back to the mainland. The interaction of two cultures appears in the renaming of the constellations. Mus, for example, was renamed Hydra for the nine-headed monster in Greek mythology. During the Seleucid era, we find that theoretical astronomy had reached a peak. Two of the Bet Nahrain astronomers, probably by the names of *Naburiano* and *Kidennu*, are believed to be the inventors of ephemerides calculations of system A and B respectively: system A is believed to be an older technique, while technique B is a later version, and probably more accurate than system A. However, to calculate the position of the planets both techniques are used, and their results are cross-correlated.<sup>20</sup>

We must also consider the cultural exchange between Persians and the people of Bet Nahrain, specifically the impact of the Persian's Zoroastrian religion and its adaptation in some form in the cities under the ruling Parthians.

By the time of the Parthian era, massive data of eclipses, the motion of planets, their cyclic periods, and periods of the planets, were available. The motion and position of planets could be calculated ahead of time, for many years if necessary.<sup>21</sup> The 19-year cycle was used to describe the true length of the year in terms of lunar cycles. There were also some 500 years of cultural exchange between the Greek scholars and those of Bet Nahrain. The scientific and astronomical knowledge and ideas acquired by the Greeks from the Babylonians were modified and occasionally advanced and brought back to Bet Nahrain during the Seleucid era.<sup>22</sup> Thus, at the time of the Parthians we had a diffused point of view on constellations and stars with strong Greek mythological background on the constellations. With this astronomical knowledge in mind, let us now examine the Cerberus Slab of Hatra.

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b. Harold Ingholt, *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences*, V. XII, Parthian Sculptures from Hatra.

c. To be published.

<sup>2</sup> O. Neugebauer, *The Exact Science of Antiquity*, Brown University Press, 1957, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, Babylonian Mathematics, pages 29-52. This is an excellent book for the entire subject.

<sup>3</sup> B. L. Van der Waerden, *Babylonian Astronomy II, The Thirty-Six Stars*, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> A. Pannekoek, *A History of Astronomy*, Interscience Publishers, Inc., New York, 1961, Chapter I, page 31.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., page 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., page 32; also, Gale E. Christenson, *This Wild Abyss*, The Free Press, New York, 1978, pages 15 and 16.

<sup>7</sup> B. L. Van der Waerden, *Babylonian Astronomy II, The Thirty-Six Stars*, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., page 6; also, A. Pannekoek, *ibid.*, page 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., page 51.

<sup>10</sup> Unpublished work by V. S. Tuman.

<sup>11</sup> O. Neugebauer, *Exact Science of Antiquity*, Chapter 5, *Babylonian Astronomy*, pages 97 to 144; A. Pannekoek, *A History of Astronomy*, Chapter 5, *New Babylonian Science*, pages 48-62, *Chaldean Tables*, pages 63-81.

<sup>12</sup> O. Neugebauer, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> A. Sachs, *Babylonian Horoscopes*, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. B, 1953, pages 49, 75; R. C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon*, 1900; A. Pannekoek, *A History of Astronomy*, Chapter 4, *Assyrian Astrology*, pages 36-47.

<sup>14</sup> A. Pannekoek, *ibid.*, page 47; also R. C. Thompson, page 274.

<sup>15</sup> O. Neugebauer, *ibid.*, page 59. According to Prof. Neugebauer, there are over 500,000 Cuneiform tablets from Bet Nahrain in different Museums of the world. Only a small percentage have been studied and analyzed.

<sup>16</sup> A. Pannekoek, Chapter 5, *New Babylonian Science*, page 57.

<sup>17</sup> O. Neugebauer, *ibid.*, Chapter 5, *Babylonian Astronomy*, page 97-144, with Biography to Chapter 5.

<sup>18</sup> O. Neugebauer, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, *Origin and Transmission of Hellenistic Science*, pages 145-190. Read especially page 149, 157, and 159; Colin A-Ronan, *Changing Views of the Universe*, Chapter 2 and 3, pages 18-75; A. Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, Chapter 12, *Hellenistic Astronomy*, pages 122-132; A. Christianson, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2, *The Ancient View of Cosmos*.

<sup>19</sup> A. Pannekoek, *op. cit.*, Chapter 12, *Hellenistic Astronomy*, page 130; O. Neugebauer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 6, pages 157 and 141; Colin A-Ronan, *op. cit.*, page 30.

<sup>20</sup> O. Neugebauer, *op. cit.*, Chapter 5, *Babylonian Astronomy*, page 115.

<sup>21</sup> A. Sachs, A Classification of Astronomical Tablets of the Seleucid Period: *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 2, 1948, pages 271-290; also Sirius Dates in Babylonian Astronomical Texts of the Seleucid Period: *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 6, 1952.

<sup>22</sup> B. L. Van der Waerden, *History of Zodiac*, *Archive Fur Orient Forschung*, Vol. 16, 1939, see especially page 225 on the work of Eudoxes, and pages 216-230.

*Editor's Note:* References will be added as the rest of the material is published. The next issue will incorporate Part II: Reexamination of the Cerberus Slab of Hatra.



## HERE & THERE

**NEW YORK** — The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York opened in February, 1981 a great collection of ancient Assyrian stone sculpture to the public. The Assyrian collection, consisting of 20 large reliefs and two massive carvings of winged bulls, is from the palace of King Assurnasirpal II in Nimrud, Assyria.

According to sculptors and artists in New York, "The Assyrian mode of monumental stone relief with its tightly controlled abstract patterning that gives it formal distinction is an extraordinary feat of representation and one of the greatest achievements of the carver's art that has come down to modern man from ancient Assyria."

**SAN FRANCISCO** — In honor of the Assyrian Martyrs Day, August 7, the Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Narsai Parish, San Francisco, held a memorial program following the Qurbana Qadisha (Holy Communion) on Sunday, August 9, 1981. The program featured a number of people who spoke in commemoration of those Assyrians who dedicated their lives for the Assyrian cause. The speakers were as follows:

Archdeacon Nenos S. Michael, Church of the East, Mar Narsai Parish, San Francisco.

Mr. William Daniel, President of the Assyrian Cultural Institute, San Jose.

Mr. Julius N. Shabbas, President of the Assyrian Foundation of America, Berkeley.

Mr. David Zia, representative of the Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Yosip Parish, San Jose.

Mr. Geevargis Yoseph, Vice-President of Motwa, Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Narsai Parish, San Francisco.

The song "Alpakh Semale Khachale Dookhakh" was sung by Walter Aziz.

**SAN FRANCISCO** — An Assyrian Youth Group has been established by the young people of the Assyrian Church of the East, Mar Narsai Parish, San Francisco. The purpose is to promote and perpetuate the Assyrian culture and heritage. The group was launched with a highly successful dance party on August 29, 1981. We wish to congratulate the young people on their initiative and wish them the greatest success in their endeavors.

**FRESNO** — Pulitzer Prize-winning author, William Saroyan, left almost his entire \$1.3 million estate to the San Francisco-based William Saroyan Foundation, according to his will.

Saroyan, who died of cancer May 19, 1981 at the age of 72 listed \$700,000 in real estate and \$600,000 in personal property excluding the value of his published and unpublished works, which amount to millions of dollars of potential royalties.

Saroyan owned two homes in Fresno. Those will be used to house Armenian exchange students. His San Francisco Sunset District home on 15th Avenue will be used as the Foundation's headquarters.

He reportedly left thousands of pages of unpublished

works as well as hundreds of mood drawings, journals, films and tapes which will be known as the Saroyan Collection.

**BERKELEY** — The Assyrian Foundation of America celebrated its 17th Anniversary by sponsoring a gala dance party on Sept. 12, 1981 at the Amfac Hotel in Burlingame. The music was provided by the Sargon Mayelian Band and the featured singer was the well-known George Maragoulis. The party was very well attended and was enjoyed immensely by all.

The Assyrian Foundation wishes to express its thanks to Narsai David and Sam David of Narsai's Restaurant for their generosity in donating a case of Narsai's premium champagne and a dinner for two towards the raffle which was held at the party.

Narsai's Restaurant is located at 385 Colusa Avenue, Kensington (North Berkeley), Calif. Its cuisine is French and Mediterranean, and every dish is a masterpiece that is carefully prepared under the close scrutiny of chef Kurt Grasing. Either Narsai David or Samuel David, or both, are usually in the kitchen hovering over preparations, tasting sauces and making certain that everything is just right. In 1977, Narsai's Restaurant was the only one in the East Bay to win the Holiday magazine award; that same year Cornell University's noted School of Hotel Administration selected Narsai's as one of the country's six great restaurants. Narsai David appears once a week on the PBS Television Show "Over Easy," hosted by Hugh Downs. He demonstrates how to cook inexpensive, imaginative dinners for one or two persons.

**CHICAGO** — In June of 1981, the Honorable Ylva Annerstedt, member of the Swedish Parliament (Liberal Party) made a special visit to the United States to meet with the officials of the Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation. Meetings were held with A.U.A.F. Executive Director, John Yonan, and Dr. Nariman Solhkah, Advisory Board Member of A.U.A.F.

The official from Sweden learned that the A.U.A.F. has a strong working relationship with the offices of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The World Council of Churches, Church World Service, International Catholic Migration Commission, and U.S. Catholic Conference.

The Assyrian Universal Alliance Foundation is also a member of the Refugee Social Services Consortium and was recently featured in a National Publication entitled "Refugee Report."

The Swedish government is concerned about the refugee resettlement problems in their country. There are presently about 14,000 Assyrians in Sweden. The A.U.A.F. was asked to help establish a workable program for the Assyrian refugees of Sweden in cooperation with the Swedish government. The A.U.A.F. will present this program to the 13th World Congress of the A.U.A. in August 1981, then it will forward its recommendations to the Swedish Parliament.



# WE, THE ASSYRIANS

By Norman M. Yonan

Civilization and the people whose genius gave it body and growth are interchangeable terms. Assyria to the scholar, represents a particular stage of human history; of man's civilization and culture, which affected the shape and directed the course of history and civilization. One of the attributes of civilization is the shaping of man's mind into a particular mould, serving as the master sample for others to copy. One wonders had there been no Assyro-Babylonian civilization, would there have been the "glory that was Greece?" The answer would have to be "a definite No!"

We have incontrovertible evidence that the recorded history is, at least, six thousand years. Perhaps to more than half of that period, the Near East is its center and abode. The birth, nourishment and development of culture, which is the soul and spirit of a civilization is the gift of the Near East. In a larger sense Babylon and Assyria and the Near East are one and the same term. Almost entirely this long period, in which man reaches his glorious destiny, is shaped by the Assyro-Babylonian concept. It is said by many exegesists that but for this concept, the One God concept of the Hebrew could not have attained to the empyrean heights of the human soul, nor could they have distinguished the history God from the God of History. Strange and marvellous are the ways of the Providence.

Within the economy of history are included those nations, peoples and empires, whose mission was to compound out of their genius, the greatness that was universal in character. The Assyro-Babylonian civilization personified and embodied this character. For during the rough and teeming period of its militaristic propensity, Assyria's imperial policy never ceased from its main goal — to assimilate and enlighten the vanquished. It offered them the advantages of its civilization — its high degree of accomplishments — agriculture, commerce, the horse and wagon, the coinage and instrument of commercial transactions; craft and industries, law and a government of law, mathematics and medicine; drainage systems, geometry and astronomy; calendar and clock; and a multitude of other social amenities that only a highly civilized people can offer. Studying the Assyrian history, one is impelled to acknowledge the debt our present Western civilizations owe to Assyria. For truly the Assyrians were the true founders of the Western civilization.

It is not the intent of this article to dwell on the history of Assyria at any length, for this would be impossible. Neither is the writer interested in the pros

and cons regarding the orthography of our name. However, when the Safavia dynasty, it was decreed that we were to be known as the "Nasara Melet," that decree established a political fact, but that fact, racially speaking, was not the truth. This may be applied to similar cases with regard to our name. Austrians are Germans, but Germans are not Austrians. One cannot change a race simply by misspelling its name. The phonetics of one language cannot be rendered in their exactness in another language, particularly when that language is a comparatively new language, such as the Armenian is.

To the question, "Are we Assyrian?" the answer is, if we are not, then we may be referred to as Paul did to a certain Biblical patriarch, "He was without a father and without a mother," (Heb. 7:3, St. James Version). But as it happens, both the reader and this writer are the off-springs of their parents. We did not select our parents, but they are responsible for our being. A man may choose his nationality, but can never choose his race; race does that for him. The English Law, commonly known as the Common Law, becomes defective if it cannot be traced to immemoriality, yet its body consists of those truths which time and usage has given them strength, and the evidence of its historicity has confirmed its principle. When traditions, customs and legends are consistent, and are persistent in their consistency, they have a certain force of history.

Our Assyrian history may be divided into three major periods, each of which averages some two thousand years, more or less. Two of these periods are of pre-Christian era, and the third of post-Christian era. I would like to dwell briefly on these periods in their inverse order. The purpose is to climb the historic ladder, rather than coming down. This is for the purpose of simplification.

To climb this ladder, of necessity, we have to begin from our present position, which means the very latter part of the Third Period. We begin by finding ourselves to be the unbroken continuity of a particular Christian culture, racial in character, tenacious in mores and customs. Furthermore, we find, that the vicissitudes of centuries, instead of weakening our racial consciousness, does strengthen and fortifies our racial exclusiveness. Certain historic factors play an important part in this, and are its contributory causes. The principle one being the Islamic Shariat, which casts us into the role of a separate people. This law is implemented and its implementation makes it mandatory for the Christians to propagate within the limits of their racial bounds.



But even more important, and certainly of penetrable historicity, is the religious factor. Here enters a concept peculiarly racial. Only the Jewish concept, where the line of demarcation separating their religion from their genealogy is non-existent, can be compared, maybe to a lesser degree, to that of ours. This concept so peculiar to the eastern votaries of Christianity, history seems to have confined to our race, thus forming a sort of a religious republic, racial in character.

### *The Language*

When a language is coexistent with a race, it becomes the indispensable instrumentality of the historic chain, connecting its succeeding links. To no other race, including even the Greeks, has this indisputable factor played so important a part. It is through this instrumentality that we scale the ladder, and reach Nisibith, and from it we reach that great landmark of our post-Christian period, Edessa (Orhai). It was from Edessa that the racial and religious stamp was pressed upon us, and became our mark of identity throughout the Partho-Persian Empire, for the next six centuries. It was that stamp that cast us into the role of martyrs during the lava-flow of Islam, as it had during the Saporian era, some two centuries earlier. But it was also that stamp which kept our continuous identity beyond the bounds of conjecture. Thus we see one language, one culture, one race, one concept, combined into one historic harmony, compounding the indisputable fact of history, spelled "Assyrians."

There is a gap of some 700 years plus, which separates this third period from the second. The chain breaks in the last days of the Second Assyrian Empire. Continuity is broken. The elements which make a race continue in its racial strain remained, to a remarkable degree, undisturbed. It is true that the racial number was reduced; that a greater part became fused with those of their conquerors. But it is also true that their conquerors were Aryans — the Persians and Medes, a race stranger to the Semitic racial attributes. When we add to this factor the nature of the topography, namely the Zagros mountains, we arrive at the explanation of how this small remnant preserved their racial identity. For these mountains offered themselves as a natural bastion against attack or efforts of assimilation on the part of their conquerors. The very nature of these mountains rendered isolation inevitable, thus adding another factor, directly contributing to racial purity. But again the language becomes the pen of history, and continues its racial concatenation, down to the time when it shakes the hand of the Edessene School.

Having reached the beginning of the third period, I would like to reverse the order hereto followed, and begin with the beginning of the first period. We will now go down the ladder until we reach where we left off. The first rung begins with the Sumerians.

### *Sumerians*

This very fascinating people appeared on the southern Mesopotamian plains some forty-six hundred years B.C.. Of the many routes that they might have taken, that of the Persian Gulf has had greater credence. It is rather debatable whether they are of Turanian strain. Some words in their language betray the Turanian origin. However, anthropologists classify them as, probably, Caucasian. They brought with them a high degree of civilization.

From the III Dynasty of Kish in 3600 and 2870 B.C., the Sumerian influence was paramount, although fusion through intermarriage with the natives had reduced their racial identity in favor of the Akkadians. At the end of this period, history closes one of its great chapters, ending in the complete amalgamation of the Sumerians and the Akkadians. Sargon, the first, established the kingdom of Akkad, with Agade as its capitol. From 2872 to 2117 B.C., several kings and dynasties came and went, as a prelude to one of history's greatest personalities — Hammurabi (2117-2094 B.C.). The absorption of one race, one civilization by another is the eternal process of history. The fusion of the Sumerians with Akkadians culminated in producing and giving to history its earliest golden era, to be known thereafter as the Babylonian Civilization. This great landmark of history is cast upon its canvas by Hammurabi. If we may forego his victories, and they were many, and dwell on his influence on the conduct of man in society, it would be but half of his contribution to a civilization which lives in its basic principle to this day.

The sinews of a civilization are its laws. It was the Code of Hammurabi that fashioned its course and wove into the tapestry of Jurisprudence a model, serving as the basic concept of Justice. To quote a line from its preamble: "Having established an everlasting kingdom whose foundations were firm as heaven and earth — at that time Anu and Bel called me Hammurabi . . . to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak . . . to enlighten the land and to further the welfare of the people." Four thousand years later the American Constitution paraphrased this preamble into that of its own. The Code of Hammurabi remains to this day as the fountain-head of the civilized laws of man. Even its lex-talliones is subjected to an elaborate and demanding judicial procedure. It closes with these noble words: "Let any oppressed man, who has a cause, come to my image as king of righteousness."

There were rulers and events which preceded Hammurabi, and many followed him; but he stands as the personification and embodiment of the Babylonian greatness, and as the Paladin for the future greatness that was to come from his kins, the Assyrians.



## *Assyria*

Civilization is a perpetual struggle for survival. It may and often has succeeded in postponing its final chapter. It is like life, ever casting itself into new mold, new habitat, newer blood. It is a movement, moving from the Sumerian-Akkadian Ur, Agade to Babylon, to Susa, to Nineveh, and by way of detour, to Judea, Sardis, Persopolis, Meletelus, Egypt, Greece, Rome, and to us of this generation.

Some three hundred miles north of Babylon, its now-distant descendants, the Assyrians, were beginning to flourish. Just as Babylon, the city, had given its name to the country it ruled, Akkadia, the city of Ash-ur (Assh-er) did to its future empire. Its name is a union of Nomino-polis and Anthropomorphic. We do not know which preceded the other. Suffice to say it is a happy combination, and furnishes a name, though not racial, but appropriate and peculiar to the race.

Being of loose political ties, Shamshi-Adad II strengthened the ties in 1716 B.C. But the strong unifying ties were brought by Shalmanesser, the First, in 1276 B.C.; and the imperial expansion under Tiglath Pileser, the First, in 1115 B.C. For the next eleven hundred years Assyria's history is marked with decline and again the rise of that empire. Great reigns are woven into its imperial tapestry. Great many events take place between the fall of the first empire and the rise of the second. When the latter falls, great is its fall.

For the next eight centuries, which overlaps our Christian era, the Assyrians are no longer a political continuity. With exception of the Edessene kingdom (being itself a question mark), the Assyrians have no political entity. This gap of eight centuries is, nevertheless, tied to our history through two instrumentalities, language and a tenacity in racial exclusiveness. No other people have had this characteristic, except the Jews, whose religious tenacity arises from and is based upon genealogy. This became particularly so, since the rise of Islam. For the harsh, restrictive laws (Shariat) of that religion, closes the door tight against intermarriages with non-Moslems, and casts the Christian into an excluded class. And certainly the Assyrians are this island of the Christian in this ocean of Islam.

## *Language*

The Aramaic is not the original language of the Assyrians, it is, to all practical purposes, indistinguishable from it. It was adapted by the Babylonians, because of its alphabet, which the Phoenicians developed. It was conducive to keeping records, disseminating knowledge and conducting imperial business. It was the Babylonian who, in combining it to the Sumerian language, made the Aramaic the great and rich organ of expression. It was the Persian Empire that made it the Lingua Franca of western Asia; but, unlike

the mistaken idea that the Persians spoke Aramaic, to them it was a jargon, as Omar Khayyam refers to it as "The high piping of Pahlavi."

To the Assyrian and post-exilic Jews, the Aramaic remained a spoken language. While to the Jews, it was the language of their conqueror, to the Assyrians it was the language of their forebears and their culture. Indeed, there were differences, but they were dialectical. To our entire post-Christian history, the Aramaic is organic. Our literature, and the Christology as developed by our Fathers, beginning with the Tatian Diatassaron, down to the golden age, is Aramaic in concept and Assyrian in character.

This article, as the reader has already noticed, is a generalization of our history. I have avoided certain technicalities and idiosyncracies for obvious reasons. But I have left the door open for those who wish to fill various gaps by merely visiting public libraries. I recommend for them to do so.

I like to draw the attention of the reader to the responsibility that we all owe to the great heritage of which we are heirs: to preserve and contribute from it to our American culture. For our American culture is the sum total of the various ethnic groups, of which we are one. Great as is our heritage, greater must be our efforts to graft ourselves into the institutional life of America.

## *HERE & THERE (continued)*

*NORTHRIDGE — A few months ago, an Assyrian Students Society was formed by a dozen young men and women on the campus of California State University in Northridge. In their first newsletter the Society's President, Mr. Edmond Betmaleck states the purposes of this body:*

1. "Promote and perpetuate the Assyrian heritage, culture and customs of nativity in the U.S."
2. "Enlighten the enormous contributions made by our ancestors towards the human race in their contributions on the basis of civilization and its further cultivation."
3. "Cherish and foster the civic and social activities of the Assyrian Youth in the U.S. by offering scholarships, University-sponsored Assyrian language classes, and sports."

*Anyone wishing to make contributions should direct them to:*

*Assyrian Students Society  
California State University, Northridge  
c/o Associated Students  
18111 Nordhoff Street  
Northridge, Calif. 91330*

### *Editor's Note:*

1. We commend you for your efforts and dedication.
2. Page 8 of the Spring 1981 Newsletter contained a very interesting word search puzzle by Camille Zeitouny. The Word Search for this puzzle is the name of an Assyrian king consisting of 11 letters. The editor worked on it and figured out the king's name.



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*Inadvertently, the commentary that was to have accompanied the statement "The Woman's Role" in the last issue of Nineveh was omitted. Here is the commentary:*

*As pointed out by Semiramis Jacob Hermes in her article on page 19 about Assyrian Family Patterns in the Pre-Christian Era, the role of women has been restricted since ancient times. The viewpoints expressed in "The Woman's Role," which was taken from a recent publication, shows how little the author's concepts differ from those times and how it has been only very recently that marked changes have occurred.*

### Foundation's Coming Events

**October 31, 1981**

Halloween Dance Party  
Dunfey Hotel  
San Mateo

**December 31, 1981**

New Year's Eve Dinner-Dance Party  
At the Foundation's Cultural Center,  
Berkeley



# ASSYRIANS IN TRANSITION

## PROTECTORS OF CIVILIZATION TO A PEACEFUL CHRISTIAN NATION

As Related by William Daniel in His Book *Assyrians of Today — Their Problem and a Solution*

Printed in Chicago, Illinois 1969.

Continued from last issue.

### PART TWO

#### Principal Council

Principal Council stands at the top of the System in a land. It is the highest co-ordinating body. Its seat is located either in the capital city or the principal city of the land. It will supervise the functions of all the Foundations through the Regional Councils of all the cities or regions of the entire land. Its Executive Body is composed of the delegates representing all the Regional Councils, who were elected from among the advisory bodies of the latter, two representatives, or at least one, from each.

The supervisory power of the Principal Council over all the Regional Councils and Professional Foundations is unquestionable. Its decisions are final and binding. Its responsibility comprises:

1. The smooth-sailing of the System's functions throughout the land.
2. Peaceful inter-relationship and well-being of all the people within the boundaries of the System in the whole land.
3. Honorable fulfillment of the duties and obligations of all the Assyrians within the System, towards the governing authorities and faultless respect of the law and the rules of the land.
4. Is not responsible for inadequate conditions, material need, disparaging actions, faults, failures, defective conduct or lack of moral or legal obligations of such Assyrians that are not encompassed within the confines of the System.
5. In all problems, questions, arguments and discussions, the decision of the Principal Council is final. If the Executive Body of a Foundation is not satisfied with the decision of the Regional Council to which it is affiliated, then the said Foundation has the prerogative to present the problem to the Principal Council. Such a step will be taken overtly, i.e., the Regional Council involved will be supplied with a copy of the report.
6. All incoming monies into the Regional Council's treasuries will be transferred to the Principal Council's treasury without delay, to be deposited in the account of PEOPLE'S FUND. Please refer to paragraph "K" of the Regional Council's chapter, or the applicable percentage in such operations.
7. PEOPLE'S FUND will owe its accretion not only to earnings coming from the Foundations but also from a) direct personal donations from individuals, b) annual festivities of the entire system in the land, c) Regional periodical festivities, d) earnings of the import and export activities carried on by the Import and Export Foundation.
8. Principal Council will establish work centers where considerable job openings will be created which would take care of numerous unemployed persons of both

sexes and of a wide range of age limit. It will consider the employment of non-Assyrians as well, subject to its means and capabilities.

9. Principal Council will hold annual or biannual convention of all the regions of the land. All the Foundations and Regional Councils will participate. The purpose and aims of these conventions will be:
  - A. A retrospection of past period.
  - B. Reports of all natures.
  - C. Enlightening lectures from members of different Foundations on all subjects.
  - D. Clinical demonstrations where the progress in Trades and Professions will be observed.
  - E. Entertainment: Shows, Concerts and Movies.
  - F. Election of new officers for the new term of the Principal Council's Executive Body. (See Rule "L" of the Regional Council chapter.
  - G. A tentative of work program for the new term.
  - H. Appointment of an Official Delegation to pay the respects of all Assyrian people to the authoritative head of the land along with a worthy gift-souvenir. Necessity will be the guide to other details.

#### Important:

A high ideal of the Principal Council will constitute: Absolute need to please the sublime will and order of the authorities through the instrument of their efforts imbibed with a high degree of morality and peaceful progress, respectfully observing all marked holidays, whether political, historic or religious, celebrating the holidays connected with the history of the leader of the land.

#### Supreme Council

If the Assyrian people desire to go one more step ahead in order to preserve their identity and to be recognized as a unified body in the scale of minor nations of the world, then the right and practical procedure would be to create an international body or council. This collective body would be formed by a union of all the Principal Councils of different lands. Say, two representatives from each Principal Council. We would call such body "The Supreme Council."

A. Meeting of the members of the Supreme Council could be scheduled for once every year in any pre-arranged country.

B. This body would automatically have the power and the means to establish relations with United Nations either through an elected representative, or to delegate a non-Assyrian who may or may not already be in the United Nations, to discuss Assyrian problems wherever in the world



they may arise. Anyone of above procedures will prevent the effectiveness of derogatory missives aimed at paralyzing the efforts of the delegate.

### ***How to Start the System***

One of the methods by which to start the System is:

A. A number of persons, exercising different trades and professions meet and discuss the technicalities of the System. They study it well. Before taking any steps, it is important that they believe in it, and be prepared to work in it. Anyone who has no faith in its feasibility should withdraw at this point. This collective body may be named Temporary Committee of United Assyrian Trades and Professions.

B. Of the remainder of persons each is asked to meet with persons exercising similar profession or trade as he does, and organize a Foundation.

C. Foundations will be named after the Trade or Profession they exercise, i.e., Assyrian Engineers Foundation, etc.

D. The temporary committee as mentioned in paragraph "A" of this chapter, will elect its temporary officers such as: President, Vice President, Recording and Corresponding Secretaries, Treasurer, etc. This committee will stay in power until the System has started, will meet periodically to hear reports and to do the necessary for the creation of the System.

E. Any problems or difficulties in the way of starting the Trade and Professional groups will be submitted to the Assembly of the Temporary Committee for solution.

F. These very same members of the Temporary Committee, it will be remembered, were charged with the task of assembling men and women of the like profession and trade and start a Foundation which they name after the trade or profession they exercise.

G. Every Foundation will elect its own Executive Body which comprises of: President, Vice President, Correspondence Secretary, Recording Secretary, Accountant, Treasurer, Auditors, Building Manager, Sergeant-at-Arms, in addition to these officers a body of four or five advisors.

H. This Executive Body will compile the Foundation's Constitution and By-laws, all the while remembering that these would undergo a kind of revision by the Regional Council when this latter Body has come into existence. Until then, the Foundations will do all the necessary to enlarge their membership which will be regulated by their temporary by-laws.

I. No major steps will be taken until the Regional Council is ready to take over from the temporary committee.

J. Immediately after the creation of the Regional Council, the by-laws of all the Foundations will be looked into and changes, if necessary, will be made. If there be Foundations who may not have their by-laws written, the Regional Council will help them to do so.

K. The Regional Council will elect its own officers from among the assembled delegates. This body, too, besides the officers who hold an office in the Executive Committee will have a number of advisors. These latter are expected to be elected from among the more experienced even though less active personages.

L. The Regional Council will keep separate files of all the Foundations in its province. It will stay in constant contact with all of them.

M. The Regional Council will receive not less than fifty percent (50%) of the net proceeds of social functions of all the Foundations. The Regional Councils of all the land will immediately transfer monies thus accumulated to the Principal Council directly and without delay, from where they will be credited to the PEOPLE'S FUND.

N. Welfare actions will not be undertaken by the Foundations independently without the advice of the Regional Council unless by reason of any one of two following conditions:

*First:* — A case, because of its very urgent nature demands the taking of immediate steps.

*Second:* — The sum involved is insignificant. (Limitations of independent actions will be stipulated by the Regional Council Committee.)

O. All problems of the needs of people will first be brought to the attention of the Regional Council. This body will relegate them to the relative Foundation for action if such be the necessity. The Foundation in question will execute the Regional Council's order and send a report of completed job.

P. Ordinarily, decision of the Regional Council should suffice to settle an argument or solve a problem, but if a Foundation is not satisfied with the Regional Council's decision, the former has the right to present the problem in question to the Principal Council of the land for final settlement, whose judgment and decree are final and binding by both parties.

Q. Each and every Foundation will organize its own social functions. These will be patronized by members of all other Foundations, thus abolishing all detrimental feelings such as jealousy, competition, etc. It is important to consult the Regional Council for date, so as not to clash with another function of another Foundation.

R. Each and every Foundation has a legitimate right to use the fifty percent (50%) of its net earnings for the improvement of its center or for local charities subject to the decision of its Executive Committee. But not for anyone's personal benefit.

### ***Laudable Gains***

We have, by now, learned that oneness or sameness of Profession or Trade and moral values are indispensable and unbreakable rules in becoming a member of any one of the Foundations. This being so, let us observe the laudable gains that such a System would help us acquire.

A. Broadening of horizon of knowledge gained from:

1. Communion of experience and mental transaction.
2. Speeches and professional discussions.
3. Published speeches in periodicals.
4. Clinical sessions.

B. Imbibation or absorption of orderliness and discipline, because gradation will be founded on the bases of formal knowledge and experience only and not by any other considerations. Thus discipline and mutual respect will be



the laminating forces, assuring the entire System a solid foundation. These two moral virtues will have to be observed most severely.

C. Each and every Foundation will command a much more advantageous view, than we ever have had in the past, to observe the needs of the people, the needs that are related to what they represent and exercise.

D. Closeness and cooperation of people exercising the same trade or profession results in developing the true spirit of collegueship that does away with all possible professional jealousy, also accessibility to people's needs with promptitude.

E. Mutual understanding and commonness of culture lends facility to all deliberations and solution of problems.

F. Because of the above noted commonness of understanding and appreciation, implementation of decisions will be enormously facilitated.

G. Such persons as false actors or pretenders cannot secure a foothold in a Professional Foundation since their admittance will require a testimony of their knowledge as well as a clean ethical background.

H. The System of Professional Foundations closes the door to the association of people of unlike trade, profession and consequently, education, thus eliminating all misunderstanding that stands in the path of wise decisions.

I. The System will uphold strongly the criteria of evaluation of merits which is indispensable in correct appointment of persons to suitable posts.

J. The System will put a stop to loss or waste of talents by employing them in their appropriate places.

K. The System will put a stop to an overflow of learned personalities who depart from their own fold in order to join non-Assyrian communities, where a better scale of evaluation of merits is predominant.

L. A stocktaking of our assets will be an easy thing to accomplish at any needed moment.

M. The Foundations in their periodicals will constantly keep the people informed as to their aims and accomplishments. The benefits reaped from this contact is two-fold: —For the people it will be a guide as to where to go for their needs; for the members of a Foundation a broadening of sphere of activity.

#### ***An Abbreviated Statement of Benefits Reaped From the System of United Professional Foundation:***

1. Easy and speedy mutual understanding.
2. Cultivation of Discipline and Mutual Respect.
3. Appointment of the right person to the right post.
4. Progress in the realm of Learning, Education, and Wisdom.
5. Economical or Financial Progress.
6. Being closer to people, thus understanding their problems better.
7. Unification of Professional Power.
8. Promptitude of usefulness in time of need.
9. War against poverty and joblessness.
10. Feasibility of establishing classes or educational centers for the younger generation.

11. This System which is based on educational and cultural progress will insure peaceful conditions between the Assyrians and other people of the lands where they reside.
12. If the Supreme Council be asked to send a delegate to the United Nations for presentation of our problems, then such a delegate will be considered as authoritative. Such a delegate's mission cannot be annulled or even weakened by disturbers, for the Supreme Council itself will not be a self-appointed body, rather the product of an orderly step-by-step election of all the people of everywhere, therefore, its authority will be genuine, formal and unopposable.

#### ***Co-Association of Related Profession and Trades***

Because of smallness of numbers among Assyrian people belonging to any Profession or Trade, a way of solution of this problem has been devised. Certain of these Foundations because of closeness of nature can co-associate for the beginning. A listing of related Profession and Trades is submitted below.

Let not this shortage of number discourage us; it is proper to mention here the saying that goes somewhat like this: "It is not the quantity that matters but quality." In the attainment of our noble purpose, the quality is the factor that we need most. A systematic coordination of our talents and capabilities, we think, is the only way to realize an effective cooperation among our people, which we doubt not will redeem us from the talons of the chaos into which we have sunk. There is no doubt, not even the size of a mustard seed, that our present system of associations and clubs, which we have been having during the last half century, has not the power to save us from the threat of eternal oblivion which settles on us gradually like a black ugly coverle of death. This present toy-system which occupies our minds and activities offers opportunities for a few selfish persons whose aim is to draw charts in which their design is nothing but personal benefits and who employ the name of an orphan nation to satiate their personal greed. Even now as we are busy with this selfless task of the compilation of this manual, we feel the gradual increase of chaos; the malady rises and swells slowly like a microbe laden dust, threatening to extinguish our fragile flame of life. This situation, more than ever, necessitates the discovery and employment of a system that would save, in our fields, the few remaining stalks of wheat from the poisonous weeds and thorn bushes that grow all around.

#### ***A Listing of Co-Association of Related Professions and Trades***

##### **Medical**

General Physicians  
Specialists  
Surgeons  
Dentists  
Anatomists  
Psychiatrists, etc.

##### **Law**

Judges  
Lawyers  
Politicians  
Other city officers



<b>Engineering</b>	<b>Commerce</b>
Construction	Manufacturers
Roads	Dealers
Bridges	Department Store
Draughtsmen, and their	Managers
Auxiliary co-operators	Brokers
	Insurance Employees
<b>Mechanical</b>	<b>Fine Arts</b>
Engineers	
Technicians	
Mechanics-Fitters, etc.	<b>Music</b>
	Composers
<b>Electrical Engineering</b>	Conductors
Engineers	Instrumentalists
Technicians	Singers
Electrical machine opera-	Music Teachers
tors, and all the auxiliary	
forces	<b>Drama and Ballet</b>
	Actors
<b>Builders</b>	Directors
Builder-Carpenters	Choreographers
Masons	Ballet Dancers
Bricklayers	Producers
Concrete-workers, etc.	Movies Personnel
<b>Clergy</b>	Painters
Bishops	Sculptors
Priests	Statuette Moulders
Pastors	Engravers
Deacons	
Elders	<b>Literacy</b>
	Authors of all subjects
<b>Natural Science</b>	Playwrights
Geography	
Topography	<b>Smithing</b>
Geology	Blacksmith
Metallurgy	Tin Smith
Oceanography	Coppersmith
Nuclear Science	
	<b>Building</b>
Meteorology and	Building Managers
Astronomy	Boiler Technicians, etc.
	<b>Vehicle Conductors</b>
	Drivers of all specifications

Further to the above listing, closer co-association can be effected temporarily between certain trades and professions. For example, various engineering departments could be brought under one heading. Similarly, all branches of the Fine Arts could co-associate until the enlargement of membership should necessitate regroupment under separate departments.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

It is with great pleasure that I observe the progress of your periodical, the Nineveh Magazine. It has taken the right path toward the nourishment of the Assyrian Culture, thereby, the zealous spirit.

May the Almighty God help you in effort and fortitude to attain the highest realms in the domain of true Assyrianism.

Yours truly,  
William Daniel  
San Jose, CA

Dear Julius:

I want to congratulate you on a job well done on Nineveh for its format and contents, specifically the last two issues where articles which appeared were written by Assyrian writers and scholars, namely David B. Perley, William Daniel, Fred Tamimi, Eden Naby, Babajan Ashouri, etc.

It is my greatest pleasure to see Assyrian history, culture, current events, etc. investigated, interpreted and written by Assyrians. I enjoyed very much reading "The Assyrians" by William Ziff. It was well delivered and is still relevant today. I am sending you some articles for your consideration. I hope that people will send articles of interest on ancient and contemporary Assyrians for Nineveh magazine.

Enclosed is a check for a year's subscription of Nineveh to my nephew, Ludwig Dooman, Woodland Hills, Calif. Keep up the good work. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
George Geevargis  
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mr. Shabbas:

Greetings and God's Blessings.

I am very grateful to you for the 10 "Ninevehs" I received in perfect condition.

I have mailed them out to my friends and relatives. I hope there will be some response as far as subscription-wise is concerned.

Here is a small offering for your kindness.

Sincerely,  
Rev. Robert Hoobyar  
Redondo Beach, CA

Editor, Nineveh:

As the only Assyrian living in Sale, I would like to subscribe for the "Nineveh" magazine. Please start sending me the "Nineveh" as soon as possible with your bill for one year subscription. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Nicola Lazarof  
Sale, Vic., Australia



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# OUR SMALLEST ALLY

## *A Brief Account of the Assyrian Nation in the Great War*

by Rev. W. A. Wigram, D.D.

### *Introductory Letter*

by Brig.-Gen. H. H. Austin, C.M.G., C.B., etc. G.O.C.

*The Refugee Camp, Baqubah, Baghdad 1918-1919*

#### *Introductory Letter*

I have been invited to write a brief introductory letter to Dr. Wigram's most interesting account of the part played by "Our Smallest Ally" in the Great War, and this I do with pleasure, as I feel that but few in England realize to what extent the small and obscure Assyrian nation helped to shoulder our burdens in the Middle East, by resisting the Turko-German aggression along the Turko-Persian frontier.

In the first place, Dr. Wigram needs no introduction from me, for his work, for more than a decade past, as a member of the Archbishop of Canterbury's mission to the Assyrians in Kurdistan and Urmi, is well known. His intimate knowledge of the country, the people, and the Syriac language places him in a unique position to deal with the subject that he has undertaken in his little pamphlet, while I can personally testify to the regard and affection in which he is held by the people whose sufferings and sacrifices he describes so graphically. It was whilst in command of the "Modern City of Refuge" at Baqubah, early in 1919, that I first had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Wigram. He then returned to Mesopotamia, after several years spent as a prisoner with the Turks in Asia Minor during the Great War, in order to place his services at the disposal of our Government in connection with the repatriation of the Assyrians—as was then hoped—to their former home. Although this hope has not yet been fulfilled, Dr. Wigram's assistance was of great value to me up to the time that I handed over the command to my successor, and we returned to England last summer. It was at Baqubah that Dr. Wigram collected the information that he now places before the public, and I think that all unbiased readers will admit, after a perusal of his pages, that "Our Smallest Ally" deserves well of the Entente nations for throwing in her lot with them, and thus sacrificing her little all in the cause of freedom.

I should here like to emphasize the point that the Assyrian mountaineers keenly felt that they had been deserted by the Russians, in the early days of the war, when they were left unaided to defend their homes against the Turks and Kurds, shortly after they had consented to fight for the Russians. Nevertheless, when these mountaineers reached their brethren in the plain of Urmi, and were again approached by the Russians, with the request that they would render assistance in Persia, they at once agreed to do so.

Two battalions of these mountaineers were organized and placed under the command of Russian officers, and became an integral part of the Russian army. Later, a third battalion was organized, under the special command of the Assyrian Patriarch. These battalions were on active service under Russian direction, and were utilized on expeditions against both Turks and Kurds, until the final dissolution of the Russian army. They then, up to July, 1918, formed part of the irregular force that defended the plains of Urmi and Salmas, and held the Turks in check on that frontier. In fourteen distinct engagements, from March to July, 1918, they defeated every Moslem force that was brought against them. Eventually, when their stock of ammunition was exhausted, and they were attacked simultaneously by Turks, Kurds, and Persians, their position about Urmi became untenable, and the flight to Hamadan commenced. Subsequently, at Hamadan and Baqubah, an Assyrian contingent was raised from these mountaineer and plain refugees, and drilled and trained by British officers and N.C.O.s. The writer has recently heard, from officers commanding this mountain battalion, of the splendid work performed by his men, who were brigaded with Indian troops during recent operations against the truculent Kurds north of Mosul, in the year 1920.

Our Smallest Ally is now homeless, and dependent on our charity at Baqubah, for its lands and villages have been utterly destroyed, and it has the further mortification of seeing—from reasons beyond our control—that although it threw in its lot with the ultimately victorious side, Kurds, and others of the defeated enemy, are in practical possession of its ruined homesteads. Such a state of things is incomprehensible to the minds of this people, but it is due to the difficulties of the country, the entire absence of food in, and the inaccessibility of their homes, for purposes of ordinary transport, coupled with the extremely disorderly political conditions of Kurdistan and North-Western Persia.

These circumstances combine to render their safe re-installment in their former lands, at present impracticable.

H. H. AUSTIN.

(Late G.O.C. Refugee Camp, Baqubah.)

February 6, 1920.

*Continued on page 24*



### *Introduction*

In the following pages we make the attempt to narrate the fortunes of a curious Oriental nationality during the Great War.

This nation, which is known as the Chaldean or Assyrian "millet" (the technical Turkish term for a nation that is also a Church), may be said to have its centre at Mosul, so far as it has a centre at all; it extends thence as far as Baghdad in the south, while to the north-east its members are found as far as Urmi, over the Persian border; and to the north-west it reaches as far as Diarbekr. It must be understood, however, that it is only one of many national types in those lands, and by no means the dominant one. It is part of the problem of all the ancient Ottoman empire (a problem that the European finds it very difficult to grasp, let alone solve), that throughout its extent differing and often hostile nationalities are mixed together like dice in a bag.

The whole "millet" is Christian, having been so from very early ages, and its Christianity is of the type called "Nestorian," a name which evokes at once certain theological problems into which we need not enter now. It has its own hierarchy, with a "Patriarch" at the head of it, its own services, and its own Church history.

Naturally, it used the same scriptures and creed as other Christians, taking the Bible in the ancient Syriac translation known to scholars as the "Pshitta." The history of the Church up to the days of the rise of Islam in these lands has been fairly thoroughly studied by Western scholars, and perhaps we may refer English readers to a work called "An Introduction to the History of the Assyrian Church," written by the author of this book, and published by the S.P.C.K.

The story of the "millet" in mediaeval times is obscure, but it is known to have extended itself as far as Travancore in the south (and, indeed, representatives of it survive there to this day), and to the heart of China in the East. There at least one ancient monument, at Singan-fu, is a testimony to the missionary activity of this Church.

The body, originally one, has been much divided ecclesiastically, though some sense of ethnic unity underlies these divisions. Considerable portions submitted to Papal jurisdiction, and formed the "Chaldean Uniat" Church, under the Patriarch of that name, who has his throne at Mosul. Another portion became "Protestant" under the influence of American missionaries, who had their headquarters at Urmi in Persia. Those in this part of the world were also more or less under the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, though it was a moot point how far this influence was political, and how far purely religious. In the mountains to the north of Mosul the people remained loyal to the ancient Church and hierarchy, and it is with this part of the nation that our narrative is principally concerned.

In these mountain districts the political position was strange and picturesque enough to merit description. The prevailing type of inhabitant was of Kurdish race (the plainsman being Arab by race and speech) and Turkish authority had never, practically speaking, extended itself into the dis-

trict at all. The reason for this was simply the extremely rugged character of the land, where no made road exists, and no wheeled vehicle can possibly go. It had not been considered worth while to really subdue the province, and it had been left as "Ashiret" or "tribal," under the rule, that is, of the local chiefs of the mountain tribes. The position was in fact not unlike that of the Scotch Highlands in the seventeenth century.

The government took what tribute it could get, when it could get it, and naturally assumed that it had full right to extend its authority in more regular fashion whenever it was convenient to do so. It even made sporadic efforts in that direction, now and then. The clans, large and small, recognised the overlordship of the Sultan in theory, reserving the right to disregard any particular order in fact. The country was a picturesque and disorderly Alsatia.

A fair proportion of these clans, and by no means the least wild among them, were Christian in religion. The only authority whom they recognised was their Patriarch, who claimed to be the real Patriarch of the whole "Chaldean" Church, though portions of it might have cast off his lawful jurisdiction. They paid their tribute through him—when they paid it—and regarded him as not only their spiritual head, but their temporal prince, or at least chief, as well. It is curious to note that here, as in Montenegro in the nineteenth century, temporal and spiritual headship were still combined, and were hereditary in one family, called that of "Mar Shimun." This was the official designation of the Patriarch.

The relations of these semi-independent Christian clansmen to their Kurdish neighbours were not more unfriendly than those of such clansmen usually are. Kurds are Moslems, but not fanatically inclined, and in "the days of our fathers" though feuds were pretty constant, they did not always follow the line of religious cleavage, and did not go very deep. "Grass soon grows over blood shed in fair battle," said a local proverb, and there were decent understandings as to what a gentleman might, and what he might not do, when he went out on the entirely laudable business of a raid against his neighbour!

Occasionally, indeed, the wars got far beyond this respectable level, and the great Raid of Bedru Khan Beg on the Christians of Tiari in 1847, and the massacres that accompanied it, are remembered still. As a rule, however, things were far from intolerable. Weapons were even, each side was accustomed to see the other bear arms, and neither wanted to break away from a reasonable understanding. There was even a disposition in many Kurds to recognise the Patriarch of their Christian neighbours as the possessor of a sort of honorary religious precedence in all Kurdistan.

In the days of Abdul Hamid, however, *i.e.* from 1878 onwards, this changed for the worse, in many ways. That potentate was disposed to pet the Kurds at large, in the hope that they would be a support for his throne. He issued them arms, winked at their acts of oppression, and generally gave them cause to look on themselves as favourites. There was, in consequence, trouble all over the mountains, much raiding against which the Christians were given opportunity



neither of redress nor of defence, and suffering for all. The Turkish revolution of 1908 gave promise of better things, but proved only a disappointment, for the Kurdish mal-practice was not stopped, and the only result of the change was the attempt to introduce that notorious plague, the Ottoman minor official, into districts where his corrupt personality had not intruded itself so far. To the old evils of a tribal state of things (from which the alleviations had been removed), there were added those of a corrupt civil service, with none of its advantages. The people began to despair, then came the general break-up of the war, and we have now to chronicle what befell this nationality in that time of trial.

## CHAPTER I

### *The Assyrian Nation in the Great War: Mountain Fighting*

We wish to put on record a small episode of the great war; an episode wholly unimportant both politically and strategically, in that it was but a "side-show" to greater events; namely, the British expedition to Mesopotamia, and the Russian operations in trans-Caucasia and Armenia: events that were themselves no more than side-shows to the main drama of the colossal struggle. Yet this episode is nevertheless worthy of record, and that not only from the point of view of those who previously felt an interest in the fortunes of the tiny national and religious community concerned, but on account of its picturesque character, and for its deep human interest.

Elsewhere, the stage is so vast that it dwarfs all but a very few of the figures who appear upon it, unless the view is purposely limited to some points of detail to the exclusion of all main questions; but here the relative smallness and unimportance of the theatre allow the characters to appear in something like their normal proportions.

#### **August, 1914**

The beginning of the war in August, 1914, meant for the Assyrians of the mountains of Kurdistan the beginning of a period of absolute isolation and suspense. The Patriarch, Mar Shimun, who had been summoned from Qudshanis (Kochanes) to Van on some government business, to confer with the Vali of that capital, returned with many promises of redress of all grievances, but with the expectation (justified both by experience and the event), that nothing would be done. The clouds grew steadily more black; a general massacre of all Christians was openly threatened, and actual massacres of Armenians (small in comparison with what was to happen later), were reported from all sides. There was fighting on the Turko-Persian border in districts of Tergawar and Margawar, between the turbulent local Christians and the Beg-zade Kurds of that country, and at the beginning of November the expected happened, and Turkey actually entered the war. The event was immediately celebrated by free leave and licence being issued to the Kurds to sack the Christian villages of Albaq, near Bashkala, under the eyes of the Ottoman local authority.

#### **December, 1914**

The first fighting, however, took place in Persia, a country which the Turks had determined to regard (and that not altogether without excuse) as a Russian province. Regular Ottoman troops and Kurdish irregulars swept over the border, drove the Christian clans from Tergawar, and came down towards Urmi, intending to occupy that place and call on the Shiah Mussalman population to forget all feuds in Islam, and join with them in the Jihad which had been already proclaimed. There were Russian troops in Urmi, forming what was, in theory, a strong consular guard; and there were also, as now appeared, considerable stores of rifles, which were given out to the men of Tergawar, from whom it was possible to enrol two good fighting battalions; still, though these fought well, the odds in numbers were against them, and the invaders swept on till they were in actual occupation of Charbash, a Christian village barely a mile from the obsolete mud walls of Urmi town. In absolute confidence of victory, the Kurdish troops threw away their reserves of bread, being told by their officers, "You will not need them, for you will be eating fresh bread in Urmi tomorrow." In the event, however, the well-timed arrival of a small Russian reinforcement saved the situation; the expected attack proved a costly failure, and the Kurds were glad to get back to their hills before the winter set in, as usual, "between the Christmases" of 1914.\*

Urmi considered itself as saved, particularly when the Russian column went down south to Saj Bulak to inflict a severe defeat upon a second Kurdish force at Dol, and clear that district also.

#### **January, 1915**

The Russian officers, however, were uneasy, having their eye on the general position in the Caucasus, and would not pledge themselves to a permanent occupation, saying to the American missionaries, "We can only promise that if we do have to evacuate, we will give you ample warning." This disappointment was followed by a staggering blow, for on the very day after the promise had been given, the amazed Americans found the whole Russian force in full retreat on Russia, leaving the people whom they had just rescued to the mercy of their enemies. To do the Russian general justice, the order was a great, and almost as unpleasant, a surprise to him as to the men of Urmi; for it came from the highest command, and was dictated by the very threatening state of things in Trans-Caucasia, where Enver Pasha, at the head of the main Turkish Army, was threatening Batum. It is true that the danger was soon averted by the utter defeat of the Turkish invasion at Sara Kamish, but the fact was of no benefit to the Christians of Urmi. The Russians had gone, and did not intend to return for the time.

#### **March, 1915**

Panic ruled in the unhappy city. All Christians who were able to do so followed in the track of the retiring Russians and fled to Russia, about 10,000 finding safety in this way. The various mission yards, particularly the American, were

\*The Oriental Christmas falls thirteen days later than the European.



crowded with refugees, and the attitude of the local Mussalmans soon became very threatening. There was, indeed, no general massacre, nor was there any second Kurdish invasion as yet. It is probable that the local magnates were by no means desirous to see either Turk or Kurd in their district. If, however, there was no general massacre there were plenty of small ones. On one occasion some sixty men were marched out of the city to the village of Gulpashin,\* and there all put to death.

Among these martyrs was the Bishop, Mar Dinkha. Previously this man had been regarded in a serio-comic aspect at best. A Bishop who stopped when reading the service, to spell the next word; who brought a village rector—caught ploughing his glebe on Sunday—to a sense of the error of his ways by thrashing him with the pastoral staff till that symbol of office broke in two, could hardly be taken seriously.

But when that same man, crippled by brutal treatment, crawled from captive to captive in prison to administer spiritual consolation, he could be viewed in a new and more apostolic light. When we hear that at the last he stood encouraging each man who was led to death till his own turn came, we can put him on the level of some of his greatest fourth-century predecessors, and ask whether some Anglican prelates might not exchange their scholarship for that man's death.

There was another but rather smaller slaughter on the "hill of the Jews" in the village of Charbash. Worst of all, however, was the fate that befell some seventy Christians of Gawar, who had been forcibly impressed and brought down by the invading Turks to act as human baggage animals on their march, and left behind on their precipitate retreat. These poor wretches were marched out by the local gendarmerie to the hill known as Kala Ismail Agha, several miles from Urmi, and there tied up in bunches and handed over to a gang of Kurds to be knifed or clubbed to death. Their bodies were left to the jackals, till such time as an American missionary (Mr. Allen) was able to give the bones decent burial.

In all of these horrors, the moving spirit was a local nobleman of education, Mejid es Sultaneh, who had in old days been distinguished as a friend of all foreigners, and to some extent as the protector of Christians, or at least of those who were his own feudal tenants. He had been accustomed to say (with perfect truth) that it was of no use to talk about reform in Persia until such time as the Shah had been persuaded to hang a Seyyid on every tree round Urmi, for those privileged "descendants of the prophet" were a standing obstacle to all improvement. In fact, some rather mis-timed zeal in this direction had brought about his exile, at which time he received great kindness both from British merchants and British officials. He was even allowed to take refuge at the British consulate at Tabriz. How it came about that a sojourn at Tiflis converted a rather free-thinking Anglophil into a pan-Islamic fanatic, we do not profess to explain, but such was undoubtedly the fact. Generally, the winter of 1914-15 was a black one in Urmi.

## April, 1915

In the mountains the case was different, for here the Turks were really anxious to avoid trouble with the Christians for the moment. The disaster of Sara Kamish had put a stop to all ideas of an invasion of Russian territory, and a Russian advance on Van and Erzerum was at least probable. If that should take place, the position of the mountain Assyrians on the flank of such an advance was important, and there were political reasons for gaining their loyalty as well. The Armenian massacres were now in full swing, and the presence of the American missionaries in the land made it impossible to conceal them altogether. The Turks were resolved to continue them (Talaat, then Minister of the Interior, and later Grand Vizir, had declared that he meant to "settle this Armenian question for the next fifty years at least"), but the policy needed concealment and apology, and it would be an obvious advantage to be able to say, "Here is a Christian millet that has such confidence in our justice, that it has thrown its lot in with us in this war of its own accord." Hence very high bids were made for what the Turks called Assyrian loyalty, and the Assyrians, with their old ideas of a shadowy independence, called alliance. They were to have absolute freedom for education, were to be given good guns, with salaries for their Patriarch, for all their bishops, and for their mountain chiefs. Promises, in fact, were cheap, and the Turk was lavish of them; and there is no doubt that a party in the nation were desirous of accepting them. They could argue, with perfect truth, that the adherence of so small a nation to the cause of the Entente could make no difference to them; and that they themselves, placed as they were absolutely in the jaws of the wolf, would never be blamed for making terms for themselves in the time of peril. Thus for a time things were in suspense. There was no fighting, but a good deal of dread of the future; and as a precaution the patriarchal family, and later the Patriarch himself, left the isolated village of Qudshanis, and went down to the Ashiret district of Diz, and to the relative safety of its rugged mountains.

In the spring of 1915, events forced the momentous decision on the nation: the Russian advance commenced, and what was left of the city of Van fell into their hands. It was a town of ruins: for it had been the scene of desperate fighting between the Armenian Tashnakists and the government troops, and the theatre of some of the most awful massacres of that awful time. The great American mission, among other buildings, had been destroyed. Now, however, in April, it fell into Russian hands, and the conquerors sent down a deputation to Bashkala and Julamerk, calling on the mountaineers to rise and fight for the Christians against the Mussalmans who had proclaimed the general "Jihad." At about the same time the Russians re-occupied Urmi, where peace and amnesty was proclaimed, and a time of relative safety began for all the inhabitants. The men of the mountains had now to make their definite choice.

\*All were offered life on condition of acceptance of Islam. Two only accepted, and these both reverted afterwards and faced death for their faith.



# *IN SOLEMN MEMORY OF THE ASSYRIAN MARTYRS' DAY AUGUST 7*

Jacob Malek Zadeh

*Persecution does not make the just man to suffer, nor does  
oppression destroy him if he is on the right side of Truth.  
Socrates smiled as he took poison, and Stephen smiled as  
he was stoned. What truly hurts is our conscience that  
aches when we oppose it, and dies when we betray it.*  
— Kahlil Gibran

*We must be ever on the search for some persons whom we  
shall love and who will love us in return; for if good will  
and affection are taken away, every joy is taken from life.*  
— Cicero

*The light of stars that were extinguished ages ago still  
reaches us. So it is with great men who died centuries ago,  
but still reach us with the radiations of their personality.*  
— Kahlil Gibran

*Be it granted to me to behold you again in dying,  
Hills of home! and to hear again the call;  
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the peewees crying,  
And hear no more at all.*  
— Robert Louis Stevenson

*We are not forced into unpleasant activities. We either  
allow them to come about or we encourage them to come  
about.*  
— William Saroyan



صَدْرُهُ : فِي قَهْرِهِ يَلْتَدُّ

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يُخْتَارُ مِنْهُ جَمَاهِيرُ الْكَلِمَاتِ عَلَى مَا فِيهَا مِنْ حَقَائِقِ الْأَعْيَانِ وَتَحْصِيْلُهَا بِمَعْنَى

دعوتی: اقصاء لہجہ، فیلڈ ہنس، نکس دیوی دیوی، لہجہ، ضلع، جسٹس۔

نہیہ جصلیہ دلا حاکم. جصلیہ جہ دیکھ دہندہ دیکھتے لایہ جہ

هفتم، ابتدا چند پیلای کوچک و یک پیلای بزرگ در کنار هم قرار داده شد و به کمک آن‌ها

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مبلغ جدید ۵۰۰ و اصل ۱۵۰/- ریال است. بقیه ۱۵۰ ریال جدید و ۵۰۰ ریال.

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ أَبِي بَكْرٍ -

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William Daniel  
1941 Hamilton Avenue  
San Jose, CA 95125  
408-377-9800











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הַיְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמְרֵנוּ וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת כָּל אֲמָרֵינוּ

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١-٢٠٠٥ ج ١، لاجبة، ١٠٠٠-١٠٠٠

בְּ-כָל-חַצְוֵהוּ יִשְׁמַע לְפָנָיו בְּ-לֵב-חַדְשׁוֹ מִן-הַמִּצְוֹת.

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הַגִּבּוֹר לַחֲסִידָא

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א - אשכול - אשכול

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ذی: ( ص ۳۳۶ ) ذبیحہ کے لئے:

(1) - כללך. דת. ימי אמונה. נכסך. כספך. סוף. מלך. יצחק.  
לכבודי. מלך. כבודי. מלך. יצחק. יצחק.

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(1) - اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ وَسَلِّمْ وَبَارِكْ عَلَى سَيِّدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ

סדר פזמונים : סדר דברים : סדר תהלים : סדר

כִּי יִשְׁמַחַם . כִּי יִשְׁמַחַם . כִּי יִשְׁמַחַם .

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3. יְהוָה יִשְׁמַרְכֶּם (בְּלִילֵי) וְיִשְׁמַרְכֶּם יְהוָה בְּלִילֵי יְהוָה

למנוחה גדולה ופזמונים : בשר שלישי - למנוחה :

מסמך . מכתב . פתק . חשבון . פנקס . פנקס . פנקס .

ל - וְאֵת הַכֹּהֲנִים בְּיָמֵינוּ כִּי יִשְׁפָּטוּם

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