

*Established 1964*



# NINEVEH

Publication of the Assyrian Foundation of America

Volume 33, Number 1; First Quarter ♦ 2010



**See Page 18**

**Cultural - Educational - Social**

# NINEVEH

Volume 33, Number 1, 2010

Editor: Dr. Ninwe Maraha  
Editorial Staff: Dr. Robert Karoukian  
Firas Jatou  
Dr. Joel Elias  
Tobia Giwargis  
Sargon Shabbas, Circulation

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Articles submitted for publication will be selected by the editorial staff on the basis of their relative merit to Assyrian literature, history, and current events.

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Assyrian Foundation of America established in June 1964 and incorporated in the state of California as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to the advancement of the education of Assyrians.

Address letters to:

The Editor  
NINEVEH  
P.O. Box 2660  
Berkeley, California 94702

## Annual Subscription

U.S.A.....\$ 20.00  
CANADA.....\$ 25.00  
OVERSEAS.....\$ 30.00

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the first story of the Biblical Flood explained in the Epic of Gilgamesh. In this very same library texts were found about the Epic of Creation "Enuma Elish" (Akkadian "When in the Highest") recorded in cuneiform on seven tablets, referring to seven generations in the creation of the universe and human kind, similar to the text of the seven days of creation in the Old Testament's Book of Genesis.

The contents of this library are considered to be the main portal to Assyriology and the beginning of the discovery of all the writings that have been later distorted, encompassing human thought for 2000 years. The contents of this monumental library have scientifically replaced the Torah which was considered for many centuries the sole historic reference to the area.

In the middle of the 19th century scientist Henry Rawlinson was able to decipher and read the cuneiform script, then George Smith shocked the Torah school of thought around the world when he was able to read and interpret the Babylonian Epic of The Flood in 1872. The similarities between the religion of Assyria and that of the Torah's legends astonished even the Jewish scholars at the discovery of the Assyrian cuneiform written tablets. Thus the phrase "Mesopotamian Torah" was given, and those scientists had to face a fierce confrontation by the western Churches and Jews, which resulted in the disappearance of many important tablets.

Scientist Fredrich Dellitch mentions how he lectured on the topic of the Mesopotamian Torah in Berlin on 13 December 1902 in the presence of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The monarch asked him to repeat it in the Royal Palace, so he presented his lecture entitled "Babylon & the Bible", where he explained that the stories of the Bible were taken from Assyria, creating a huge clamor within the European media, which caused Dellitch to receive threats from some Jewish Rabbis and was severely reprimanded by western Churches.

Few of the neighboring peoples to the Assyrian homeland know about Neesan (April), its connotations, both cultural and national to the Assyrian people as well as its philosophical background for all of humanity. Generally, today's Assyrians consider the month of Neesan as God's blessed month, exactly as it was considered for thousands of years before, when the belief was that behind nature's revival was the Lord of the gods' descent to earth, then battling with the evil gods and defeating them and finally marrying the goddess Ishtar, thus reviving nature and the beginning of Spring.

The Sumerians called this feast "Akiti Zigorku", but in Assyrian it was called "Rish-Sateen" (The Beginning Of the New Year). Even today, the month of Neesan is scientifically considered the real beginning to the cycle of life

on earth, for in March/April, nature begins to renew and revive itself and not in January.

In the Assyrian cities (Babylon, Nineveh and the rest) the Epic of "Enuma Elish" was considered the ritual reading which embodied the Lord of the gods' eternal existence, the beginning and the purpose of life. This is considered one of the oldest Epic legends in history which was recited in the temple of Mardukh, "Esagila" (Magnificent House), that was done on the fourth day of Akitu (Assyrian New Year's festivities in Babylon lasting twelve days following the night of the equinox between 19-21 of March).

The prelude to the Epic of Enuma Elish mentions in the first tablet the beginning of the first generation when the earth didn't exist and was nameless. The universe was represented by the male element; Apso (god of fresh waters), the female element Tiamat (goddess of salty waters) and Mammu (god of clouds) which moved between them (note here the exact similarity in day one of Genesis 1:1-2).

Then in the sixth generation, the god Mardukh (Ashur for the Assyrians of Nineveh) creates "Lallu" (human) to serve the gods so that they may rest in the seventh generation (exactly as when God created a human on the sixth day, and rested on the seventh, Genesis 2:2-3). Briefly, the story of Creation is about the goddess Tiamat which takes the form of a dragon "Habur" which swims in the seas, wanted to get rid of her bothersome grand-children in order to enjoy a peaceful time with her husband Apso, so she summons the scary beasts for a battle. Then comes Mardukh (Ashur) and battles her until he's victorious, then divides the waters Tiamat into two parts, creating the heavens with its stars and planets, while he makes the earth with the second part where he creates animals and plants (as in the Torah, Genesis 1:6 when God separates between the waters and creates heaven and earth) When Mardukh finishes with all that, he creates a pair of humans with blood and mud, then Mardukh builds a house on earth so that he may rest whenever he descends to earth in April (exactly as the Lord of hosts builds a house in Israel (II Samuel 7:1-17) The phrase "Lord's tent" is found in the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh -where the Torah's story of the Flood was taken in the person of Noah after the Babylonian "Ziosodra" & the Sumerian "Utemapeshtim").

### **Neesan Festivities in Nineveh and Babylon Before the Time of Jesus Christ**

(Some general ideas about the ancient Assyrian mythology)

The following brief picture about the festivities can give the reader an idea of how the ceremonies of the Assyrian New Year were conducted in Babylon and Nineveh. Here we learn about the concept of the Lord of gods, Mardukh in Babylon and Ashur in Nineveh. The festivities of the Babylonian Assyrian New Year (Akitu) were held starting

on the first night of spring equinox, and they included prayers, massive religious plays as the priests would use figure representations of the gods as a medium of expression. The program of the festivities would be as follows:

**1st to 3rd Day:** Purifying souls: The priest of Easagila (Marduk's house) would recite solemn prayers with the other priests and the people would answer with equally woeful prayers which expressed humanity's fear of the unknown. That is why the high priest would head every day to the Esagila asking for Marduk's forgiveness, begging him to protect Babylon, his holy city. This prayer was called "The Secret of Esagila".

**4th Day:** The same rituals would be followed as in the previous three days. Then at night the Epic of Creation "Enuma Elish" would be recited, telling the story of how the universe and the four seasons were created, how all gods united in god Marduk following his victory over Tiamat the dragon. The recitation of this Epic was considered the beginning of preparations for the submission of the king of Babylon before Marduk on the fifth day of Akitu.



Assyrians celebrating Assyrian New Year– Akitu – in Qamishly, Syria, 6760 (2010).

mission of the king of Babylon before Marduk. The king would enter to the Esagila accompanied by the priests. They would approach the altar where the high priest of the Esagila impersonates Marduk then he approaches the king, begins to strip him of his jewelry, scepter and even his crown then he would slap him hard while the latter would kneel and begin to pray asking for Marduk's forgiveness. The king would then ask: "I have not sinned O Lord of the

universe, and I haven't neglected your heavenly might at all"... Then the priest in the role of Marduk repeats: "Don't be afraid of what Marduk has to say, for he will hear your prayers, extends your power, and increase the greatness of your reign". After this the king would stand up and the priest would give him back his jewelry, scepter and crown then slap him hard again hoping for the king to shed tears. Shedding of a king's tear expressed greater submission to Marduk and respect for the monarch's power. Returning the crown to the king meant his power was renewed by Marduk, thus Neesan would be considered not only the revival of nature and life but also to the State as well. Thus, these ceremonies would make the greatest and most feared personalities of that time (kings of Babylon and Nineveh) submit to the greatest god, and live a moment of humiliation with all the population, sharing prayers to prove their faith before the Mighty God.

Following a brief presence in his earthly home in Babylon and renewing the king's power, god Marduk remained in the "netherworld mountain" -- a tower composed of seven floors, known in the Old Testament as the Tower of Babylon. In the Old Testament God dwells on a similar "mountain" (Psalms 74:2). During this day according to the tradition of Akitu, Marduk would enter his dwelling and is surprised by the evil gods who will fight him, and then he's taken prisoner and waits for arrival of his son god Nabu who would save him from "Nough" and restores his glory.

**6th Day:** The arrival of god Nabu in boats accompanied by his assistants of brave gods coming from Nippur, Uruk, Kish and Eridu (cities in the south of today's Iraq). The gods accompanying Nabu would be represented by statues which would be mounted on boats made especially for the occasion. Here the people in huge numbers would begin their walk behind their king towards the Esagila where Marduk is held prisoner, chanting the following: "Here's he who's coming from far to restore the glory of our imprisoned father".

**7th Day:** On the third day of his imprisonment Nabu frees Marduk. The evil gods had closed a huge gate behind him when he entered his dwelling. Marduk would be fighting till Nabu's arrival, when he would break in the huge gate and a battle would go on between the two groups, until Nabu comes out victorious and frees Marduk.

**8th Day:** When Marduk is set free, the statues of the gods are gathered in the Destinies Hall "Upshou Ukkina", to liberate his destiny. Then it's decided to join all the forces of the gods and bestow them upon Marduk. Here, the king implores all the gods to support and honor Marduk, and this tradition was an indication that Marduk received submission from all the gods and was unique in his position.

**9th Day:** The victory procession to the "House of Akitu"



Assyrians kept their beliefs even during Alexander's time and also during the rule of his successors(331-126 B.C). During this time **the** Babylonian historian Berossos(Bar Aasha) compiled Babylon's history from 3600 B.C to the rule of Alexander in his famous book "Babyloniaca" in three volumes, responding to a request from king Antiochus II who ruled Babylon(261-247 B.C.). Berossos taught as well in Athens where he composed the book of "Wisdom". He was respected by the Greeks who sculptured a statue of him in his honor and made its tongue of gold. It's worthy here mentioning that Berossos during his days was the priest of the Esagila (Mardukh's House). The book "Babyloniaca" became a source of learning to the Greeks, following the letters of Herodotus and Alexander. The Greeks obtained a lot of the Assyrian sciences in the fields of religion, astrology, time measurement, calculation and mathematics, the most important one being that of Euclid in mathematical geometry which is taught till today in schools and universities around the world because it's considered as one of the basics in the science of mathematics.

**Neesan Festivities After the Advent of Christianity**  
(Some Assyrian festivals inherited since the Assyrian Empire)

The new testament mentions that the Apostle Peter visited Babylon and established a church there ( I Peter 5:13).The Assyrians were the first to embrace Christianity for they found in Christ's person the "Saviour" that they celebrated for, and also the new faith had many similarities with the religion of their forefathers:

1- The Oneness of the unseen God.

2- The tradition in the Land of Ashur about Mardukh (Ashur) who descends to earth and battles evil. He is then imprisoned in the earthly mountain and liberated on the third day. Life resumes with a new covenant, and as we have seen Mardukh(Ashur) was imprisoned by the evil gods on the fifth and liberated on the seventh day (that is on the third day of his imprisonment).

3- In Babylon the king takes over the role of Mardukh's servant during "Akitu"; while in the Assyrian inscriptions, on the sixth day of Akitu, the king of Nineveh's role dif-

fers from that of his Babylonian brother. The latter assumes this role if the hero Ninurta(Storm God)who takes revenge for Ashur and saves him after three days, exactly as Christ the Lord conquers death on the third day during a strong "Storm". Death in ancient philosophy especially that of Assyria, was considered as a form of imprisonment.

4- The beginning of Spring following Christ's Resurrection, as Spring begins when Mardukh (Ashur) is freed from darkness.

5- Mardukh's return to his upper house (Heaven) after his liberation and meeting with the gods (11th Day) just as Christ ascended to heaven following His Resurrection, then later meeting His Apostles.

6- The existence for the Babylonians of the idea of a holy trinity which was composed of Ea (god of the seas and Mardukh's father), Anu (god of heavens) and Enlil (god of the atmosphere and earth).

7- Baptism in Christianity, where the idea of cleansing sins inherited from "Nusard-El" which was considered as a tradition of sprinkling water in the path of the god Dumuzi. This tradition had a great part during Akitu alongside the celebrations of Mardukh's(Ashur) freedom, the Assyrians would sprinkle each other with water to wash away their sins before welcoming the god Dumuzi after his liberation from Arshkigal the goddess of death. The Assyrians still celebrate this tradition today by sprinkling water on each other and in the streets. Also known as

"Nusardel" on this day special prayers are recited in the Assyrian churches. St. John the Baptist while washing the people in the River Jordan asks: "Repent Ye For the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

Many Assyrian and non-Assyrian clergy admit to these similarities but not in public, however, at the altar the Old Testament is considered the book that tells about the New Testament, and that is to preserve an old Church tradition which was followed

considering the Torah as a prophecy to the coming of Christ. This tradition began in the Church of the East in the first centuries A.D at the schools of Urhai (Edessa) and Nisibin (Nisibis) which were considered the oldest



Assyrian celebrating Assyrian New Year - Akitu - in Iraq, 6760 (2010).

"Universities" in the world. The western Churches consider the Torah as a prelude to the Christian religion. However, the Torah contributes to the distortion of history by presenting the Assyrians as an impious people, while on the other hand it glorified Jews presenting them as a pious, tormented people and this has played an important role besides the Holocaust during the Second World War and the establishment of the State of Israel in the 20th century.



Although the Assyrians gave up their Akitu celebrations in favor of their Christian faith, they still considered Neesan as the month of renewal and resurgence. It has become a more simple festivity as until recently in the Assyrian villages girls would gather flowers and herbs on the first day of Neesan and suspend them under the house's roof, as a joyful expression to the arrival of the month of plenty and the revival of life and nature. These bouquets of flowers were called "Deqna D'Nissan" (Neesan's Beard). Also the villagers would gather their children in pairs of brides and grooms; then those children would visit every house, where they would be offered different sorts of sweets and these visits would last till night fall then they would gather to share and eat a popular meal made especially for the occasion. This tradition had its roots in the tenth day of Akitu when the god Ashur would marry the goddess Ishtar before they ascend to heaven on the eleventh day. On this same day the king and the high priestess as mentioned before would enact the holy marriage, and this feast is known today as "Kalou D'Soulaqa" (Bride of the Ascension).

However, with the resurgence of political parties within the modern Assyrian national movement it was decided to celebrate the Assyrian New Year on the first day of April (the 10th or the 12th of Akitu according to the equinox). The celebrations took a special tradition of public processions, festivals, patriotic and traditional songs, where the celebrants gather in every country in great numbers and go out to the fields where nature renews itself. April First is considered a nationalistic celebration for we rarely see an Assyrian who doesn't celebrate it. This day along with Assyrian Martyr's Day (August 07th) [An-Nahar newspaper 09/08/2001] are considered to be a national duty for all Assyrians wherever they are. They provide an occasion to

affirm the modern Assyrian existence. The Assyrian New Year became a point of continuation for the Assyrian national identity over the centuries in spite of all the persecutions the Assyrians faced beginning with the Fall of Nineveh (612 B.C) and the Fall of Babylon (539 B.C) followed by religious persecutions when they embraced Christianity and the organized massacres of the 20th century in Turkey and Iran (1915-1918) and the political persecutions in Iraq (1920-1933). These persecutions continue even today with the policy of arabization & kurdification under the Iraqi regime and the government of the so-called "Province Of Kurdistan". Interestingly both regimes are founded on the ruins of Assyrian monuments.

The Assyrians of today still keep many of the ancient festivals which they inherited from their forefathers even if they are celebrated in simpler ways. Some of the celebrations (Nusardel, Nineveh Fast) became a part of the liturgical celebrations, distinguishing Assyrians once again from their neighbors, for these festivals are celebrated distinctively by the Assyrians and the Church played a great role in preserving some of the Assyrian traditions over the centuries.

The joy of these celebrations has diminished in the Assyrian villages due to the instability and oppressive practices towards the Assyrians who face a war of eradication of their identity in their own homeland. This has also increased their rate of emigration. The greater level of association with people of different cultures than Assyrian and in the Diaspora where they live in areas far from each other has obviously contributed to the dispersion of the Assyrian identity, particularly within the Arab and Kurdish majorities in Assyria.



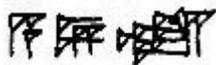
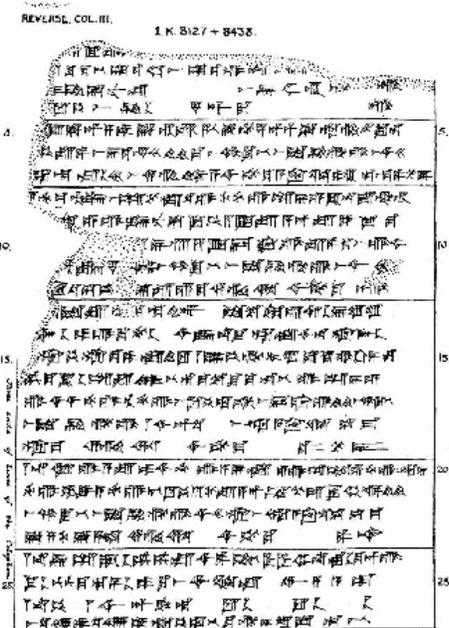
syria. For example, Ashipus crushed adaru-poplar seed (which contain salicylic acid, missing the acetyl group found in aspirin) to treat patients suffering from headaches. Amazing!!

These are but a few examples of the medical advancements ancient Assyrians made but still go relatively unnoticed. Having worked in the healthcare industry and knowing the various challenges involved, I find what our ancestors did to be both fascinating and a tremendous source of pride. I feel it proves that ancient Assyria was truly an advanced civilization and one of the clear pioneers in the area of medicine and so should be recognized. And one of proofs of how advanced is that these contributions were made thousands of years and have stood the test of time.

### Assyrian Medical Tablet

Tablet K.8127+8439 [Plate AM-90 No. #1]  
REVERSE COL. III

[Starting on Line 20] . . . If ditto, hellebore, **seed of Can-nabis**, \*mint, the kazallu-plant, seed of \*Solanurn, seed of daisy, together three grains each in honey of the mountains, oil and kurunnu-beer thou shalt mix, let it stand under the stars, in the morning before the sun he shall drink, stand on bitumen, look on lapis, cinnabar (carnelian), gold, silver, and he shall be freed. [Next Section] Line 24



[AM-90 #1 (K.8127 + 8438) Line 20]

Source: British Museum

## ASSYRIAN NAMES

### Boys names

- Bareil = Child/creation of El/god
- Barsin = Child/creation of Sin/Moon-god
- Elyamo = God of the Sea
- Giliana = Revelation; appearance; manifestation
- Mardokh = God of Babel/Babylon, God of sun, water, vegetation, magic etc.
- Nemrud = City of Assyria
- Sin = Moon
- Barshaina = Son of peace
- Gilgamesh = Sumerian king of city Uruk: 1/3 human and 2/3 god
- Anshar = Male principal
- Lamassu = Protective spirit in the form of Assyrian winged human-headed bull and lion colossi
- Lebario = Lion-hearted
- Enkidu = Friend of Gilgamesh
- Ur-Nammu = King of Ur
- Akkad = A region north of Sumer, included Babylon, Kish and Nippur
- Adad = Weather/Storm-god
- Rimush = King
- Ninurta = God of farmers and warriors

### Girls names

- Ishtar = Goddess of Love (Akkadian) and of Babylon
- Inanna = Goddess of Love (Sumerian)
- Simta = Created
- Romrama = Greatness; exaltation
- Marganitha = Jewel
- Ninsun = Mother of Gilgamesh, Great Queen
- Nisaba = Grain-goddess; Goddess of writing, accounting and scribal knowledge
- Babylonia = City of Babel/ Babylon (fem.)
- Mimra = poetry; speech; discourse; sermon
- Ornina = fair
- Sbartha = derived from Patience
- Talita = fem. for student
- Shufrin = derived from beauty
- Nisha = goal
- Lilya = night
- Diyala = Assyrian region in Iraq
- Izla = from sugar cane (straw)
- Berolin = Pearl





# Presidio Dance Theater

## Interview with Judy George Breitschnider

By Tamara Odisho Benjamin, CA  
 Pictures by www.pkbvisions.com

Presidio Performing Arts Foundation's (PPAF) mission is to preserve and present folkloric dance, music, and theater traditions in their historical context with a perspective that deepens impressions and knowledge of peoples, culture and art, creating an eloquent means of joining together performing arts, collective wisdom and social justice. The school is located in San Francisco, California. Their website is: <http://www.presidiodance.org/>

*Tamara: How did you decide to create the Presidio Dance Theater?*

Judy: I created the Presidio Performing Arts Foundation to help underserved children



have the chance to dance. I created an afterschool program, which is held in 3 SF districts, and also a scholarship program for students at The School of Presidio Dance Theatre

*Tamara: Do you have a background in dance?*

Judy: I've always loved dancing....from a little girl at the Assyrian parties....I studied tap but my passion was for piano and I was a student at the SF Conservatory of Music. I then continued in college as a piano minor.

*Tamara: How long has it been in existence?*

Judy: I started in 1997, and became a non-profit in 1998.

*Tamara: Who attends the school?*

Judy: From 2 years through seniors, we have classes for all ages and many dance specialties.

*Tamara: What types of programs do you offer?*

Judy: We have Presidio Dance Theatre, an adult professional production company; Presidio Dance Theatre Junior Company, middle-high school pre-professional











# Moussa (Moshe) Malki

## An Assyrian Artist

Brussels, Belgium

By Joula Malki

Originally Assyrian (from the south-east region of Turkey, Tur-Abdin) his family had to flee their land following the massacres carried out by Sultan Abdul Hamid II from 1894 to 1896. These massacres left more than 100 000 dead (La Libre Belgique, 20th of August 1933; " An international crime: the Assyrian tragedy") as well as the genocide from 1915-1917 which annihilated the Christians of the Ottoman Empire and forced hundreds of thousands of Assyrians to flee for their survival. Moussa Malki was born in 1954 in Syria, a country artificially created from a colonial split of Assyria at the First World War. Son of an agricultural family, he created his first drawings at the primary school of his village at the age of six.

After his studies in the fine arts, at the prestigious Academy of Damascus in the late 70s, where he specialized in painting techniques, sculpture, architecture and drawing, he rigorously perfected the specific techniques of engraving and lithographs on metal, wood and linoleum. Having brilliantly submitted his theses, with the theme "The research of immortality" he worked for two years with professor Fathi (personal studio-Damascus).

Since 1986, he splits his time between teaching in artistic circles and his irresistible need to explore different types of painting and artistic shapes. His paintings are diversely created using conventional natural or chemical colors. He also hand-crafts his own wood blocks for his prints on fabric. The major theme of his work is the sharing of the Assyrian-Syrian cultural heritage with our contemporary civilization. Each one of his creations is unique and original.

Married and father to three children, he resides since 2003 in Belgium where he fervently pursues his quest for freedom of expression.

### Main Exhibitions:

- 1989 Goteborg (Sweden)
- 1993 Berne-Schiller Gallery (Switzerland)
- 1994 Alep-Khanji Galerie (Syria)
- 1994 Frauenfeld (Switzerland)
- 1995 Damascus-Goethe Institut (Syria)
- 1995 Beirut-Tourism Ministry (Lebanon)
- 2000 Damascus-Al Bahl Gallery (Syria)



- 2000 Damascus-Goethe Institut (Syria)
- 2001 and 2002 Amsterdam-The Free University of Amsterdam (Holland)
- 2006 Brussels-Gallery of the Giraffe (Belgium)
- 2007 Brussels-St Michel and Gudule Cathedral (Belgium)
- 2008 Brussels-Gallery of the Giraffe (Belgium)
- 2009 Louvain-la-Neuve UCL -Forum des Halles (Belgium)
- 2009 Brussels-St Michel and Gudule Cathedral (Belgium)



The artist Moussa (Moshe) Malki

This is written about Moussa Malki by a Professor of History of Art, Afif Bahnassi, Academy of fine arts and Architecture of Damascus, Syria:

For those who would like to return to the roots of the contemporary art world, the works of Moussa Malki constitute the clearest example of this return, whether in his way of taking on the plastic arts or in

his technique, which he borrowed from the traditional art of printing which accompanied the development of the plastic arts from the Assyrian era till today. The arts developed over centuries, starting in the across literature, up to the current traditions to which the majority of the inhabitants of the Tigris and Euphrates Basin are still attached. Across the authentic artistic beauty which has attained, with Moussa Malki, a clear degree of success, he shows that authentic art is not only still alive, but still evolving and in full creativity, even now.

One discovers in the works of Moussa Malki a world of colors and rhythms which are not created by a pen or a sword but multiple impressions, thus spreading awe and surprise. If one could stay quite in front of the works of this artist, sight and sound contribute as much to the reading of the works as the imagination, and these form a necessary whole for understanding the legendary symbols and colors applied to the white background. The canvas becomes a scene on which colors and lines dance to which spectators can only reply by raising to rejoin this spectacle to partake with the work in the company of the artist, to feel with him what he lives to create his work.

Moussa Malki comes from the land where History and civilization are born and the authentic aspect of his work represents, in a way, the cultural similarities of an Oriental fringe historically linked to the Occident; a dialogue between close civilizations.

(Continued from page 17)

need borders to represent a nation but a strong unity of people. Other nationalistic pieces performed were *Ya Umta, Ya Yema (O Motherland)*, *Ghooyama (Revolution)*, *Atouraya Khata (The New Assyrian)*, and *Ghoom Ya Jvangha (Rise, O Young Assyrian)*. Another concert followed in Turlock in 2009.

Among all his passionate and busy years of music, Nebu has always been an advocate of good health through sound diet and sports. While in his native Iran, he competed actively in soccer and table tennis tournaments, as well as being an accomplished bodybuilder. But his sport interests did not stop there, as he placed first in the 50k and 250k cycling races several times in his native Iran. His most significant, if not most dangerous feat, however, was as an accomplished mountain climber. His highest peak achieved was Mount Damavand, the highest volcano in all of Asia, and not to mention, the highest point in the Middle East. Today, he still finds time for jogging and walking.

Currently, Nebu and his wife, Eglantin, reside in San Jose, where he continues to build the awareness of Assyrian and Western classical music through his private teaching of piano and violin. Nebu's efforts over the past decades have had one goal in common: to promote our nation's culture through the international language of music.

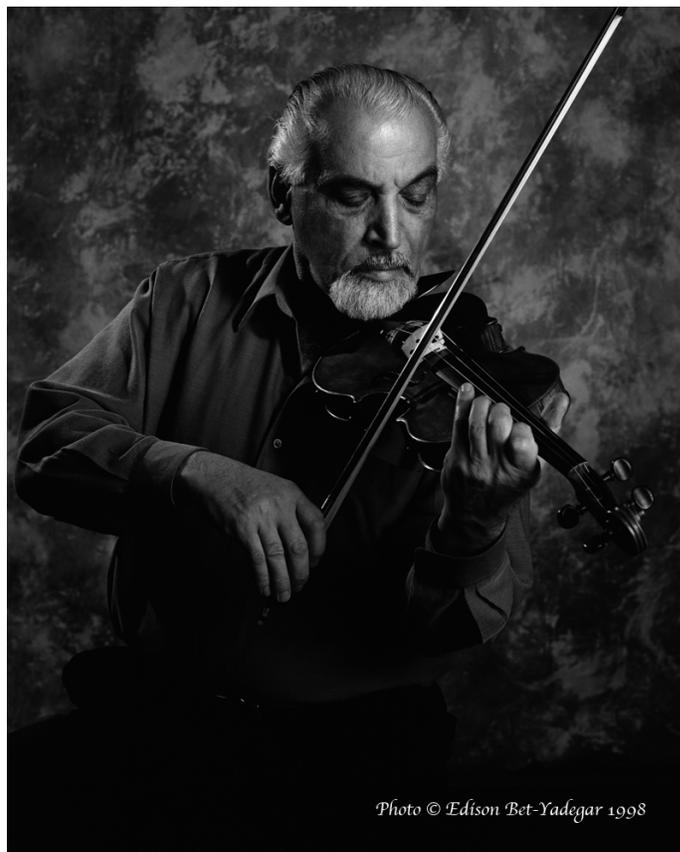


Photo © Edison Bet-Yadegar 1998





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From Left to Right: Ramen Adam (Welfare), Joseph Sarkis (Treasurer), Chris Hamzaeff (Social), Jackline Yelda (President), Ninwe Maraha (Secretary & Nineveh Magazine), Daniel Dekaleita (Vice President), Maha Hermes (Education), Sargon Shabbas (Membership).

**Description of Donations:**

- *Nineveh*: Subscriptions and donations to Nineveh Magazine.
- *Education*: For financial assistance of Assyrian students and other educational and cultural projects.
- *Needy*: For financial assistance of Assyrians in need.
- *Donation*: Not specified.

Assyrian Foundation membership dues are not included.













syrians entirely. The dispute over Mor Gabriel is being closely watched here and abroad. The EU and several embassies in Ankara sent observers to a court hearing in February, and a Swedish diplomat attended this week's session. Protection of minority rights is a condition for entry into the EU. Mor Gabriel's influence, however, reaches far beyond its fortress-like walls, inspiring and binding a community of Assyrians scattered by persecution and emigration. There are hundreds of thousands more Assyrians across the frontier in Iraq and Syria and in Europe. They speak Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ.

"The monastery is all we have left," says Attiya Tunc, who left for Holland as a child and returned February of 2009 in response to a call from Bishop Aktas appealing to former residents to come back and show their support in the land battle.

### Historical Claims

Turkish officials say they have no desire to uproot Christianity. They point to new roads and other services provided to small settlements of Assyrians who have returned in recent years from abroad.

Mustafa Yilmaz, the state's senior administrator in the area, says Turkey wants to clarify blurred property boundaries as part of a national land survey, something long demanded by the EU. He says the monastery could lose around 100 acres of land currently enclosed within a high wall, meaning a loss of about 60% of its core property. Some of that could be reclassified as a state-owned forest, with the rest claimed by the Treasury on the grounds that it's not being used as intended for farming or other purposes. Mr. Yilmaz says the government has no desire to hurt a monastery he describes as a "very special place" that, among other things, helps boost the region's economy by bringing in throngs of pilgrims and tourists.

Assyrians see a more sinister purpose. They say the Turkish state and Muslim villagers want to grab Christian land and force the non-Muslims to leave. "There is no place for

Christians here" until Turkey changes in fundamental ways, says Ms. Tunc.

### A Long List of Raids

Assyrians have indeed been living -- and often suffering -- here for a very long time. Mor Gabriel's history is a "long list of raids, wars, droughts, famines, plagues and persecutions," says British scholar Andrew Palmer. "Time and again, they've had to start again from nothing."

In the eighth century, plague swept through the area and took the lives of many of Mor Gabriel's monks. As Islam extended its reach, the monastery shut down repeatedly, but always reopened. It was attacked by Kurds, Turks and then Kurds again. In the 14th century, Mongol invaders seized the monastery and killed 40 monks and 400 other Christians hiding in a cave. Perhaps the biggest blow of all came in the modern era, when Turkey's slaughter of Christian Armenians during World War I led to massacres of Assyrians/Syriac Christians, too. The patriarch of the Syriac Orthodox Church later decamped to Syria.

Ms. Tunc, the woman now living in Holland, grew up with stories of massacred relatives. Her father ordered her to master Dutch ways "because we could never go back". Her family and many others left Turkey in the 1980s during a brutal conflict between Turkish soldiers and Kurdish guerrillas. Assyrians, viewed with suspicion by both sides, frequently got caught in the crossfire. The exodus drained towns and villages of Christians, including the town of Midyat, where the court is reviewing the land dispute. Midyat used to be almost entirely Christian but now has just 120 non-Muslim families out of a population of 60,000. The town has seven churches, but just one preacher.

### Running a Tight Ship

Alarmed by a spate of thefts and determined to keep Muslim neighbors from encroaching, Bishop Aktas started building a high wall around his land. Since 2000, Assyrians abroad have poured money into rebuilding churches and putting up summer homes. A few decided to move back for good. The return to Turkey of relatively prosperous Christians helped the economy and provided jobs in construction. But it also needled some Muslims, especially when returnees began to claim abandoned property occupied by Muslims.

Turmoil in neighboring Iraq added to the unease. After the 2003 U.S. invasion, hundreds of thousands of Assyrians in Iraq fled mainly to Syria and Jordan as security collapsed and Muslims turned on their neighbors. As uncertainty mounted about the future of the Syriac Orthodox church, officials in Midyat were ordered to survey all land in their area not yet officially registered. Surveyors, armed with old maps and aerial photographs, began fanning out through villages trying to work out who owned what.

Last summer, officials informed the monastery that big







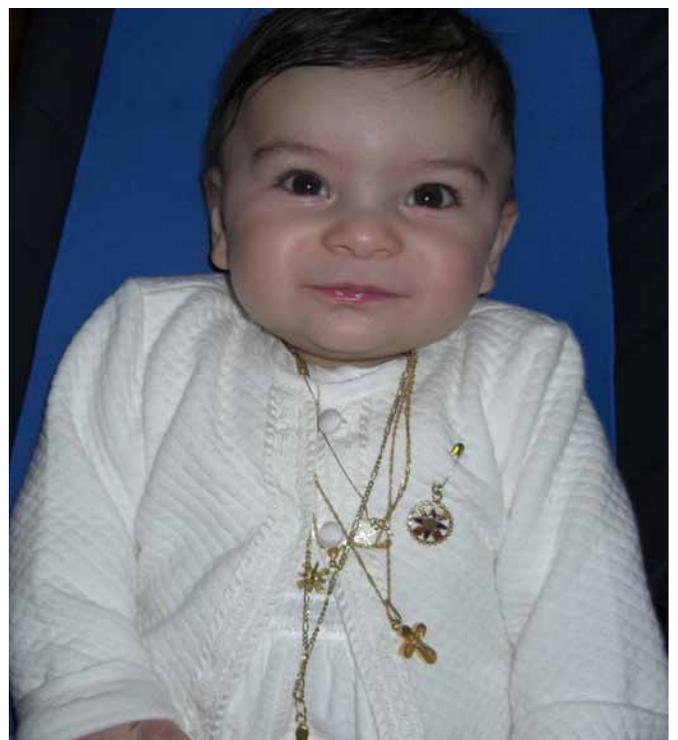
# CONGRATULATIONS



*Nineveh* and the Assyrian Foundation of America join the Akopova family in congratulating Ms. Elena Akopova for her achievement of a Master of Music, Majoring in solo piano performance, chamber music, piano pedagogy and music theory . Ms. Akopova got her degree at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, California in June of 2009.



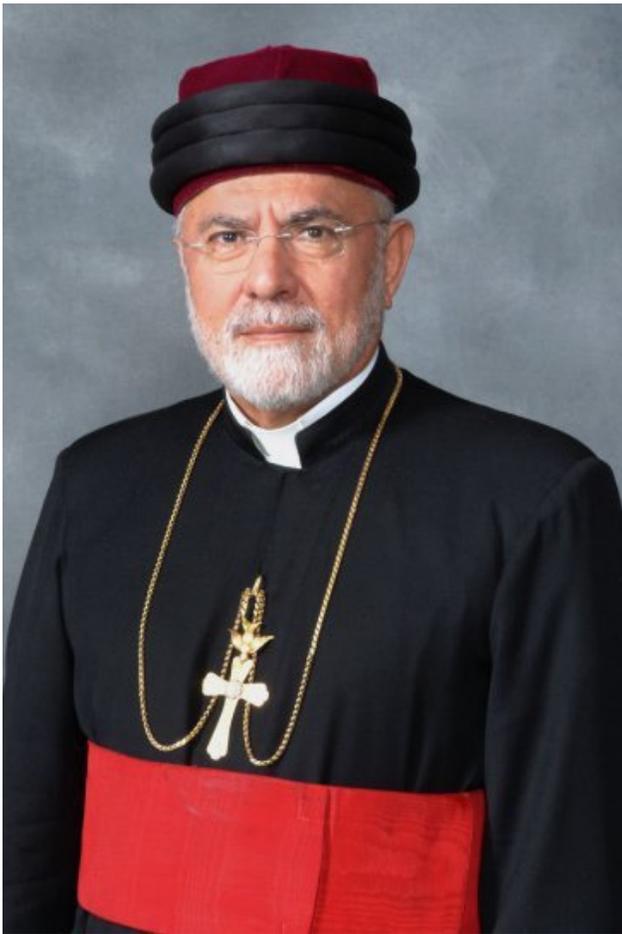
*Nineveh* and the Assyrian Foundation of America join the Tamraz and Lado families in congratulating Diana and Sargon Lado. The wedding was held in Mar Zaya Church in Modesto, California, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July 2008.



*Nineveh* and the Assyrian Foundation of America join the Jatou and Nessian family in congratulating the happy and proud parents Susan and Firas Jatou for the Baptism of their son Tatian Goliat Jatou. Tatian was born November 9, 2009.







**Metropolitan Mar Narsai Elias DeBaz**

*By Solomon (Sawa) Solomon, Lebanon*

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the Assyrian Nation mourned the passing of Metropolitan Mar Narsai Elias DeBaz, Archbishop of Lebanon, Syria and Europe. Patriarchal Vicar. Mar Narsai, died in a Medical Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, where he was a patient for ten days. The Metropolitan received Holy Communion from the Patriarch; Mar Dinkha IV and died peacefully.

Mar Narsai was born to Qasha Elias of Baz and Victoria Yonan on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1940. His father had taught in Qasha Yousip's Assyrian School in Mosul, Iraq. Of his siblings, George died in March 2005. Hermis passed away in January 2006 and Diala in May 2005. His sole surviving brother is Archdeacon Aprim, now retired in Chicago.

Mar Narsai was ordained a priest in March 1968, and consecrated a Bishop in July 1968. He was elevated to the rank of Metropolitan on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1976, in England.

Mar Narsai Metropolitan has visited India 4 times, first in November 1995 for the unity in India, second in March 1998 for the funeral Of Mar Poulouse, third in January 2000 accompanying the Patriarch and finally in August 2001 for the funeral of Mar Timotheus Metropolitan, He was sorry to miss the Holy Synod in India in January 2010. In September, 2008, Mar Narsai had a prostate surgery in Lebanon and another major one in 2009. He was diagnosed with cancer and later he flew to Phoenix, Arizona, for treatment. He died three months short of his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.

A memorial service took place on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in Phoenix, Arizona, presided by his Holiness the Patriarch. The remains were flown to Chicago, Illinois, and the casket was interned at Mar Gewargis Church. The Archbishop was buried on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, in Montrose Cemetery in Chicago, next to the graves of his two brothers.

The memory of Metropolitan Mar Narsai will always be cherished, not only by his family and friends but also by all Assyrians. May he rest in Peace.





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No pen can ever tell of the atrocities that day.  
The bitterness of those events it never could portray.  
The misery we imagined from reports we later heard  
Were more awful in reality than any spoken word.

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In the towns of all that region, history cannot deny,  
From *Tur ʿabdīn* to *Urmi* came an urgent, brutal cry.  
*He who clings to his religion, the enemy cannot forgive.*  
*Because of Christianity, no longer let him live.*

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The snow was kneaded with our blood a hundred times its weight.  
Our people preached of meekness through our apostolic faith,  
But day by day our nation perished with our peaceful creed,  
Oppressors took our blessing through the vileness of their deed.

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Two thirds of our ancient nation vanished in between  
The 1914 exodus until 1918.  
Marching first to Russia, to Iraq then turning back,  
Until today our people are fleeing from attack.



که پلتن سځل ټنه‌نځ، څو پلمبڼه ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
ټول‌هوسه تنډه ځکه‌نځ، که مومې ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
ډیپه که ټوسه پوهېځنه، ځکه‌نځ که مومې ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
ټول ځکه‌نځ ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه، ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه

From a dark and icy swamp came an anguished woman's shout,  
Though she tried, her grandchild could not pull the woman out.  
The girl ran on to summon help from the fleeing crowd,  
But they arrived too late, her grandmother had drowned.

په څو ډېره‌هوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه، مومې ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
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An expectant mother stumbled, weighed down by her growing child.  
She could not reach her family and was captured and defiled.  
Her people found her crucified, her clothes and body torn.  
As she dangled from the branches, a knife took her unborn.

ټوسه پوهېځنه ځکه‌نځ ټوسه پوهېځنه، مومې ټوسه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
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Barbarians seized the baby who hung above the wreck,  
Tied up with her intestines wrapped 'round the mother's neck.  
The slaughter of so many had filled the fields with crying,  
Of orphaned youths who had escaped, the wounded and the dying.

ټوسه پوهېځنه ټوسه پوهېځنه، ټوسه پوهېځنه ټوسه پوهېځنه  
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Upon the frozen vineyards lay thousands of the dead,  
Some bodies sliced in two and countless torn to shreds.  
A crawling infant was seen slipping over blood and snow,  
From his mother's stiffening breast he sucked a final flow.

















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The Assyrian Foundation of America and the editorial staff of *Nineveh* would like to express their gratitude to Mr. George Zia and Medius Corporation, the publisher of *Nineveh* magazine. They have not only printed the magazine with great care and technical expertise, but, have also supported us by doing this beautiful work at a reduced fee.

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