



# NINEVEH

CULTURAL | EDUCATIONAL | SOCIAL





**Assyrian Foundation of America**

P. O. Box 2660  
Berkeley, California 94702

The Ancient Church of the East  
Attn.: His Grace Mar Petros Tamras/Bishop of California Dioceses

On behalf of the Assyrian Foundation of America, its board and membership, I would like to express our sincere condolences to the prelates, clergy, and members of the Ancient Church of the East on the passing of His Holiness Mar Addai II Giwargis, who served faithfully as Catholicos-Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East over the course of the past 50 years.

After so many years of blessed tenure and service to the church and to our Assyrian nation at large throughout the world, his presence will surely be sorely missed. May he rest in peace in paradise along with all our Assyrian Saints and Martyrs.

With Sincere Sympathy,

Sargon Shabbas  
President  
Assyrian Foundation of America

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# CONTENTS

<p><b>2 Letter From the Assyrian Foundation of America</b></p> <p><b>4 Mar Addai II Giwargis Catholicos Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East, passes away</b></p> <p><b>5 An Assyrian Palace in Los Angeles</b> Professor Julye Bidmead</p> <p><b>8 Assyrian Princess Comes to the United States!</b> Christopher R. Nelson, Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation</p> <p><b>14 Khä B'Nësán (April 1st) Akitu Assyrian New Year</b> Emanuel Y. Kamber, Ph.D.</p> <p><b>17 10 Questions With Etiquette Expert Lisa Mirza Grotts</b> Allison Pacatte</p> <p><b>18 Youel A. Baaba Author, Educator, Philanthropist</b> Pnoel Y. Shamun</p> <p><b>20 William Daniel's Speech at the Assyrian Association of San Francisco</b> Arianne Ishaya</p>	<p><b>25 Noteworthy Book: Assyrians in Modern Iraq</b> Alda Benjamen</p> <p><b>26 In Memory of</b> Prof. Eugene Invievitch Givargizov Dr Rebecca "Nora" Bet-Alkhas Irani Florence Adam</p> <p><b>31 Nineveh Donations</b> 1/01/2022 - 2/28/2022</p> <p><b>32 Model of the Prophet Jonah: Ancient Israeli Ambassador to the Land of Assyria</b> Dr. Yaacov Maoz</p> <p><b>34 Interview with: Stefan Sado Archimandrite of the Russian Orthodox Church</b> Pavel Bukreev</p> <p><b>37 From Qarajalu (Persia) to Santa Clara</b> Exhibit &amp; Lecture Series Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum</p> <p><b>40 The Genocide Chronicles</b> Professor Arianne Ishaya</p> <p><b>42 Assyrian Language Section</b></p>
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Lamassu at Louvre



Starbucks lamassu at Citadel  
Author's photo



King and geni (wall from Citadel)  
Author's photo

Commerce purchased it, rescuing it from its proposed demise. Envisioning a mixed-development project that included a discount retail outlet center, the site was expanded to 35-acres. On its groundbreaking, Gretchen Schleicher Davis, the eldest daughter of Adolph Schleicher, wielded the same silver shovel and pick that she used 61 years ago. The new complex, which still operates today, opened in 1990 as the Citadel Outlets Mall, capitalizing on its ancient iconography with the tagline, "Only in Los Angeles can you drive to an Assyrian palace to buy blue jeans and leather goods. Citadel Outlets, Los Angeles' only outlet center, has the distinct honor to be located behind an Assyrian Castle wall."

The Citadel's 1,700-foot-long exterior "castle" wall is constructed in the same Assyrian crenelated style and towers as Dūr-Šarrukīn. The builders replicated the ancient elements in exquisite detail but what is most noteworthy is the frequent inclusion of religious or mythological images, particularly guardian figures like the *lamassu* and the *genii*. In antiquity, these apotropaic figures helped ward off crises, illness, or any unspecified evil. The *genii* were benevolent hybrid divine beings whose iconography graced the walls of many Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs while the *lamassu* protected the buildings. On the top of the Citadel's exterior walls, the *lamassu*, gigantic hybrid human-headed winged bulls, hover like the watchful guardians that they are. Several smaller *lamassu* are scattered everywhere throughout the mall, with *lamassu* likeness serving as Citadel's logo on its website, in its marketing material, and mall signage. The *lamassu's* face and headdress copy the stone reliefs of King Sargon—a masculine human face with a curly beard and long hair topped with a diadem headdress. Feathered wings jutting from the upper body are delicately carved while its legs are well-sculpted with hooved feet.

On the mall's western exterior wall, huge reliefs depict King Sargon in his royal regalia, poised like a warrior grasping

his sword. Separated by a window, a similarly styled relief of a winged *genii* faces him. Etched across the legs of both figures are several lines of faux cuneiform, the writing system employed by the ancient Assyrians. Like their counterparts at Dūr-Šarrukīn, the Citadel *genii* are human-headed, with facial features mimicking the king. Holding a pinecone in their raised right hand and a bucket in their left, cultic items used in religious rituals, the *genii* are performing some type of purification or protective rite.

It is curious to consider why are the *genii* and *lamassu* motifs so prominent in the modern Citadel complex. Does anyone shopping at the Outlet wonder about what they are looking at? To modern viewers, without any understanding of ancient Mesopotamian religion, or knowledge of today's Assyrian culture, these creatures on the Citadel Outlet might look fantastic, curious, and even superstitious. Mesopotamian religion was polytheistic with a rich mythological tradition, and belief in the gods, demons, and protective beings dwelled in every aspect of human life. Prophylactic and apotropaic rituals and objects were widespread, with *lamassu* and the *genii* playing significant roles in the ancient's worldview. Public buildings and palaces often displayed *genii* and *lamassu*, meant to protect the monarch, and by default, all his subjects, and the entire empire. Smaller *lamassu* figurines have been found buried in private homes for more personal protection. To the ancient Assyrians, these were familiar guardians who offered a sense of calm, order, and security—a sentiment that is lost on the 21st-century viewer.

Returning to the idea that Schleicher envisioned his Samson Tire Factory complex on "strength," why did the architects focus on the *lamassu* and the *genii*? How do these figures symbolize "strength"? Countless other images from the Neo-Assyrian reliefs, such as royal hunting scenes, chariots, processions of subjects bearing tribute, and mighty military campaigns, that convey strength and power could have been used instead of these religious figures. To a modern onlooker, these images are more readily understood as power than the inclusion of foreign



Office front doors from Citadel  
Author's photo



genii closeup



Hollywood and Highland Center Mall

mythological creatures. Was the decision to include the *lamassu* and the *genii* based precisely on this foreignness and exoticness? Did the "otherness" of the winged creatures spark Schleicher and his architects to spotlight them? One may never know this answer, but perhaps a look at another contemporary example of a Mesopotamian-themed shopping mall could shed some light. The Hollywood and Highland Center, a multi-storied open-air shopping mall in Los Angeles, is a tourist mecca visited by thousands who want to shop while experiencing a taste of old Hollywood. When the Hollywood and Highland Center was the mall was constructed in 2001 as a tribute to silent-film era Hollywood, they reproduced the "Babylonian Court," a lavish movie set from D.W. Griffith's silent epic, *Intolerance* (1916). The set, and the mall, featured Neo-Assyrian motifs, including the winged *genii*, *lamassu*, and the stylized Assyrian tree. This imagery, however, is ahistorical and Orientalist. Griffith's story did not take place during the neo-Assyrian in the 9th century BCE but during the fall of Babylon to the Persians in 539 BCE. And the movie set included elephant sculptures idols, never a component of Mesopotamian architecture or religion.

Angelenos have long complained about the Hollywood and Highland Center's homage to Griffith's white supremacist ideology. Its ersatz Mesopotamian imagery is now gone. On July 29, 2021, crews began dismantling the elephants and other

Babylonian displays, replacing them with Art Deco displays. Given a new name, Ovation Hollywood, and a \$100-million makeover, the mall hopes to erase its ties to a racist past, appealing to a modern shopper.

In the future, will someone question the Assyrian imagery at the Citadel Outlet and fight for its removal like the Hollywood and Highland Center? I hope not as the situation at the two malls are quite different. But with our 21st-century sensibilities the appearances of ancient religious and mythological imagery, out of context can be seen as cultural appropriation of a foreign culture, especially when one considers the Orientalism and colonialism behind the discovery of these ancient artifacts. Is there anything to be gained from the use of ancient Assyrian imagery in today's culture? There are no easy answers, but perhaps understanding this imagery might lessen the feelings of blatant appropriation. Plaques with QR codes linked to a short and unbiased explanation of the significant role of the *lamassu* and *genii* in ancient Assyria could be placed at key points at the Citadel. The rich history of the Assyrian people, both ancient and modern could be spotlighted. Looking at the religious figures not as something "other" or "exotic" in a "pagan" religion but as an integral component of an ancient worldview would provide an educational commentary and sense of cultural context to the casual, and likely uninformed shopper.

# PART III: Homecoming

(Part 3 of 3)

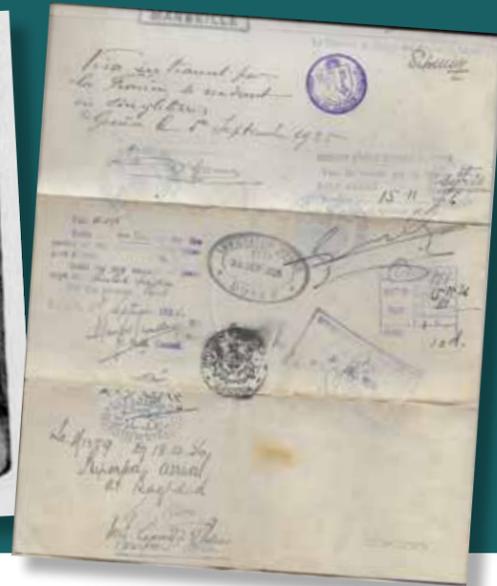
by Christopher R. Nelson,  
Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation



THE BISHOP OF LONDON PRESIDING AT THE MANSION HOUSE MEETING FOR THE RELIEF OF CHRISTIANS IN MESOPOTAMIA  
(At the extreme right of the picture seated is Sir Henry Lunn, the English dogman, publicist, and philanthropist, who is now in America. In the center, next to the Bishop of London, is Lady Surma. Next to Sir Henry Lunn is the Duke of Athol. Sir Willoughby Dickson is seated at the left, and next to him is Mrs. Hewitt.)



S.S. Minnetonka



As Surma d’Mar Shimun prepared to leave the United States after five months of travel and speaking engagements, Assyrians George Lamsa and Qasha Showil urged her to stay a little longer. They hoped she could return to Chicago to settle disconcerting Church of the East divisions there. Meanwhile, Bishop Perry and Reverend Emhardt of the American Committee to the Archbishop’s Assyrian Mission promised further meetings in Worcester and Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where higher returns were anticipated. Surma put away the farewell letter she had penned to Assyrian-Americans and agreed to continue speaking to anyone who might hear of the Turkish-led genocide that had devastated the Assyrian population in Kurdistan and denied them their rights to a homeland.

For two more months in the fall of 1926 Surma Khanum spoke at additional gatherings in New England and New York. A correspondent of the New York Evening Post reported: “I never heard so sad a tale told so quietly and I may also say so proudly. . . . She does not plead a cause, she states it. And she speaks of death with no more tremor in her voice than when she speaks of life. . . . Her composure is that of an artist today. Her sense of history is Oriental. Her power of adaptation is of the twentieth century.”<sup>1</sup> Still, despite near unanimous praise of her speeches, donations were hardly forthcoming, and Emhardt, ever concerned with expenses and “busy with a hundred other things so that it leaves the Assyrian cause behind,”<sup>2</sup> failed to secure the Worcester and Fitchburg events. Nor would a return visit to Chicago materialize. Surma Khanum was booked to sail on the S.S. Minnetonka for England on October 23rd.

Her final days in America were spent at the Emhardt home in Philadelphia where, with Mrs. Emhardt, she visited

1 Lowrie, Sarah D. “Descendants of the Mighty Assyrian Nation are Now Struggling to Secure Political and Religious Freedom in a Protected Corner of the Vast Domain Which their Ancestors Ruled.” New York Evening Post, 5 Aug 1926: 15.

2 Surma d’Mar Shimun, 15 Oct 1926. SurmaDiary: Mar Shimun Memorial Foundation (MSMF) Archives.

the Sesqui-Centennial International Exposition, a world’s fair celebrating one-hundred and fifty years of American Independence. Like her fundraising tour, the fair struggled with low financial returns, poor publicity, and bad luck (it rained 107 out of the 184 days it was open). In contrast, however, she was impressed by its being “well developed and organized.”<sup>3</sup> An 80-foot tall replica of the Liberty Bell suspended from a massive arch and illuminated by thousands of incandescent, multi-colored bulbs greeted visitors. As she passed beneath this luminous, fractured reminder of freedom from imperial oppression, Surma Khanum entered an expansive fairground dotted with pastel painted pavilions representing multiple countries, including two she was quite familiar with, Russia and Persia. In every direction were exhibition palaces, patriotic pageants, and colonial recreations to explore. Within forty-eight hours she would be sailing back into the harsh realities of refugee status, but for this one last carefree afternoon anyway, she might have dared to dream of an Assyria amongst the international pavilions of some future world’s fair.

She arrived in London on November 1st, staying with the nuns of the Sisters of Bethany at Lloyd’s Square, where she also stayed in 1919. She met up again with members of the Archbishop’s committee and other friends, and visited with her nephew Mar Eshai Shimun, now in his final year of college at Wescott House, Cambridge. Canon A.J. Mason, former head of the Archbishop’s Assyrian Mission and one of Mar Shimun’s guardian’s while there, wrote her: “. . . It will be best to be with your own people again. They will, I daresay, be somewhat disappointed to find that, in spite of all your labours in their case, there has not been the response that we might have hoped for. But at least they must feel you have done your best. If you have not succeeded in removing mountains, no one on earth could do it.”<sup>4</sup> Rev. F.N. Heazell, another former member of the Assyrian Mission, escorted her to the docks at Tilbury

3 Ibid. 21 Oct 1926.

4 A.J. Mason to Surma, 16 Nov 1926. SurmaCorr; MSMF Archives.

on November 18th where she boarded the S.S. Kaylan for Port Said, Egypt. After a stop-over in the Holy Land which included a visit with the Syriac-Orthodox Patriarch, Mar Ellias III, she was finally “home” in Mosul on December 20th, just in time for Christmas.

By all accounts the fundraising aspect of Surma Khanum’s tour of America was a failure — returns totaled only about 10% of the £22,000 (\$106,000) ultimately collected by the Henry Lunn Fund.<sup>5</sup> The audacious goal of £100,000 (\$485k US — \$7 million in today’s money) originated with the British High Commissioner of Iraq, Sir Henry Dobbs, who calculated this to be the minimum required to settle an estimated 10,000 Assyrian refugee families then in and around Mosul.<sup>6</sup> The irrepressible former minister and missionary, Sir Henry Lunn, ran with this number, instructing the Secretary of the Archbishop’s Committee, Canon J.A. Douglas not to, “. . . Ask for less than one-hundred thousand pounds. We shall want it all if we can get it. ‘Blessed is he who expected much’ and not little. I am quite clear about that blessing.”<sup>7</sup> Whether or not Surma Khanum felt this lofty goal achievable is unknown, but what she was clear about was that as much of what she brought in go towards the “repatriation” of Assyrians.<sup>8</sup>

But why, if the United States was the most prosperous and charitable country in the world, and Surma’s talks reportedly well-attended and received, had Americans donated so little? As it turned out, the much ballyhooed “prosperity bandwagon” of the Roaring 20’s wasn’t all that it seemed. While business may have been booming in urban

5 Lunn, H.S. *Nearing Harbour: The Log of Sir Henry S. Lunn*. London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934. 211. Various English news references from the day validate this total. For U.S. returns I relied upon refs. fr. Emhardt & Perry in PerryCorr (17) f.596, and Lunn in Douglas (63): f. 387 which supported a number between \$10-15k. Note: £1 = about \$4.85 US. *Federal Reserve Bulletin* (1929).

6 Dobbs to Surma, 15 Aug 1926. SurmaCorr.

7 Lunn to Douglas, 25 Feb 1926. Douglas (63): 243-4.

8 Heazell to Douglas, 21 Nov 1926. Douglas (63): f. 398. Cf. SurmaCorr 14 May 1920.

centers like New York, Boston, and Chicago, “In the agricultural Northwest and Middle West there was a violent outcry for farm relief, but it could command only a scattered and half-hearted interest throughout the rest of the nation which was becoming progressively urbanized,” observed social-historian Frederick Lewis Allen. “Public spirit,” he added, “was at a low ebb; over the World Court, the oil scandals, the Nicaraguan [substitute: Assyrian] situation, the American people refused to bother themselves. They gave their energies to triumphant business, and for the rest they were in a holiday mood. ‘Happy,’ they might have said, ‘is the nation which has no history—and a lot of good shows to watch.’ They were ready for any good show that came along.”<sup>9</sup> Thus, tragic hardship tales of displaced Christian minorities in ancient lands more preferably associated with archaeology and oil booms weren’t as seductive to Babbit-esque business types lured by lectures on personal improvement and sales success.

At any rate, Surma Khanum’s American organizers acknowledged their own disorganization, admitting for example that they had mis-timed her initial East-Coast lectures during Easter holidays when the majority of potential wealthy donors were on vacation. And when they then sent her on to Canada it was learned, en route, that Lunn’s contacts there had been unreliable and so further events needed to be rescheduled or cancelled altogether. On top of this, an unexpected death in the Perry family, and spinal issues suffered by Emhardt created further complications. Surma Khanum, frequently traveling alone between cities, adapted and adjusted as only one well-inured to adversity can by staying faithful to her larger mission. Not until late April however did her hosts think that a traveling companion and assistant might be helpful for her, and so Emhardt scrambled to find someone. He considered his daughter at first, but she had taken ill. As it turned out, the wife of the inventor Thomas Edison was willing to loan her social secretary, Ms.

9 Allen, Frederick Lewis. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*. New York: Harper & Row (1931). 156.



Katherine Righter. Ms. Righter would accompany Surma throughout most of her Western journey.

While the Episcopal organizers might not be blamed for the hollow commitments of the vicars of Fitchburg and Worcester, for example, or the fickleness of other religious bodies that had apparently signed on to the Committee primarily for its public relations value, there are several perplexing oversights, which, if accurate, would be less forgivable. 1.) The lack of larger, more diverse, secular events on Surma's schedule. Service clubs like Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions Club, were popping up across the United States at this time and quite popular—were they even considered as potential fundraising venues? 2.) Radio. With over \$500 million in sales in 1926, radio had been rapidly expanding and increasingly popular.<sup>10</sup> Since Lunn himself had helped organize her BBC appearance earlier in the year, and the Chairman of the Episcopal Relief Committee was S. Parkes Cadman, a popular newspaper columnist and radio personality who had pioneered the broadcasting of sermons in the early 1920s, where was Surma's U.S. radio appearance? Even more baffling is that Cadman, whose name figures prominently on the Committee letterhead, never appears to have advertised Surma Khanum or the Assyrian cause. 3.) Dr. Robert E. Speer, Secretary of the Board of Presbyterian Missions, was a long-standing and influential missionary advocate of the Assyrians based in New York who Surma had in fact written to about potential American government assistance, but for some reason wasn't included in the Lunn Committee. E.W. McDowell, who had lobbied U.S. Congress in early 1924 to admit Assyrian refugees into the United States, had written Dr. Speer that he reach out to Lunn and the Archbishop's Mission. Speer was happy to help (recommending in turn that the Committee reach out to the Rockefeller Foundation), but this was well into June when Surma Khanum was already reaching the end of her

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 137.



originally planned stay in America, and Speer then on his way to China.

In the end, perhaps the most satisfactory explanation for why Americans contributed so little, especially in comparison to the English, is the most obvious one, namely, the fact that Assyrians were largely unknown to Americans. As an increasingly alarmed Emhardt expressed to Canon Douglas in June, *"The ignorance of our people regarding the Assyrian is even greater than anticipated."*<sup>11</sup> The Armenians, on the other hand, *"... were known to the American school child in 1919 only a little less than England,"* according to President Coolidge's successor, Herbert Hoover.<sup>12</sup> Americans had donated tens of millions of dollars to Near East Relief (then known as "The American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief"). J.D. Rockefeller himself, through his foundation, was alone responsible for \$600k by 1918, and the American Red Cross had raised over \$10 million by 1920. All in all, between 1915 and 1930, about \$110 million (\$1.25 billion today) was collected for Near East Relief.<sup>13</sup> Significant portions of this did in fact go towards helping Assyrians, but the vast majority was earmarked for Armenian orphanages, refugees, food and clothing. N.E.R. was founded with Armenians in mind when U.S. Ambassador to Constantinople, Henry Morgenthau, Sr. grew increasingly alarmed at the reports of atrocities committed against the Armenian peoples in 1915. American Protestant missionaries had been proselytizing and working amongst Armenians and Assyrians since the 1820s and 1830s respectively, but had gained a much greater foothold amongst the Armenian Orthodox Church than the Church of the East Assyrians who came to favor the Anglicans. Capturing the collective conscience of Americans when

<sup>11</sup> Emhardt to Douglas, 2 Jun 1926. Douglas (63): f. 339.

<sup>12</sup> Hoover, Herbert. *Memoirs: Years of Adventure, 1874-1920*. New York: Macmillan Co. (1951), 385.

<sup>13</sup> Barrs, Elizabeth Berit. "Marketing the Golden Rule: Near East Relief and Philanthropy's Role in the Political Economy, 1915-1930." *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers, University of Montana* (2020). 9; Near East Foundation: <https://www.neareast.org>.

"the Armenian Question" arose

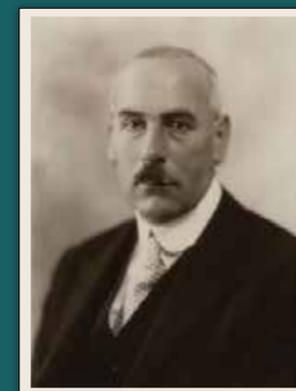
during World War I was therefore a natural consequence of the long-standing missionary bonds between Americans and Armenians. In England, however, the much smaller Assyrian community was better known because of their ties with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission dating back to the time of Mar Rowil Shimun in the late 1870s. Regular appeals for aid by the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as numerous news articles, pamphlets, memoirs and books by ex-missionaries, travelers, military and political officials further educated the public about the Assyrian peoples. No small part of this public recognition was due to Surma Khanum's initial visit to London in 1919 as an official representative of the Assyrians during the Paris Peace Conference negotiations, and proceeds from the sale of her own book on Assyrian church customs and the murder of her brother, the patriarch Mar Benyamin, published with the help of Dr. Wigram in 1920, also went towards early Assyrian relief efforts.<sup>14</sup>

The comparison of \$110 million raised on behalf of Armenians by N.E.R. (over a period of fifteen-odd years) to the \$105k raised by Surma Khanum, Sir Henry Lunn, et al. over a period of less than a year, really isn't fair for many reasons, the most obvious being the stark contrast in populations.<sup>15</sup> Also, N.E.R. was a well-oiled fundraising machine with professional public relations men like Charles V. Vickrey of the Layman's Missionary Movement who canvassed businesses and forged state and city co-operating inter-denominational committees to support the Armenian cause. They also had a Division of Pictorial Publicity that focused exclusively on wealthy donors, and publicized the atrocities against Armenians in the media.<sup>16</sup> Artistic posters and other catchy visual ads were mass-marketed, effectively capturing the hearts, and pocket-books, of millions of

<sup>14</sup> E.g. *Living Church* (63), 1920: 864 or *St. Andrew's Cross* (35), 1920: 73.

<sup>15</sup> At least 3 million Armenians to 200,000 Assyrians at this time. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical\\_Armenian\\_population#1923](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_Armenian_population#1923), and various sources of the day est. an Assyrian pop. of between 150k-200k (including Chaldeans and Syriac-Orthodox).

<sup>16</sup> Barrs. 10; 13.



Sir Henry Dobbs  
High Commissioner of Iraq  
1923-1929

Americans. By the time Surma Khanum arrived in 1926 she was not only up against her own committee's disorganization and poor planning (as well as the aforementioned indifference and antagonism within her own Church), but American donor fatigue. As Frederick Lewis Allen reiterates: *"Americans were tired of reality,"* and *"... Genuine public issues, about which the masses of the population could be induced to feel intensely, were few and far between."*<sup>17</sup>

When the Treaty of Angora officially came to a conclusion in the summer of 1926 the British government dropped its facade of "unofficial" promises to repatriate the Assyrians.<sup>18</sup> The moral and ethical responsibility of protecting their "Smallest Ally" had been hashed out in Parliament the year before (with Surma Khanum watching on from the sidelines) when they more or less came to a conclusion of domestic and imperial interests first. Reports to and from the Foreign Office were now emphasizing the Assyrians stranded in Iraq who no longer *"had a wish to return to their old homes"* in Turkey, rationalizing that even if a large enough amount of land could be obtained for them, *"... there is every reason to believe that the creation of an Assyrian enclave on the Iraq side of the frontier would have aroused resentment on the part of Turkey and prejudiced the successful application of the bon voisinage (neighborly relations) clauses of the Treaty of Angora."*<sup>19</sup> Nevermind that most of these Assyrians referred to were not from the mountains in the first place, but rather the Urmia plains or Iraq itself, and that native resentment toward Assyrians had been exacerbated, if not manufactured, by their privileged status as British levies. In its 1926 colonial report to the League of Nations, the British effectively contradicted Surma Khanum's understanding (or at least, hope) that

<sup>17</sup> Allen. 156.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Lt.-Col. A.T. Wilson to Civil Commissioner (Baghdad), 4 Aug 1919 in *India Office Records (L/PS/10/833/2)*: p. 191-193; *ColRpt* (1927): 27-8; Col. J.J. McCarthy, Nov 1933 RCAS (20):159; W.A. Wigram, 18 Nov 1936 in *RentonCorr*; etc. All reference unofficial "encouragement" of Assyrians to think that their return was assured.

<sup>19</sup> Report by His Britannic Majesty's Government to the Council of the League of Nations on the Administration of Iraq for the year 1927. London: 1928. 19 [ColRpt].

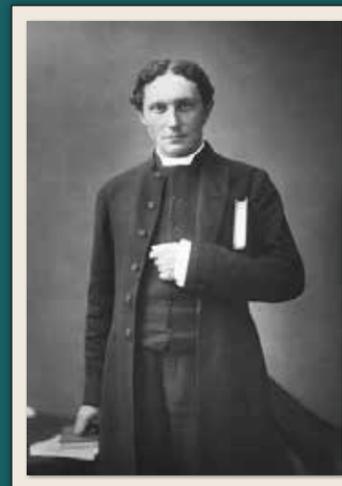


Rev. J.B. Panfil

With my kindest regards to  
you, & humbly asking your prayers  
Yours very sincerely  
Surma



Rev. E.W. McDowell



Can. A.J. Mason



Rev. F.N. Heazell

the money she was helping raise would go towards an Assyrian homeland with the verdict that: “No form of local administrative autonomy can be organized for a people scattered in small groups over a wide area, and it has not been found practicable to create a special territorial enclave within the present frontiers of Iraq into which the 20,000 Assyrians could be settled as a united community. There is no uninhabited area large enough and climatically suitable for this purpose.”<sup>20</sup>

In other words, the British Mandatory power refused to be seen as helping one group (Assyrians) at the expense of others (Arab, Kurds, Yezidees, . . .). The Chancellor of the Exchequer quelled any lingering anxieties of the conservative contingent in the House of Commons by assuring them that, “No payments have been made [from public funds] during the last 3 years on the support and maintenance of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek refugees.”<sup>21</sup> Canon Wigram echoed the chagrin of all long-time Assyrian advocates when he caustically commented: “With regard to the cost of settling the Assyrians in the British Empire or elsewhere, this was estimated at half a million [pounds]; Great Britain’s annual expenditure was 8 hundred million, and to say she could not afford it was if a man with a thousand a year refused to pay 12 shillings 6 pence for damage done by a revolver which he had himself put into the hands of an irresponsible boy.”<sup>22</sup>

As Wigram and others pointed out, the “we promised them nothing” party of M.P.s seem to have willfully ignored or outright dismissed the inconvenient fact that British tax-payers had been saved millions in military expenditures protecting the nascent country of Iraq through its liberal use of the Assyrian levies since 1922. Having essentially lost major opportunities to repatriate the Assyrians back into the Hakkari just after the war ended, the British were now stuck with funding the resettlement of their former ally, while continuing to use the Levies to help stabilize Iraq. Since

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 1926: 17.

<sup>21</sup> House of Commons Debate: “Foreign Refugees and Nationals (Payments).” British Parliament, 28 Jun 1926, v. 197, c825W.

<sup>22</sup> Stafford, Lt.-Col. R.S. “Iraq and the Problem of the Assyrians.” Royal Institute of International Affairs, v.13, no. 2 (Mar-Apr, 1934): 183.

precious British tax-payer money wasn’t on the table, that left the good-will and charity of friends of the Assyrians like the Archbishop of Canterbury, who in turn called on Surma Khanum. The continuing cost of maintaining the refugees until they were settled, according to McDowell, was ten-cents per person per day and so at 20,000 the refugee-relief meter was running at \$2,000 a day.<sup>23</sup> Even with the Lunn Fund’s eventual collection of \$105k this would have lasted only about two-months, so the clock was rapidly ticking on finding a place to settle the Assyrians.

In August, 1927, Mar Eshai Shimun arrived in Mosul to assume leadership as Patriarch of the Church of the East. He found Assyrians divided as to whether to settle down in Iraq, continue living as nomads, or press for resettlement somewhere in the British Empire, or elsewhere. The money Aunt Surma had helped raise to settle Assyrian refugees in and around Mosul had dwindled down to £4,000. Administrative Inspector Major W.C.F.A. Wilson was claiming that “fewer than 500 families remained to be settled,” and these 500 he referred to as “malcontents”.<sup>24</sup> Mar Shimun, though only nineteen years old and fresh out of college, recognized British constraints and intentions with regard to settling the Assyrians, and was under no illusions as to where their true allegiances lay. He was aware that their number one priority was not only to stabilize and make Iraq self-supporting, but also to maintain amicable relations with the Turks. And he felt keenly their treatment of the Assyrians as a problem to be solved, or rid of altogether. He unhesitatingly took up the role of confronting their convenient mistruths and incessantly reminding them of Assyrian assistance during the war and after, immediately pointing out to Dobbs, for instance, that the number of unsettled families was certainly higher, and that those “malcontents” had been settled on unsuitable lands in Kurdish-run villages where they were treated like serfs. Of course, the British Foreign Office wasn’t going to let facts get in the way of policy progress and

<sup>23</sup> The Missionary Review of the World. Funk & Wagnalls, Co. New York. (49): 447-8. Jun, 1926.

<sup>24</sup> Stafford, Lt.-Col. R.S. The Tragedy of the Assyrians. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London (1935). 54-55; cf. ColRpt 1928: 18.

a year later Wilson was reporting that the number of unsettled families had steadily dropped to 350, and by the end of 1930 below 300 — no doubt, the remaining “malcontents.”

The money from the Lunn Fund was filtered through representatives of the Archbishop’s Mission, namely Americans Father Panfil and E.W. McDowell, who in turn worked directly with both Wilson and the Assyrian tribal leaders themselves. In addition to assisting with settlement into villages, it was used to buy food, medicine, and clothing, as well as provide seed, stock animals and agricultural implements to farmers. It lasted until 1933 when a final £73 was used to launch a new relief committee run by Assyrian Hormuzd Rassam. It should be pointed out too that Iraq government funds were also used to assist in relief efforts of the displaced Assyrians in the form of cash payouts and certain tax remittances. But over and above this or the Lunn Fund itself, the most reliable and lasting source of financial aid to Assyrian families throughout this difficult period was derived from the steady incomes of those who had sons serving in the Assyrian Levies employed by the British.<sup>25</sup>

Contemporary critics might look back and claim that nothing was accomplished since there is no Assyrian homeland and the calamitous events of the early 1930s led to further dispersal and divisions within the Assyrian community. They may claim, for instance, that Surma Khanum and other Assyrian leaders were used by the British government to further their expedient political aims in the region. And once used, forcibly exiled. This cynical viewpoint fails however to account for the lack of viable options, limited resources, and an almost unimaginable and unprecedented array of setbacks, tragedies, and obstacles to securing a home for themselves in the region. It seems deeply unjust to judge falling short of an unreachable financial goal —let alone effecting the creation of a nation-state out of disunited and dispersed peoples on non-existent uninhabited land— a “failure.” Nevertheless, Surma Khanum was compelled by a sense of unwavering duty to her church and nation (not as some so-called scholars have carelessly

<sup>25</sup> ColRpt 1926: 18.

alleged, for “political ambitions”) to attempt the impossible. The New York Evening Post correspondent who had heard her speaking in the Adirondack Mountain retreat in Upper-State New York in the summer of 1926 reflected: “Someone said to me after the gathering was over: ‘How pathetic that she should have to tell this thing to so few of us and to so futile an audience, so far as international influence goes, at the mere summer time gathering of people who can do nothing but write a few checks!’ . . . There were enough people there, and in them was enough power to hold public opinion and make the cause of that tragic people resound from one end of this country to the other. But that may not be the way the plight of this wandering nation will be eventually turned to a safe homecoming. It may come about some other way, apparently at least. From the stroke of a pen by a potentate who will have been moved in ways he himself cannot analyze to an act of justice that he may judge merely as an act of good-natured concession to someone’s casual suggestion. Many suggestions infinitely repeated are unrecognized at the last turn of the scales. We live in strange times and respond to promptings that we only a little comprehend.”<sup>26</sup>

Surma Khanum may not have been the only Assyrian whispering “infinite suggestions” to the powers that be in the attempt to bend the deaf ear of a self-serving imperial power towards doing what is right and honorable for its “Smallest Ally,” but she was the most widely recognized and admired for her integrity and intelligence, at least amongst her British and American contemporaries. If she was unable to alter a fait accompli at the League of Nations in Geneva, or raise half a million in America, she at least succeeded in making Assyrian voices for self-determination heard and understood on an unprecedented scale. Canon Mason’s consolation to her that if she “couldn’t remove mountains, nobody could” reverberates with Assyrians across the globe a century on.

<sup>26</sup> Lowrie, 15.

# Khä B'Näsán (*April 1st*) - Akitu Assyrian New Year

by Emanuel Y. Kamber, Ph.D.

Article courtesy of Assyria Online. Relief Photos by AYGv.

It was the tradition of our ancestors, the inhabitants of Bet-Nahrain (Mesopotamia), to celebrate the New Year annually on the first day of Nissan (April), a celebration of revival and renewal of nature. This was one of the most important religious and national celebrations held in Bet-Nahrain [1-3].

These celebrations originated from two myths, the myth of creation and the myth of Ishtar and Tammuz, which were revered by the inhabitants of Bet-Nahrain. In Babylon, the myth of creation assumed central importance owing to the fact that it became associated with the great Babylonian new year or Akitu Festival [4], and was embodied in liturgical form in the poem or chant known for its opening words ENUMA ELISH "When on high" [5]. In this form of the myth the Babylonian god Marduk plays the principal part. The German excavation of the site of Ashur, the old capital of the Assyrian empire, brought to light the Assyrian version of the "ENUMA ELISH", in which the name of the Babylonian god Marduk was replaced by the name of Ashur, the Chief god of Assyria.

The first of these two myths are the myth of creation [6,7], the work consisting of seven tablets. These tablets were first discovered by the British excavation of Nineveh. The outline of this myth begins with a description of the primeval condition of the universe when nothing existed except Apsu, the god of the sweet (fresh) water, and Tiamat, the goddess of the salt water. From the union of these two, the gods were brought into existence. The first pair, Lahmu and Lahamu, give birth to Anshar and Kishar, interpreted by some scholars as the circular horizons of sky and earth. Anshar and Kishar in turn give birth to Anu, the sky god, and Ea, the earth and water god (also known as the god of wisdom and the source of all magic). Ea then begets Ashur, the hero of the Assyrians form of myth. But before the birth of Ashur, there was an account of the first conflict between the primeval gods and those whom they have begotten. Tiamat and Apsu are disturbed by the noise of the younger gods and take counsel with Mummu, Apsu's vizier, on how to destroy them. Tiamat is reluctant to destroy her offspring, but Apsu and Mummu devise a plan. Their intention is disclosed to the gods, who are alarmed, but Ea, the all-wise, devises a counter-scheme; he casts a spell of

sleep upon Apsu, slays him, binds Mummu and puts a cord in his nose. He then builds his sacred chamber. In this chamber, the birth of Ashur takes place and a description of his beauty and tremendous strength follow.

The preparation for a renewed conflict between the primeval gods and the younger gods went on. Tiamat is reproached by her other children for having remained quiescent when Apsu was destroyed, and they succeed in stirring her up to take measures for the annihilation of Anu and his associates. She makes Kingu, her first born, the leader of the attack, arms him and invests him with the tablets of destiny. She then begets a horde of monstrous beings, and places Kingu at the head of this host, and prepares to avenge Apsu. The assembly of the gods received the news of the coming attack. Then Anu is sent armed with the authority of the assembly of the gods to turn Tiamat from her purpose, but he returns unsuccessful. Then Anshar rises in the assemble of gods and proposes that Ashur, the strong hero, should be entrusted with the task. Ashur's father, Ea, advises him to accept the task, and Ashur agrees to undertake it on the condition that he is given full and equal authority in the assembly of the gods, and that his word is to determine destiny unalterably. The gods are satisfied and proclaim "Ashur is King". Then Ashur arms himself for the combat; his weapons are the bow and arrow, mace, lightning, and a net held at the corners by the four winds; he fills his body with flame, and creates the seven raging hurricanes; he mounts his storm chariot and advances against Tiamat and her host. He challenges Tiamat to single combat, he casts his net to enclose her and when she opens her mouth to swallow him, he drives in the evil wind to distend her and transfixes her with his arrow, splitting her heart. Her demon helpers flee, but are caught in the net and bound. Their leader, Kingu, also is caught and bound. Then Ashur takes from Kingu the tablets of destiny and fastens them upon his own breast. He then splits the body of Tiamat in two; he places half of her above the earth as the sky, fixes it with bars, sets guards and charges them not to let her water escape. Ashur declares his intention of creating man for the services of the gods. By the advice of Ea, it is decided that the leader of the rebellion, Kingu, shall die so that mankind may be fashioned. Accordingly, Kingu is slain

and from his blood mankind is created for the services of the gods. Then the gods build a temple for Ashur, and at the command of Anu, they proclaim the fifty great names of Ashur, a proceeding that occupies the rest of the poem.

The second myth, which gave rise to the choice of April the first to become the beginning of the New Year for the Assyrians and Babylonians, is the myth of Ishtar and her lover Tammuz. The details of this mythical story begin with a discussion between Ishtar and her brother, the god Utu. Initially, she announces her love for the farmer and her desire to marry him, whereas Utu prefers her marry to the shepherd Tammuz. Eventually, she is persuaded to accept her brother's choice especially after listening to Tammuz claim to be gifted with superior qualities. After this meeting, Ishtar falls in love with the shepherd Tammuz, who in turn asks for her hand in marriage. Hence Ishtar, the goddess of love, marries the shepherd Tammuz, who is elevated into the god of Fertility. Their marriage endows the earth with fertility and renewal of life is ensured.

From this myth, we also learn of the descent of Ishtar to the Netherworld (land of no return), the realm of Ereshkigal (Ishtar's sister). The original version gave no reasons for this journey, but the Assyrian version states that she sets free some of the dead. The version runs as follows [3]: Ishtar determines to descend to the Netherworld. When Ishtar reaches the gate of the land of no return, she says these words to the gatekeeper:

*"O gatekeeper, open thy gate,  
Open thy gate so that I may enter!  
If thou openest not the gate  
so that I cannot enter,  
I will smash the door.  
For I will shatter the bolt,  
I will smash the doorpost,  
I will move the doors,  
I will raise up the dead, eating the living,  
so that the dead will outnumber the living"*

Although Ereshkigal is Ishtar's sister, she is filled with joy at the thought of capturing such a prize, and orders her to be admitted. At each of the seven doors of hell, through which she must pass, the keeper of the gate forces Ishtar to remove part of her apparel; first her crown, and then her earrings, her necklaces, her breastband of precious metal, her belt made of charms of "stones of childbirth", her bracelets from her wrists and her ankles, and finally her "garment of modesty." Thus, Ishtar appears naked in the presence of the queen of the Netherworld, and overcomes with rage, without a moment's thought, she attacks her. In revenge, Ereshkigal bids her minister, Namtar, to unleash upon Ishtar a multitude of

diseases, like a pack of hounds.

During these events in the underworld, everything on earth is withering away. Trees and plants will not turn green; animals and human beings alike are sterile. But Ishtar has already asked her devoted messenger Papsukkal, the vizier of the great gods, to inform Ea, the god of wisdom, of her misfortune if she does not return from the Netherworld within three days. Three days elapse and Ishtar has not appeared. Consequently, Papsukkal pleads with Ea to rescue Ishtar from the Netherworld. When Ea learns of Ishtar's predicament, a being Asushunamir of extreme beauty (or the eunuch) is created and instructed by the god Ea to undertake the rescue of Ishtar from the Netherworld. Ea sends Asushunamir down to induce Ereshkigal to give him the life-water bag. By his charm he succeeds in doing this, and Ereshkigal reluctantly orders her vizier Namtar to sprinkle Ishtar with the water of life. Ishtar is released and returns, receiving back those articles of adornment and apparel which had been taken from her as she passes through the seven gates on her return journey. But a reference is made to the ransom, which she must pay. Ereshkigal says to Namtar, "If she does not give thee her ransom price, bring her back." What this is to be is not specified, but the mention of Tammuz at the end of the myth seems to imply his return from the underworld, although no indication has been given as to how he came there.

Mr. Yousip Nimrud Canoon, in his article [1], describes in details the mythical story of how Ishtar passes through many cities whose inhabitants are in mourning because of the news of her death. When Ishtar reaches her husband's house, she realizes his indifference to what had happened to her. She also realizes that he is not saddened by her death. Instead he is wearing immaculate robes and sitting in opulent surroundings. In anger Ishtar casts a deathful look on Tammuz followed by an attack of Namtar, but Tammuz escapes several times aided by the god Utu.

Tammuz is restored to life on the 1st of Nissan (April), the 1st day of spring. The event is marked by the renewal of life on earth and the promise of fertility, and Tammuz returns to the Netherworld by the end of August, the onset of autumn.

Eventually, Tammuz is captured and beaten to death by Namtar and taken to the Netherworld. His sister mourns his death and pleads with Ishtar to set him free; Ishtar also mourns the death of Tammuz her beloved husband. When her anger subsides, Ishtar pleads with the council of gods to restore Tammuz to life, but the gods agree to a partial reprieve only, whereby Tammuz spends six



months in the world of living and the following six months in the Netherworld. Hence, Tammuz is restored to life on the 1st of Nissan (April), the 1st day of spring. The event is marked by the renewal of life on earth and the promise of fertility, and Tammuz returns to the Netherworld by the end of August, the onset of autumn.

#### NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

At Ashur (or Babylon) the New Year festival lasted for twelve days. The first four days of Nissan were in fact largely given to preliminaries including the necessary purification, and culminating in the recitation of the epic in the temple, and the ENUMA ELISH itself was solemnly recited on the fourth day of the festival. On the fifth, the king began to play his leading part. Within the shrine of Ashur (or Marduk), he was confronted by the high priest, who stripped him of his regalia and placed them before the god's image. The priest then struck his face, made him kneel and declare his innocence: "I have not sinned, O lord of the lands ..." The priest addressed him on behalf of the god, announcing that his prayer was heard and that he will increase thy dominion, heighten thy loyalty, then gave back the regalia and struck the king again. If the blow drew tears (fertilizing rain?), it was a good omen. In this curious rite, evidently, the ruler was purified and his reign renewed in preparation for the universal renewal in which he was to participate. On the same day emotion grew in the streets. The god had disappeared, the power of death held him captive in the mountain, nature was lifeless hung in suspense, chaos might be about to return. The crowds began to work themselves up, they ran hither and thither, wailing and lamenting; the people's eyes were turned toward the ziggurat - there was Ashur's "tomb", there he was imprisoned in the dusty dark of the Netherworld and needed the help of their mourning.

The next day, Nissan 6, was full of excitement. The crowds must have surged along the riverbanks to watch the arrival of the visiting god -- images as they arrived at the quays in their sacred barges. They came from Nippur and Uruk, from Kutha and Kish. Most important of all Marduk's own son, Nabu, who was a resident at Borsippa, came to Babylon as the Savior of his father. Possibly he led a triumphal procession of all the gods up from the river; the king was there and poured a libation. Not so much was known of the actual "liberation" which may have been enacted on the seventh day. In some manner Nabu led the gods against his father's foes and Marduk was set free from the mountain. Nissan 8 was a solemn day. All the divine images were assembled in the Ubshuukkinna, which here as elsewhere represented the place of assembly for the gods. They were ranged in order of precedence and stood facing Ashur (or Marduk), on whom they bestowed their united power, giving him "a destiny beyond compare." While the king, the priests and the images were occupied in this way within the walls of the Esagila, the populace were to remain hushed and peaceful, a day of calm between the lamentations and the outburst of rejoicing. It was the ninth day that saw the great procession of gods and people from the Esagila to the Festival House (Bit Akitu), set in beautiful gardens outside the city. Eventually, Ishtar went with Ashur (or Marduk) and the king proclaimed the start; The Lord of Ashur (Babylon) goes forth, the lands kneel before him. Sarpanitum (Ishtar) goes forth, aromatic herbs burn with fragrance. By the side of Ishtar, while her servants play the flute, goes all Ashur exultant.

Sennacherib had the drama shown on copper doors of the Bit Akitu at Ashur -- where of course Ashur was the protagonist; the drama of the battle, between Ashur (god) and Tiamat, and the subsequent creation of heaven, earth and mankind seems to

have been expressed by symbolic acts. With chaos defeated and order triumphant once again, Ashur led the way back to Ashur (city) through crowds roaring out their ritual cries of joy. This return may have taken place on the tenth of Nissan, after a grand banquet held in the Festival House.

If this ordering of the days is correct, then it was that night, either in Esagila or in the chapel with the couch on the ziggurat, that the sacred marriage of Ashur and Ishtar, perhaps enacted by the king with the high priestess, was celebrated and the renewal of all nature secured. On the eleventh day, the gods had a second assembly for the determination of destinies comparable to that of the eighth. This time, however, it was the destiny of mankind that had to be settled. Just as in Genesis, the creation of man in the ENUMA ELISH followed that of the natural world. This last solemn rite of the New Year festival seems in fact to celebrate the moment when Ashur and Ea killed Kingu and from his blood, they formed mankind... Ea then imposed toil on man and set the gods free. The twelfth day of Nissan was the day of departures. The quays must have been thronged once more as all the visiting gods, and perhaps visiting royalty as well, set out on the waterway that would take them home.

Mr. Canoon in his article [1], described the 6th day as that, a hooligan is chosen to rule the land (during the daytime) surrounded by madmen and lawless companions who kill, steal, rape and spread chaos. At sunset, the impostor king is dethroned and stripped of his regalia and offered to the legal king who reclaims his throne amidst rejoicing of the populace. The aim of such display is to remind the inhabitants of the benefits of justice and stable rule, and the triumph of order over that of chaos.

Finally, the new year festival has left its mark on the contemporary Assyrian; where to this day, they indulge in the game of luck (fortune telling) with the hope of knowing their fortune for the coming year and from this tradition developed the habit of gambling practiced by some Assyrians on New Year's Eve. Also, present day Assyrians living in the northern villages of Bet-Nahrain place a bunch of green grass (or NISSAN'S BEARD) on the thresholds or lintels of their houses on the 1st day of Nissan, an indication of green pastures, fertility and prosperity in the new year.

Another custom inherited from these festivals is on the 10th of Nissan, the day of the sacred marriage of Ashur and Ishtar, as mentioned earlier, a large number of marriage ceremonies took place on the same day in different Assyrian cities. Consequently, it was impractical to hold every marriage celebration separately, but instead the brides paid a visit to every house in their city. To this day, the Assyrians uphold this tradition whereby on Ascension Day (KALO SOLAQA) groups of young brides visit every house in their village (or city) and they receive presents which then they share or distribute among the brides of each group. We can also attribute to the "April Fool" to what took place on the fifth day of the New Year festival where the god disappeared and disorder prevailed.

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## 10 Questions With Etiquette Expert Lisa Mirza Grotts

By Allison Pacatte | September 10, 2021

Courtesy of SF Magazine; sanfran.com

San Francisco-based etiquette expert Lisa Mirza Grotts has proven to be everyone's go-to gal for advice from wedding to travel etiquette and everything in between. Lisa dispenses her pearls of wisdom: compassion, consideration, and civility to help her readers and clients deal with business, social, and political situations. As a "new school" etiquette expert, Lisa honors traditional rules and melds them with the changing times. Her approach is to redefine traditional practices and put others on a path of making informed and intuitive decisions. According to Lisa, "When behavior comes from that level of kindness and respect, it can be powerful and transformative."

### How did you receive your etiquette credentials?

After working as Director of Protocol for Mayor Willie Brown, I attended protocol school in Washington D.C., became a certified etiquette expert, and established LisaGrotts.com. My clients have included KPMG, Oracle, Levi Strauss, American Airlines, Stanford Hospital, and more. I have also been lucky enough to be featured in some of the world's top business and lifestyle publications, pen a manners blog for *The Huffington Post*, and author *A Traveler's Passport to Etiquette*.

**Is there anyone who helped you get to where you are?** My Christian Assyrian family who emigrated to the United States from the Middle East in 1958. Their story is the American dream come true, and I would not be standing in my shoes without them. When I give advice, it's often based on my family values.

### What is your business motto?

You can have everything in the world, but what matters most is your behavior and how you treat other people.

### What is your most marked characteristic?

My sense of humor.

### How has the pandemic changed your business?

We fell asleep in March of 2020 and woke up in the Twilight Zone. That's when the Covid Golden Rules were born. How we treated others took center stage and made us realize what's truly important.



### Which etiquette phrases do you most overuse?

The Lisa-isms are never-ending; we get when we give; when you're nice to people, they're nice back; do nice things for others without expecting anything in return, and sharing is caring.

### Why is philanthropy important to you?

For the past 20 years, I have shown appreciation for my good fortune by raising money for nonprofits, including the Assyrian Aid Society, San Francisco Suicide Prevention, and San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Currently, I volunteer at UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and raise money for Saint Baldrick's Foundation.

### Who is your real-life hero?

My 18-year-old niece Charlotte, a five-time bone cancer survivor.

### What is your most treasured possession?

My family, whom I consider my joy luck club.

### Can you share any career highlights?

Covering the royal weddings of Prince William and Prince Harry for *The Nob Hill Gazette* and *The Huffington Post*. My husband John and I are members of the Royal Enclosure at Royal Ascot, and we support The Prince of Wales Foundation. I also serve at the pleasure of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth in the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem.

# Youel A. Baaba

## Author, Educator, Philanthropist

By  
Pnoel Y. Shamun

Courtesy of AFA Archive

A gracious man, Youel A. Baaba was known to many Assyrians for his knowledge of Assyrian history, language and literature. He published a vast number of books, articles and journals. He also helped to create the Assyrian Calendar in Tehran, Iran, as well as in Baghdad, Iraq. He was praised for his efforts to improve the Assyrian printer press that led to increased speed of Assyrian publications. In his personal library, he kept many books, journals, recordings and writings that he spent years collecting and assembling. Two examples of respected books he wrote in the English language are: "An Assyrian Odyssey" and "The Assyrian Homeland Before World War I." In the Assyrian language, he produced "Gilgamish" and "Memories of Being Rejected," among other impressive writings.

In a commentary written by Youel, he acknowledges the difficulties related to promoting Assyrian language publications:

*"Today there are many books written by Assyrian writers and poets that are not available to the reading public. This is due to a lack of established publication facilities, financial support, and interest in the Assyrian language and literature. Admittedly, the segment of Assyrian society that has the capability to read and appreciate these literary works is small, especially in these United States of America. However, there is still a need to promote publication and distribution of these works."*

Youel was born in Baghdad, Iraq on July 23, 1930 to Mariam and Abraham. His siblings were his brother, Emmanuel (who later lived in California and had 1 son and 1 daughter), and his 2 sisters, Almas Toma (who lived in Australia and had 4 daughters) and Mable Fryer (who lived in Germany and had 3 sons). Youel's daughter is Sargina Grey (who has a son and a daughter) and his son, Ramon (who has a son and daughter who reside in California).

Youel loved books and reading. His mother instilled in him a love of education, Christianity and Assyrian nationalism. He also loved to exercise in his youth and had a passion for sports. His favorite activities were football and boxing.

Youel completed his primary and secondary education in Iraq, then came to USA to further his studies. He received his Bachelor's degree from San Jose State University. His successful career began when he was hired by Bechtel Corporation in San Francisco to work as an engineer at their Refinery and Chemical Division. To advance further, he studied and got an MBA degree from Golden Gate University in San Francisco. It did not take long before his talent and diligence were recognized by his superiors and he was propelled to an even higher position. In 1984, Youel was assigned to the position of Project Manager of the



Kasim Refinery to be built in Saudi Arabia. This huge project of over a billion dollars was staffed with over 600 personnel covering all engineering disciplines, procurement, and administration.

His passion and dedication to his people became evident in the 1970's and 80's, when over 40 Assyrians working at Bechtel Corporation, at the time, acquired their employment with Youel's help. In 1996, he became Program Manager and Vice President at Lyondell-Citgo to build a one million dollar refinery in Houston, Texas. In this capacity, he managed 7 major petro-chemical construction companies such as Bechtel, Brown and Root, Zachary and others. Here again, he was instrumental in helping Assyrians find employment. His interest and passion for Assyrians was lifelong. He was truly a proud Assyrian who dedicated his life to assist his people.

Youel A. Baaba and Julius Shabbas joined the Assyrian Foundation of America (AFA) together. During the 1966 AFA board election, Youel was elected as President, a position he held for many years thereafter. Some of the important decisions and actions taken under his leadership that helped to establish the AFA as the highly respected and trusted organization that is today are :

1. Updating and printing of the Bylaws.
2. Achieving a nonprofit tax-exempt status.
3. Opening the financial statements for all members to review.
4. Publishing a newsletter announcing AFA activities. (This newsletter was later taken up by Julius Shabbas who developed in into the beautiful Nineveh Magazine that AFA members are proud of to this day.)

At 80 years of age, Youel suffered from cancer and spent much time with doctors and in hospitals. At the end, he succumbed to his illness, passing away on February 3, 2010. Following a fitting church sermon in honor of this exceptional Assyrian, the assembly attended the eulogy service. Among the family attendees were Youel's sister Almas who came from Australia, his brother Emmanuel, and other family members and friends. One of the speakers was his young nephew (his brother Emmanuel's son) who gave a touching and impressive speech. The loss of Youel A. Baaba was not only a loss to his family and friends, but also a significant loss to Assyrians everywhere. May God bless his soul.

# William Daniel's Speech at the Assyrian Association of San Francisco, August, 1977

Transcribed from a Cassette Tape

By Prof. Arianne Ishaya

In 1977 The Assyrian American Association of San Francisco invited the Late Rabi William Daniel to come to California from Chicago in order to participate in a program in his honor.

The organizer of the program was the Late Youra Tamraz, an Assyrian nationalist and a promoter of Assyrian literary and artistic achievements.

Rabi William was not only the guest of honor but also the guest speaker at that event.

The careful reader will notice that the speech is not only in the genre of social critique, but it is also an exquisite piece of literary expression. Almost every sentence is embellished by imagery, figures of speech, and idioms in the Assyrian language rooted in a tradition of farming and village life. Translating the speech does not do justice to its literary value, but the original is also printed in the Assyrian section for those who can read the mother tongue.

Arianne Ishaya

And now the speech:

Dear guests, whatever honor you have bestowed upon me, you have bestowed it upon yourselves because you see your own image in me since we are from one flesh and blood all striving to be useful to our nation in need.

Friends, in order to fulfill a task to its best, the person who undertakes it, has a great responsibility as there are many conditions to be met. When a speaker takes on the burden of speaking to a group of listeners, that person has made a serious commitment that he/she needs to keep in mind. Such as:

1. Whether to say that which will please the listeners, as many do; or to reveal a truth that might not be pleasing to the ear.
2. Who am I to be the judge, what right do I have to esteem one or to belittle another?
3. Or, if I choose to boast about our forefathers for their fame and civilization before the Christian era or applaud the achievements of our people during the Christian era as the missionaries who spread the new religion without any expectation of monetary compensation and then claim all these achievements as our own, do I deserve to be cheered by my audience? Did I complete my responsibility? Was this that which was expected of me? Undoubtedly words of praise are an ointment to the wounds of the listeners, they give rest to sore limbs. But am I fulfilling my duty? If I am afraid to reveal the truth, therefore, I hide it under silky words, or wrap it in the folds of velvety phrases, have I fulfilled my duty? Even if I receive the applause of my audience, what about the judge inside, which is with me whether I am asleep or awake? What about my conscience? What will be my answer to it? When I am asked, "Did you put to good use the talents given you?" Can I answer and say, "I was worried that my words would not be accepted, therefore I did not speak the truth?"

Issues such as these or similar points need to be taken into consideration when a speaker stands before an expecting audience, people who have left their tasks

and given their time to come and hear the views of the speaker, compare them to their own thoughts, and evaluate them in the hope that what they learn will be of some benefit in their life.

So, friends, a conscientious speaker must communicate his message truthfully and clearly for the sole purpose of benefitting the listeners and fulfilling their expectations.

Now I turn to the subject of my speech:

The purpose of my talk is to draw a picture or show you a reflection of our social activities as seen in a broken mirror.

If this picture [of our social activities] was reflected in a broken mirror, it would show different pieces of historical events some of which have a meaning and others which do not.

It is the picture of our associations from the time they opened their eyes to a new world. It is the picture of their infancy: crawling, babbling, falling down, crying, laughing, and activities among those who considered themselves older and wiser.

Was there someone to teach them?

Our leaders were prompted from the beginning with the zeal of nationalism and national goals. But most of those who followed them had no idea what was the significance of nation or nationalism. They were content with meeting together in a foreign country, with an unfamiliar language and culture. Everything was strange to them and depressing. Their only consolation was the pay they received at the end of every week as they waited in anticipation to meet their friends again the next week after seven days' hard work among strangers. They could not wait to be with friends and enjoy speaking their own language and reminiscing about their life in the old country. They took pleasure in spending some hours in each other's company.

What about their leaders? On what did they place their hope? With no money, no country, no, discipline, no training, what did they expect to accomplish? We might not be too far from the mark if we predict that they were expecting that international political organizations would fulfill their needs. If this was their expectation, then it looks like they were not experienced enough to know that a people with no backing, no homeland, nothing worthy to sell, would be of no interest to political powers. This they would learn later. But at the beginning, we see that they were often trying to educate their friends in the civilized world about their centuries-old missionary activities and sacrifices for Christ in Asia and Africa at a great cost to their life. These unfortunate ones did not know this was an account between them and their God. That saving lives for Christ did not carry value in the world's bank account.

They had not yet learned the motto, "It is the day of the survival of the fittest." In other words, stand on your own two feet if you can, if not, may God have mercy on you.

As they waited for a better outcome with the help from above, these leaders, and with them, the ones who fasted for them, began to baptize their associations with hollow words and with titles such as Atour, Nineveh, Umta, Unity, etc. These were names with impressive echoes, but it was not the deeper meaning of these names with deep roots in the distant past, buried in the depth of the earth, that awakened this newly rising generation from slumber. No. It was the thunder of their echoes that startled them and pulled them from dust and grime to become the inheritors of a treasure, of wealth so immense that they could not even have fathomed in their wildest dreams. We can imagine the effects of this condition on the mind of these newly awakened nationalists

with words such as these: Really, I am an Assyrian? I thought we had perished. I swear to you, I am ready to lay my life down to my country Atour.

What did they understand by "Atour" or "Umta"? Of course in all sincerity, according to their understanding, they were ready to sacrifice their life for Atour. That is praiseworthy. But then what? What would be the outcome of their sacrifice? There was no depth or foresight in it. Like the seed that sprouts somewhere. It withers right away because of the lack of depth in the soil. What did those who were awakened from the slumber of ages need? What did they need to sustain their awakening? What did they lack as resources and capabilities? We can more easily answer this question if we turn it to its wrong side as though a garment. So, we will ask: What did they possess in order to actualize their national zeal? Answer: Nothing. They had nothing. The picture we see is that of a joker in the camp who bangs his long scoop on an empty pot and announces, "Come and get it." The starving chap runs to the empty pot when he hears the clacking on the pot and longingly looks to the right and to the left and asks, "Get what?" There is nothing. Emptiness reigns in the cold air. Crazy with hunger and cold, the contenders begin to argue with one another. Each accuses the other. The arguments become louder and lead to fistfights until they all fall to the ground exhausted and dismayed.

My friends, weeping and laughing, grief or joy are found as opposites in the same emotional field. Just like two ends of a stick they are the farthest points from one another. But if you bend the stick, they become the closest points to each other. In the same way, these desperate people, in the depths of sorrow and despair, suddenly find solace in dance and amusement, because there is no more room left to sink further into despair. The alternative is either madness or suddenly something worse. This is a common occurrence. You find people suddenly laugh when they are in the grip of despair.

This has been one of the theatrical aspects of our associations.

But the fire of nationalism is some strange fire. Once alight, it is not easy to extinguish. But you have to find fuel to keep it aflame; else it will devour you. The type of fuel reflects the quality of the fire. What I mean is the way each defines "nationalism", will affect his actions. In other words, in what type of furrow does one plant one's seeds? Or, what type of fuel is used to keep his Tanura (oven) warm?

The outcome is that each person finds his/her own way to find the fuel that will keep his fire aflame.

As they gather around their national fires, do these zealots learn anything? The broken mirror reflects a positive image. The image indicates now they have learned how to argue officially with phrases such as "Point of Order; I second the motion. Special Committee, General Body". These phrases are used regularly.

As they busy themselves making resolutions that are on their agenda, the anxious nation is asked to hold on until they resolve their issues.

Then we find out that the associations have agreed to unite and form a federation.

I am sorry to say, that is a weak union because it lacks the power to implement its goal beyond the words on the paper of which it is written. The associations gather once a year to celebrate the inauguration of their union. The visitors are dazzled by seeing the luxury hotel buildings, the decorations inside, the soft carpets, the vast halls, the sounds of trumpets and handclaps. Swayed back and forth by drinks, their chest swells by boastful speeches about unification, power, national success, and progress. They are cheered by the sounds of clapping by their supporters. And the expenses of the opulent hotels come from the "national budget" that is, the people.

After three days of celebrations, they wake up sobered and find out from the hundreds

and thousands of dollars spent, only pocket money is left for the federation and the association in whose town the celebration was hosted for three days. And that is divided by the use of the system, one for you, one for me. To the poor nation with stretched hands for help is said, "It didn't work this year, wait until next year

My good friends, this is the result of material gain. But what about the educational gain? "Sorry, on that subject, it is not in our power to give you a report."

These activities, while year after year are growing in size and pump, they are getting away farther and farther from the original objectives upon which they were founded.

My good friends, the paramount trend that prevails in our society today leads to activities that are of no benefit to our nation in need. These activities only dazzle the eyes, estrange people from the essentials, and demoralize them. This is because we are kept busy with useless activities to divert us from useful activities. Let us be aware of this.

With this critique, my goal is not to belittle the associations that have accomplished many good deeds. In them are found devoted members with goals and deeds that benefit our people. But alas, their virtuous thoughts die as they are drowned in the wave of selfishness and goose chasing. Let us just say that "The dry ones burn among the wet ones."

No, my intention was not to dismiss good deeds or to belittle the worthy members of our associations of whom there are many.

I just want to draw a picture of our activities as seen in a broken mirror which reflects that not only we have been late in starting educational programs, but that we were not ready and well-equipped to do so. In spite of this, we are not trying to remedy our weaknesses. When the intertwined strands of yarn are twisted, we do not attempt to find the loose end but grab any strand that comes to hand. Therefore we fall on a course full of difficulties. When we want to build, we start with the top story before laying down the foundation. Not only that, we put in the mix, unsuitable substances. Ones that an experienced engineer will not endorse. How sturdy do you think such a building will be?

Friends, it is time to wake up to our shortcomings. It is time to build up our monetary resources and to develop our educational capabilities. But if we do not admit our shortcomings, if we do not wake up to our weaknesses, we will not seek a remedy. We will weaken day after day. We must admit that we are sick to take the first step for a cure. So that the source of zeal and the sense of devotion can come to life in us. So that we can use our abilities in activities more fruitfully, more productively than the ones we have done thus far. If we closely examine the social situation of our people and do not let carelessness make us insensitive, we will notice the degree of mayhem within which we find ourselves; one which allows Wolves in the shape of sheep to penetrate our folds and bring severe damage.

These play actors entice the crowds with flattery and the sound of their bagpipes and drums covering up the ailments that exist. So essential goals are drowned in the roaring music of our parties. Consequently, we hear some say "Forget nation and nationalism. Focus on your own work. Why are you wasting your time?" But others, one in ten, say, "My business is my nation because I am the nation and the nation is me. I am so selfish that I love my nation for myself and I love myself because of my nation.

I wish the book of Kateeny Gabbara was with me; I would have read a few passages relevant to this.

Now, my friends, as we looked into the past and the present in the broken mirror, we see that it is being shattered into even more pieces due to our hot disputes which distort the image further. But it also shows that there are some who attempt to work and lead with devotion while others are trying to catch fish in murky waters.

So it is time to ask ourselves, "What do we want, and that which we want, is it in our power to do it?" As long as we have not answered that question we will be groping in darkness. If we want to dream big dreams, we must start from the beginning. If we want to go a thousand miles, we need to start with step one. If we want to build from top to bottom, our building will not have a foundation. We will fail and fall down in defeat and despair. We must get busy with deeds that are within our power. Those we need most. It is a fact that Man is constantly in search of ways that are more helpful, more practical. Movement is a sign of life; standing in one place is the sign of stagnation and death.

Although my knowledge of the activities of associations in this state is very limited, it looks like they are on a more progressive path than a few others. I hope I am not mistaken. But do not let a little progress become a soft pillow under our head to put us asleep. We must be constantly looking for our shortcomings and try to overcome them wisely. It is very important to examine ahead of time and find out if the new step we are taking is a weapon for disputes, or is aimed for progress and success.

We have great respect for all the attempts that are made for educational attainments. And those who try to find different strategies for the prosperity of our nation. But when we see the lack of progress because of the name under which we identify ourselves, we think that if we change our name, then success will roll towards us on oiled wheels. But after some time, we realize, with broken hearts that the horse is the same. Only the saddle has changed.

Friends, a name is only a shell. What is important is what type of seed lies inside the shell. To keep the seed healthy, we do not need to decorate the shell with tinsels. We must take care of the roots of the tree by fertilizing it, protecting it, and watering it. We need to search with seriousness, diligence, and a sound mind to find the needs that must be fulfilled.

If we search with this objective, we will find that we need centers where our literary and artistic endowments are enriched, and our traditions are preserved. We need welfare organizations to help the needy, a small clinic where those who cannot afford access to large hospitals can be looked after. These are all doable and can be accomplished through community organizations from which all the thorns are removed. We need a community association in which the elements of selfish pursuits or jealousy from all its branches, either personal or on group level are cast out.

Let this state, by its cultural accomplishments, be not only an example of success for all the Assyrian organizations throughout the world but also a source of pride for the government of this country that has provided us with valuable opportunities like freedom, financial help regardless of our numbers, opportunities for educational achievements in order to make us worthy members of the American society.

At the same time, we must not fall into the trap of forgetting our Assyrian identity and not cease from advancement. We need to have a national fund without which we will be impoverished; and practical wisdom which will be a heavenly light to guide our path. Thank you.

xxx

## Assyrians in Modern Iraq Negotiating Political and Cultural Space

**Alda Benjamen**

*University of California, Berkeley*

Examining the relationship between a strengthened Iraqi state under the Ba'ath regime and the Assyrians, a Christian ethno-religious group, Alda Benjamen studies the role of minorities in twentieth-century Iraqi political and cultural history. Relying on extensive research in Iraq, including sources uncovered at the Iraqi National Archives in Baghdad, as well as in libraries and private collections in Erbil, Duhok, and Mosul, in Arabic and modern Aramaic, Benjamen foregrounds the Iraqi periphery as well as the history of bilingualism to challenge the monolingual narrative of the state. By exploring the role of Assyrians in Iraq's leftist and oppositional movements, including gendered representations of women, she demonstrates how, within newly politicized urban spaces, minorities became attracted to intellectual and political movements that allowed them to advance their own concerns while engaging with other Iraqis of their socio-economic background and relying on transnational community networks. Assyrian intellectuals not only negotiated but also resisted government policies through their cultural production, thereby achieving a softening of Ba'athist policies towards the Assyrians that differed markedly from those of later repressive eras.

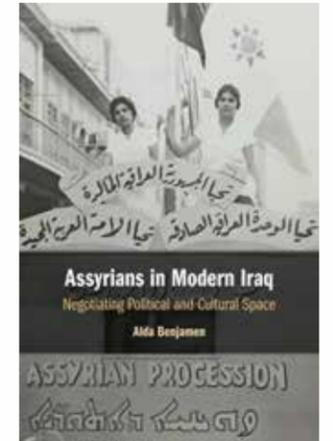
Preface; Introduction: Identity, Urbanization, and Citizenship; 1. Assyrians and the Iraqi Communist Party; 2. The Role of Assyrians and Communists in the Kurdish uprising (1961–1975); 3. Between Reconciliation and Repression: Ba'athist Policies Towards the Assyrians in the 1970s; 4. Compliance, Negotiation, Resistance: Assyrian Press and Popular Culture (1970s–1980s); 5. The Re-establishment of the Assyrian Nationalist Political Movement (1970s–1980s); Conclusion; Appendix 1: Census Data Tables; Appendix 2: The 'Simele' song; Bibliography.

'In a persuasive, well-researched, clearly written synthesis, Benjamen offers an objective and detailed study. Placing Assyrians within the historic context of the Iraqi state and the cultural mosaic of modern Iraqi history and politics, her book represents a welcome addition to the literature, and fills an important void.'

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'Benjamen's groundbreaking study examines Assyrians as Iraqis, Christians, and political activists who moved within regional, national, and international networks. Historians of the Middle East will appreciate her nuanced appraisal of pluralism and diversity, which draws attention to the small towns and landscapes of northern Iraq.'

**Heather J. Sharkey,**  
*University of Pennsylvania*



**February 2022**

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Hardback 978-1-108-83879-5

<i>Original price</i>	<i>Discount price</i>
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'Benjamen's timely book offers an original, extensive, and meticulously researched exploration of Assyrian history during a critical period of the twentieth century. Benjamen not only locates Assyrian experiences within Iraq's social, political, and cultural context but also considers their essential place within the study of minorities and Christians in the Middle East. *Assyrians in Modern Iraq* is a much-needed study that will surely set the tone for future examinations of an understudied topic.'

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*Middlebury College*

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**IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
PROFESSOR EUGENE INVIEVITCH GIVARGIZOV**  
(EUGENE BIT-GIVARCIZ BAR-INVIA)

87, PASSED AWAY PEACEFULLY ON  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2022, IN MOSCOW, RUSSIA.

Prof. Givargizov was born in 1934 in the village of Urmia (Krasnodar region, Russia). His father was the famous Assyrian educator, Raabi Inwia Givargizov (Bet-Giwargis). Prof. Givargizov graduated from the local high school with honors in 1952 and in the same year he entered Moscow State University. In 1958 he graduated from the Faculty of Physics with honors.

Prof. Givargizov devoted his entire life to the advancement of science and his work in the Institute of Crystallography at the Russian Academy of Sciences. In 1965 he completed his PhD in Physics and Mathematics, and ten years later earned his doctorate in the Science of Crystallography.

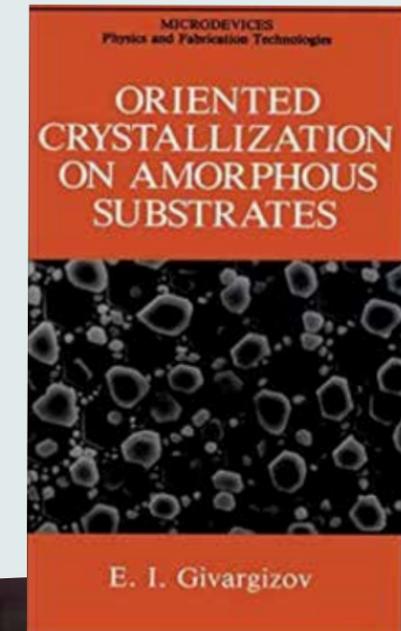
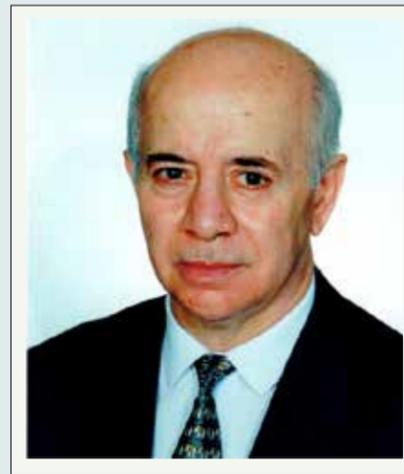
Prof. Givargizov has over 300 published articles in the scientific journals, including the American journals; four books, two of which were also published in English. These books were ordered by the American and Japanese publishing houses, Plenum Press (New York) and Terra Scientific (Tokyo, Japan). He was also a member of the editorial boards of such international journals as the Progress in Crystal Growth (Pergamon Press, UK) and Innovations in Materials (Springer, Germany).

Because of his close collaboration with the American scientists, Prof. Givargizov visited the United States on many occasions. In 1982 and 1990 he worked on a research project with the American scholars at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California.

Crystallography was not the only subject matter to which Eugene devoted his life. He loved his people and spent a great deal of time and effort on building a strong Assyrian community in Russia. During the Soviet Union era, while traveling around the world for his work, he was able to find Assyrian organizations in America and Europe. Later, after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, he assisted the Assyrians of Russia to connect with the other Assyrian diasporas.

Prof. Givargizov played a significant role in helping his son, Mikhail Givargizov, create the Assyrian dance group "Shamiram". He accompanied the group on tours in Europe and the United States.

He also loved spending time in his beloved village of Urmia, where he was born and raised. He made frequent visits, spending time with his childhood friends and family. In 2004, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of Urmia's establishment, Prof. Givargizov published the book "The History of Urmia".



Eugene is survived by his wife, Zinaida; children, Atouria, Ilya, Mikhail; grandchildren, Shamiram, Elizabeth, Givargis, Nineveh, Eugene Jr; his sisters Alla and Yulia Georgizov, his younger brother, Oleg Georgizov; great grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

*Eugene was buried in the village of Urmia in Russia, next to his mother, Serafima and father, Inwia.*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
**DR REBECCA “NORA” BET-ALKHAS IRANI**

AUGUST 26, 1933 – NOVEMBER 3, 2021

Dr Rebecca “Nora” Bet-Alkhas Irani, 88, the first Assyrian woman physician in Iran and the Middle East who was a pioneer in setting standards for women, passed away peacefully on Wednesday November 3, 2021 in New York City.



*Dr Rebecca Nora Bet-Alkhas in 2014*

Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani, also known as Dr Nora, was not only the first Assyrian woman physician in Iran and the Middle East, but also, she was most likely the first Assyrian woman physician world-wide of modern times in the post-18th century era. Dr Nora was among the first wave of Iranian-educated doctors who went to the United States or Europe for their training and residency in the 1950’s and chose to return to their country, Iran. This generation, which included Dr Nora’s late husband, Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour, brought back with them the latest in medical techniques and knowledge and led their country’s modernization in medicine. They were at the forefront of the Pahlavi dynasty’s efforts to modernize Iran’s medical system and healthcare infrastructure in the 1960s and 1970s until the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Dr. Bet-Alkhas Irani was a staunch advocate of women’s rights as well as a devoted mother and wife. She was a trailblazer in the Iran and the Middle East of 1940’s and 1950’s, where she firmly believed in the rights of women to choose their professional paths in life. She also firmly believed that, if married, family and motherhood were a woman’s most important responsibility. She lived by example with and in this duality and was an inspiration to many women in the Middle East as well as in Europe and the United States where she emigrated after the Iranian Revolution.

Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani was born on August 26, 1933 in Urmia, Azerbaijan, a province in Northwestern Iran. Her mother, Luba David, originally from Berdyansk, Ukraine (formerly, in Russia and later Soviet Union), was a couturier to the court of Iran while her father, Elisha Bet-Alkhas Irani, was a businessman. Dr Nora had one older brother, Michael, and two younger brothers, John and Joseph.

Upon the Soviet occupation of Azerbaijan in 1941, Dr Nora and her family escaped from Urmia and moved to Tehran via Hamadan. She graduated from Anoushirvan Dadgar, a women-only high school in Tehran, and set her sights on enrolling into the medical school of Tehran University for which she had to take and pass a highly competitive national university entrance exam, the “conours”. Dr Nora’s father had no intention of allowing her to take this exam nor of allowing his daughter to attend university as he believed a woman’s place in society to be that of wife and mother. Dr Nora, however, would not allow her father to dictate her life or derail her ambitions. In secret and in defiance of her father, she studied for and took the highly competitive university entrance exam. She placed in the top ten out of the thousands of students who took the exam which qualified her to enroll in the medical school.

At Tehran University Faculty of Medicine, Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani was one of only a handful of women students studying medicine in the Iran of the early 1950’s where women rarely studied beyond primary school. After graduating in 1956, she went to the United States for her internship and residency in pediatrics. Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani married Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour in Chicago, Illinois, where she was training as an intern. Once again, as a pioneer of women’s rights, she saw no need to change her last name to her husband’s as she already had a career and was established as a medical doctor.

After her marriage, Dr Nora moved to New York City for her residency in pediatrics at Booth Memorial Hospital, now New York Presbyterian Queens, as her husband was doing his residency in gynecology and surgery at New York University-Bellevue. Together, they returned to Iran in 1960 where they set up their private practice as well as working at Pars Hospital, the most prestigious hospital in Iran at that time. Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani also actively advised on pediatric healthcare infrastructure with various Iran’s Ministry of Health.

*#4: Dr Rebecca Nora Bet-Alkhas with her husband Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour in Tehran in 1976*



*#5: Dr Nora with her husband Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour and His Holiness Mar Dinkha IV at the Assyrian Elementary School of the East in Tehran in 1972*



*Dr Rebecca Nora Bet-Alkhas in 1959*



*Dr Nora at The Unveiling of the Flag of Assyria in 1970 at the Assyrian Youth Center of Tehran with George Bet-Atanous (artist-designer of the flag) and her husband, Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour (at the podium)*

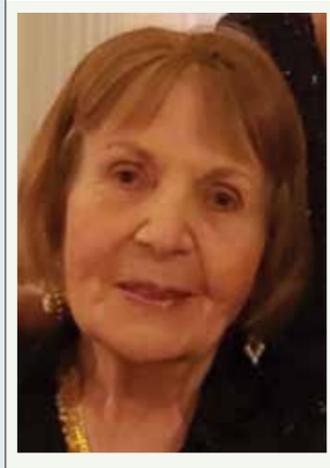
*Dr Rebecca Nora Bet-Alkhas at the Tehran University Faculty of Medicine in 1954*

Dr Nora and her husband together with their peers founded Jam Hospital in Tehran in 1968 with the aim of creating a modern first-class state of the art medical facility in Iran and the entire Middle East devoted to patient care. To this day, Jam Hospital is still one of the best modern state of the art hospitals in Iran and the Middle East. The demands of motherhood, however, led to Dr Nora’s decision to withdraw from her partnership in Jam hospital after a couple years in order to focus on raising her young children and her flourishing private pediatrics practice. In this duality of a consummate devoted physician and advocate for women’s rights as well as a loving and devoted mother, Dr Nora chose a path that placed motherhood and family at the forefront without fully sacrificing her career.

Dr Nora had a thriving practice. Her devotion to her patients was legendary and unconventional for the medical field of then and especially now. She would spend so much time with each patient such that the waiting room of her office would always be busy well into the late evenings. Her aim was to ensure that mothers and fathers were clear of every detail of care of their children. Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani’s patients were devoted to her. So much so that one of her patients saved her husband’s life in revolutionary Iran. Her husband, the late Dr Wilson Bet-Mansour, was a political figure in pre-revolutionary Iran as the Member of Parliament Representative of Assyrians and as the founder and first secretary general of the Assyrian Universal Alliance. Dr Nora’s husband was imprisoned by the revolutionary government because of his political activities. Unbeknownst to Dr Nora, the father of several of her patients was the right-hand man of Khomeini, the cleric who led the Iranian Revolution deposing the Shah of Iran: This very father saved her husband’s life.

Dr Bet-Alkhas Irani continued her private medical practice in post-revolutionary Iran for several years after which she emigrated to the United States to be with her family. As an immigrant to the United States, she lectured and consulted on pediatrics. Dr Nora was an inspiration to women from all walks of life and nationalities as they regularly sought her advice on life and career choices and how to balance motherhood and family with their careers and professional aspirations. Men and women alike were galvanized by her to be better, to do better and to leave the world a better place. Dr Nora is survived by her daughter, Eunice, her son, Raman, two grandchildren, Sabrina and Ayrtou and her brother, John.

**IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
FLORENCE ADAM**  
JANUARY 1930 – JANUARY 2022



Florence Adam was born in January of 1930 in Mosul, Northern, Iraq (Assyria). Her father was Eramia Badal and her mother was Maria Sarkis, both from Shirabat, Urmia, Iran. Florence grew up in Mosul until she graduated from Thanawiyat El Mosul Lilbanat, Mosul's girls high school. After graduation, she moved with her family to Baghdad where she worked as a teacher. There, she met and married Baba Adam. Then moved to Kirkuk, as he worked for IPC. Once there, she taught at the private Assyrian elementary school, while raising 3 children: Gilbert, Robert, and Raman. Florence and her family immigrated to the United States in 1970, starting a new chapter of her life. At Central Bank's Data Systems, she worked in Data Systems for over 17 years. Unfortunately, she had to quit her job to take care of Baba who had been sick for 8 years until he passed away in 1997.

Florence was an elegant lady and enjoyed traveling. She was also well-known for her extraordinary cooking skills. The last couple of years of her life were very challenging, as a result of ill health and having lost her middle son Robert to cancer. She was admitted to the hospital on November 23, 2021 and passed away on Friday, January 14, 2022. Her sons Gilbert and Raman were at her side, as well as her grandson Andrew, cousin Norma, and niece Cynthia.

Florence leaves behind her sons Gilbert and Raman; her grandchildren Christopher, Andrew and Catherine; her cousin Norma (who was frequently at her bedside during her illness); her nieces Cynthia, Brenda and Laura; her Nephew Danny; her sisters-in-law Gladys, Alice, Barbara, Jane, and Zareepa, as well as other relatives in California, Illinois, Canada, and Germany.

Florence was a much loved and appreciated member of the Mar Narsai Parish in San Francisco, as well as of the Assyrian Foundation of America. Because of her inherent grace and kindness, she will be missed by all who knew her. May she rest in peace.



**List of Assyrian Foundation of America Donors**

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David Farhad	\$60.00		\$60.00		
David Farhad	\$60.00	\$30.00	\$30.00		
Dr. Peter Kiryakos	\$500.00		\$250.00	\$250.00	
Edba Hovagimian	\$25.00		\$25.00		
Flora Ashouri Kingsbury	\$250.00	\$250.00			
Florence Adam	\$100.00	\$100.00			
Florence Bet George	\$400.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$100.00 <i>In Memory of Francis Bet Ishu</i>
George & Regina Nissan	\$150.00		\$150.00		
George BetShhlimon & Dr. Dolphine Oda	\$1,000.00			\$1,000.00	
Gerohe BetShhlimon & Dr. Dolphine Oda	\$40.00		\$40.00		
Hubert & Blandina Adams	\$100.00				\$100.00 <i>In Memory of Florence Adam</i>
Janet Yonan	\$100.00				\$100.00 <i>In Memory of Florence Adam</i>
Jean Flint & Carolyn Simon	\$100.00				\$100.00 <i>In Memory of Florence Adam</i>
Marina Odisho	\$100.00				\$100.00 <i>In Memory of Florence Adam</i>
Narsai & Venie David	\$250.00	\$250.00			
Paul & Sue Odah	\$120.00	\$60.00		\$60.00	
Raman & Flora Essa	\$100.00			\$100.00	
Rev. George Shahbaz	\$30.00		\$30.00		
Robert Oshana	\$100.00		\$100.00		
Solomon & Shmoney Eshu	\$50.00	\$50.00			
Vladimir Lazari	\$40.00		\$40.00		
Youhana Khosrowabadi	\$50.00		\$50.00		
					<i>Birthday Wishes</i>

\*The amounts listed are charitable donations only and exclude subscription fees and membership dues.

## Model of the Prophet Jonah: Ancient Israeli Ambassador to the Land of Assyria

By Dr. Yaacov Maoz  
Courtesy of SeyfoCenter.com

In 1985, the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality (Israel) erected a statue by Ilana Gur “The Smiling Whale” near the port of the Old City of Yafo (Jaffa). Since then, the whale statue has become an integral part of the city’s landscape and everyone who’s seen it has learned about the ancient biblical drama that links the fate of the Assyrian nation to its Jewish (Biblical) counterpart. The prophet Jonah was sent by God’s command to save Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire: “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim upon it” (Jonah 1: 2). He thus embarked on this epic journey from the port of Jaffa to the city, the name of which was changed by its Islamic conquerors to Mosul in today’s Iraq. Although Jonah tried to evade the mission, God (as God only can) found ways to return him to the path of prophecy. The rescue of Nineveh was more important than the well-being of the tormented Jewish prophet.

Thousands of years after this unique episode, at the end of November 2019, a group of Assyrian leaders from around the world, and several other Israelis, stood by the whale statue in Jaffa. They recounted the story of the prophet Jonah and the connection between the two nations, and the message was clear. Just as the Jewish nation mobilized to save the Assyrian nation in ancient times, so must the modern state of Israel do today. The Assyrian nation is scattered among the peoples of the world after a long series of extremely brutal persecutions, beginning with the genocide perpetrated by the Turks and Kurds in 1895-1925, continuing with the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and ending with the ISIS terrorist group.

As is well known, the most sacred day for Jews in the Hebrew calendar is Yom Kippur. This is a day of fasting that lasts about twenty-five hours and, for the most part, we pray to save ourselves from the judgment that God brings upon all creatures of the world. To illustrate the possibility of salvation, the ancient Jewish

sages prescribed the reading of the Book of Jonah in the middle of Yom Kippur. Every year, on the most holy day, we are reminded of the mission of the Jewish prophet to save the Assyrian people. This phenomenon has no equal in the entire Jewish religion.

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki draws our attention to the fact that “Nineveh was a great city for God” (Jonah 3: 3). He explains that the city received this special status because its people “were God-fearing since early times, and explains that it was a large and precious city in the eyes of God for him to destroy it... And if they were not the men of God from the beginning, he would not have sent the Prophet to them, and here we have seen that they returned in a complete repentance, which is unparalleled” (Rashi, Jonah 1: 2). Everyone who knows the Bible knows that there is no other important city for God other than Jerusalem. But here, Nineveh occupies an important place with Him next to Jerusalem. The people of Nineveh are the people of God and, therefore, the city of Nineveh is very important to God. Thus, if Nineveh is important to the God of Israel, it should also be important to the people of Israel.

Rabbi David Kimkhi provides us with another argument: “Why does the God of Israel care about the other peoples; and, God be blessed, wants the world to be in order?” (Radak, Jonah 1: 2). The God of Israel wants the inhabitants of the whole world to live in peace and security and, so, he bothered the prophet Jonah to go to great lengths and save another nation. As mentioned, Jonah did not want to go on this mission. The Book of Jonah does not explain the reason for his refusal to accept the mission. The sages explained this by saying that Jonah knew in advance that the kingdom of Assyria was to be used as a tool by God against Israel, “The angry whip of the Lord to bring down Israel who rebelled against God... and, when Jonah knew that from this mission evil would grow for Israel, therefore,

he thought he would not go on this mission” (Malbim, Jonah 1: 2. See also Jerusalem Talmud, Sanhedrin 56b).

On that occasion, Rabbi Meir Weiser says a most wonderful thing: “God wanted to show that Assyria has a greater right than Israel. That the Assyrians heard the words of the prophet and repented, and Israel hardened their necks and did not hear” (Malbim, *ibid.* See also *Shemot Rabbah*, 45a). If so, the Assyrians in this case are the model to be emulated by Israel. If they made such a repentance, we too would also do the same. There is no other example in the entire Bible where another people serve as a worthy model for Israel’s behavior. Moreover, the Torah warns us on many occasions “Shall ye not do; neither shall ye walk in their statutes” (Leviticus 18: 3), and elsewhere it states “Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23: 9). But this rule probably also has an

exception. The exception is the people of Nineveh and the Assyrians. Perhaps this is what the Torah meant by saying “For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him” (In Hebrew, the word meaning “to see” is also Ashur). We are all commanded to look straight at Assyria.

The exalted place of Nineveh in the eyes of God and in the eyes of Israel is also reflected in the tradition of Kabbalah. For example, in the “Tzemakh Tzedek,” Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson writes: “You should know, that Jonah is the secret of malkhut (kingship), and Nineveh is the secret of bina (supreme wisdom) and, therefore, Nineveh is called the ‘great city’ and, therefore, their sin was dependent on repentance, at fifty gates of wisdom. Thus, Jonah is Nineveh, for the repentance is in bina” (Book of Likutim, Jonah 1). Anyone familiar with the tree of life of Kabbalah (ilan ha-sefirot) knows that the bina, which represents Nineveh, is one of the top three sefirot (emanations).

One of the greatest leaders of Hasidic Judaism hence gives the “great city,” the capital of the kingdom of Assyria, such a high status in the deific system.

The end of the story is known: “So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD... And Jonah began to enter into the city a day’s journey, and he proclaimed, and said: ‘Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown.’ And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them... And God saw their works, that they

turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which He said He would do unto them; and He did it not” (Jonah 3:3-10). The story of the prophet Jonah also took root in the Assyrian tradition. With great resemblance to the Jews, the Assyrians also celebrate Bā’ūtā d-Nīnwāyē every year in fasting and prayers that last three days. This is another example

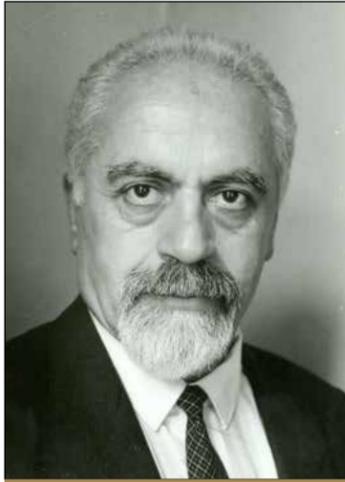
from which one can learn about the immense closeness between the two cultures. But above all, the story of the prophet Jonah and the rescue of Nineveh came to teach about the model of mutual guarantee between the two peoples, which we are commanded to do even today. The Committee for the Revival of Aramit-Ashurit Language in Israel sees itself as the modern Israeli ambassador to the Assyrian nation. Khayya Ashur, Khayya Israel!

*The author thanks Dr. Nicholas Al-Jeloo for editing this article*

*Dr. Yaacov Maoz is the chairperson of the Committee for the Revival of the Aramit-Ashurit (Assyrian-Aramaic) Language in Israel and is an activist for the promotion of Assyrian-Israeli relations. He is a lecturer in Jewish philosophy, author, poet, publicist and commentator on Jewish society on IDF Radio (Gali Tzahal).*



*“The Smiling Whale” by Ilana Gur in the Old City of Yafo (Jaffa)*



## Interview with: Stefan Sado Archimandrite of the Russian Orthodox Church

*Please tell us where you were born and raised and about your family?*

I was born in 1965 in Leningrad. My parents are Assyrian. My father Mikhail Yukha-novich Sado was born in Leningrad in 1934. His father arrived in Russia as a refugee after the Assyrian exodus from the Hakkari region in Turkey, where they used to live. They fled in 1915 and moved to Persia. It was during World War I, when the Russian army was at the Caucasian front. They lived in Persia for some time and then moved to Russia. My grandfather, Yekhanna bar Chalyu Sada, went to Mesopotamia (Iraq) in 1923. There he served in the Assyrian unit of the British army in Mosul. Then in 1927 he and his wife, Maria (my grandmother) and the whole family decided to return to Soviet Russia. They traveled through Beirut and Istanbul and arrived in Batumi and settled in the Caucasus. In 1930 grandfather Yekhanna moved to Leningrad. At that time, almost all Assyrians in Russian cities worked as shoe shiners and in small trades. It brought them enough income to support their families. My father was the third son in his family. His older brothers, Andrey and Givargiz, were born in Mosul and in Beirut respectively. In 1938, grandfather Yekhanna, like many Leningrad Assyrians, was arrested on espionage charges. Many were shot, and the rest were given 10-year sentences and sent to correctional labor camps.

*What was the main reason for these repressions?*

Assyrians were persecuted like many other ethnic groups on the count of espionage and working for various foreign intelligence services. Of course the charges were fabricated. Among the repressive operations of that time against Finns, Germans, Greeks, there was one against the Iranians. Among those arrested were Assyrians, as well as Armenians, Turks, and Persians. But the Assyrians were arrested mainly in regards to this operation, which began in February 1938. About 80 Assyrian men between the ages of 20 and 70 were arrested in Leningrad at the time. Of these, 50 were shot, and half of the remaining died in camps. But my grandfather survived, although he got a 10-year sentence. Then he was released and arrested again. He was finally freed after Stalin's death in 1953. His family - his wife Maria



By Pavel Bukreev, Moscow  
Translated from Russian by:  
Nina Georgizova

and their children - remained in the besieged Leningrad. In 1942 they were evacuated to the village of Urmia in the Kuban Region. After the War [WWII], they returned to Leningrad. My father was engaged in the classic wrestling. After serving the required military service, he became a student at the Leningrad University in the Faculty of Oriental Studies. He specialized in the Semitic languages - Assyrian, Arabic, Hebrew. Then he and his Russian friends organized an anti-Soviet organization.

*Was it a religious organization?*

It was more political, anti-communist, but with a Christian angle. In 1967 he was arrested and sentenced to 13 years in prison and a labor camp. He served 11 years and was released in the late 1970s. The last couple of years of his sentence he was no longer in a camp or colony. He was working at a construction site under supervision, where it was necessary to register daily. My older brother, George, and I finished high school. We grew up without a father, raised by our mother, grandmother and an uncle. Later, after his release, my father was admitted to the Theological Academy to teach Hebrew.

*Did he speak Hebrew well?*

Yes, he studied this language while in college and could teach the basics of this language. Also after his release, he founded the Assyrian school for young people and taught Assyrian language and culture.

*As far as I understand it was not an official school?*

Yes, you are correct, but the authorities allowed it. First the classes took place in our apartment, later in the community center. He had a lot of students who studied the Assyrian language, writing, and culture of the Assyrians.

*Do you speak Assyrian fluently?*

Unfortunately, I don't. I read Assyrian and understand it well when I hear Assyrians from the East. My father used

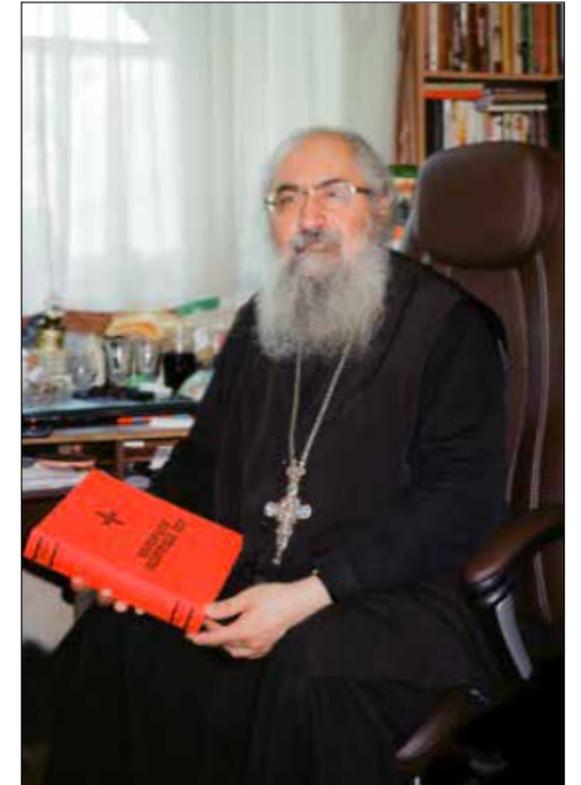
to organize cultural evenings in Leningrad and Moscow. He gathered Assyrians, always shared his knowledge, and took some students under his wing. Therefore, he was a famous person among the Assyrians in the Soviet Union. Shortly after finishing school I enrolled in the Theological Seminary and then continued my education at the Theological Academy. After that I took on priesthood and since then I have been serving first in the Theological Academy, and then in the Alexander Nevski Monastery. My father was always involved in different aspects of the Assyrian life and instilled it in me. He was my teacher. When studying at the seminary and later in the academy, I chose the history of the Russian spiritual mission in Urmia as my field of study. The mission worked for 20 years, from 1898 to 1918. Then, of course, when the Russian revolution happened, the mission ceased to exist. After my father's death in 2010, my brother and I published his book about the Assyrians of Leningrad. It is called "Martyrology of the Leningrad Assyrians".

*Did your father spend many years working on it?*

Yes, he collected materials on the oppressed Assyrians of Leningrad since the late 1990s, when the archives of the FSB (Federal Security Service) began to open. In 2000, together with the sculptor Yuri Dzhibrayev, they unveiled a monument on Levashovo Wasteland which was an NKVD (secret police) shooting range near St. Petersburg. 50 Assyrians are buried there. Their names are engraved on the monument. Then I continued what my father had started. I set out to compile a Martyrology of all Assyrians of the Soviet Union - not only Leningrad and Moscow, but also Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia. It turned out to be a big book. The presentation of the "Martyrology of the Assyrians of the USSR: 1920-1950s" took place in Moscow on September 19, 2017.

*How did your father manage to unveil this monument?*

The state turned this landfill into a memorial site and different ethnic communities began to erect monuments there. This is perhaps the largest burial of Stalinist repressions in Russia. More than 50 thousand people were shot and buried there. For some reason there were less Assyrians shot in Moscow than in Leningrad, but quite a lot as well. In Moscow the burial site is at



landfills in Butovo and Kommunarka.

*Have these books been translated into other languages?*

No, Vasily Shumanov wanted to translate the "Biographical Dictionary" into English, so maybe someday there will be a translation. It would be very nice, and I hope Assyrians who live in other countries could find their loved ones with the help of this book. Among the books we have published are "Martyrology of the Leningrad Assyrians" compiled by my father, "Martyrology of the Assyrians of the USSR", which includes the names of all Assyrians repressed in the USSR from 1920s to 1950s on political charges. And the Biographical Dictionary that includes the names of famous Assyrians (priests, teachers, scientists, war heroes, etc.) who lived in Russia and the USSR before the middle of the 20th Century.

*Do you know the approximate number of Assyrians who were arrested in the USSR?*

In Martyrology, the number of those arrested, who received prison terms and were shot is somewhere around 1500. Hundreds of families were also deported from Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North Caucasus. It is difficult to give an accurate number, as many families were exiled to Kazakhstan and Siberia. This is a large percentage of our people, because according to the Census there were a little over 20,000 Assyrians in the USSR, so proportionally a huge number. These were mainly men, fathers of families. Many Assyrians executed in Leningrad left 5 or 6 children behind.

*Was your father also a deeply religious person?*

My father, like all Assyrians, was a believer, but not a priest or deacon. He read in Assyrian, taught others, prayed as best he could.

*How did you come to God?*

I think my father influenced me greatly. Our family has always been religious, but of course I never thought that I would enroll into the Theological Seminary and become a priest. When my father started working there, somehow my heart opened up. I was about 17-18 years old. I had a choice: to enroll into the Faculty of Oriental Studies at Leningrad University, since Assyrian issues have always interested me, or into the Seminary. But in Soviet times students were required to be Komsomol members (Youth Communist League) and take tests. I was disgusted with the idea of becoming a member. I had to go against my conscience and pretend in order to be a student. I had to demonstrate some kind of Sovietness. My heart was in the seminary, free of hypocrisy and dishonesty. Later, when I enrolled in the seminary I wanted to become a monk.

*Do you keep in touch with other Assyrians?*

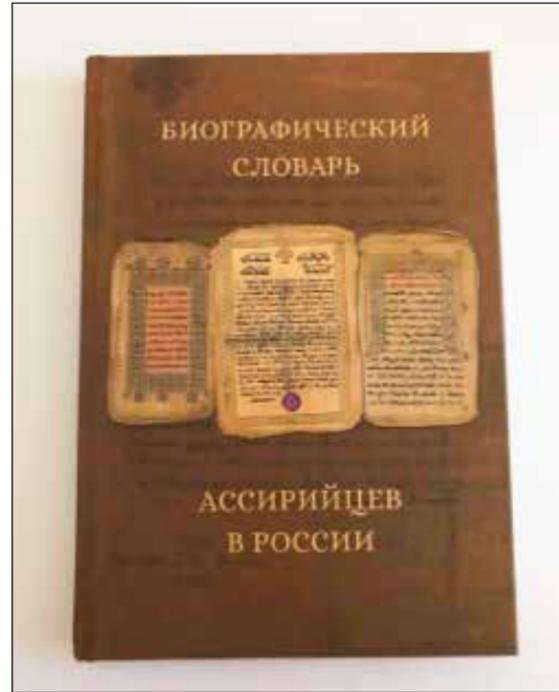
I keep in touch with my family. Thanks to my research on repressions I also travel all over Russia, and work on archives, including the private FSB archives. I try to get in touch with the Assyrian communities when I visit different Russian cities. I get some information from them and sometimes I am the one sharing information with them about their relatives. This is how I keep in touch with Assyrians. As I said, family ties among the Assyrians are all intertwined. You can live in St. Petersburg and have relatives in the Caucasus, Kiev, Moscow, Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod and Krasnodar.

*Was it difficult for you to find these archives?*

Much has already been published. There are memorial books (collections of biographical information about victims of World War II) in every Russian region and republic. Some of them contain Assyrian names and primary sources. In addition, there is a database of the "Memorial" association that also contains great deal of primary information on the oppressions in all regions, territories and republics of the Russian Federation and other adjacent countries. For example, if I know that the person was arrested somewhere in Krasnodar or Rostov, I can send a request and they will send me the necessary information. Then I can ask to see the investigation records.

*Do you always get permission?*

In most cases. They have a rule that this information is provided only to the relatives of the deceased, but they make an exception for researchers. Also I think because I am a member of the clergy, they accommodate my requests. As a rule, they do not refuse. If they refuse, then they disclose only certain information that does not hurt the relatives of those people.



*Why did you choose the Russian Orthodox Church and not the Assyrian Church of the East?*

I was born in the Russian Church and didn't have much choice. I came to my faith in the Russian Church and I love Russia. The Russian Church is more authentic, and it also meets my religious aspirations. But I hold the Assyrian Church of the East in high regard as well.

*Do you believe that the Assyrians were the first people to accept Christianity?*

Yes. There was an Assyrian state called Osroene with its capital in Edessa (in Assyrian "Urhay"), and the king (Malek) of Osroene, Abgar, was the first to accept Christianity even before the Armenian king Trdat, and of course before the Edict of Milan of Constantine, the Byzantine King. Back in the 3rd century, he introduced Christianity to his state as the official religion. Although the Armenians mistakenly consider Abgar their king, it is well-known that he was an Assyrian ruler.

*I know that you are also the Head Librarian. What type of books do you maintain, store, and preserve?*

Yes, I am the Head of the Library at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy. This library has an extensive collection of about 400 thousand books related to the history of the Church, theology, and history of Russia. My mother's house is home to my father's personal library. His library contains Assyrian books and manuscripts that he was collecting all his life. A great number of books were purchased by him, and many of them were given to him by the relatives of the deceased Assyrians. He kept all these books, studied them, catalogued, and generously shared them with everyone who was interested in the subject of the Assyrians.

## *From Qarajalu (Persia) to Santa Clara*

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*An Assyrian Family's Multiple Atlantic Crossings  
in Search of a Home at the turn of the Century*



### **Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum**

570 E. Remington Drive  
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

*Ample Free parking available at Museum  
Admission is Free*

Museum hours: Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays 12 to 4  
**Sunday, April 3 to June 5, 2022**





## Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum

### **From Qarajalu (Persia) to Santa Clara** An Assyrian Family's Multiple Atlantic Crossings in Search of a Home at the Turn of the Century **Sunday, April 3 - June 5, 2022**

In 1922, the first woman of Iranian birth graduated Stanford University. She was an Assyrian, born in the Urmia village of Qarajalu to an Assyrian father and his Irish-American wife, both passing through New York. Right after getting married, Joseph David Joseph raised the money from among American church members and their network to return to Urmia to establish a medical practice.

That is the beginning of the main correspondence in a cache of some 150 letters faithfully kept safe by Rabi Yosep Bet Yosep, in his Turlock home, until their value was recognized as a primary source for the early history of Assyrians in Iran as well as in the United States.

On April 3, 2022, an exhibit based on these letters and much more since then discovered, will begin and run through June 5. If you want to see an Assyrian doctor with Qajar nobility, come see how he managed to look extremely elegant in this setting. If you want to see pulled teeth preserved, a bullet pulled from a tibia, and lots and lots of beautiful but worthless paper money, come to see what the Joseph/Yuseff family has preserved for

over 100 years as they treasured the memory of their father and great-grandfather.

Hear 4 lectures from prominent Assyrians explaining the times and circumstances of life in the Urmia countryside and life in pre-Silicon Valley Santa Clara County as cherry orchards flourished and it seemed almost possible to recapture the idyllic village life of Urmia, in retrospective nostalgia. And if you do not live close enough, AGN sat will live stream the lectures. So, leave some time to learn how your family too can help preserve Modern Assyrian Archives.

This exhibit was sponsored in part by a generous grant from the Assyrian Foundation of America, but has been supplemented by many other sources.

The letters, journal, photographs, and objects form the exhibit at the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum. A catalogue will be available for purchase. The materials will be archived at UC Berkeley as examples of patterns of early settlement in Santa Clara and Stanislaus Counties.

## Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum - Lecture Schedule

- All lectures will be held at the Sunnyvale Heritage Park Museum.
- The lecture and exhibition rooms have handicap access.
- The premises is open from 1-3.
- Come to see the exhibit, then hear the lecture.
- Three lectures are in English, one in Assyrian neo-Aramaic.



### **April 3, 2022, 1pm "New Urmia in Place of the Old"**

Arianne Ishaya has a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from UCLA. Her research interests are in the history of the Assyrian diaspora in North America. She was born in Urmia. Little did she know as a child that she was growing up in the cradle of an ancient Assyrian Christian center, with shrines such as Mar Sarguis and Mart Maryam that date back to the 7th –8th century AD.

In 2010 she published two books *New Lamps for Old* (2010), which is the history of the settlement of Assyrians in North Battleford, Saskatchewan Canada, the very first settlers of the region; and *Familiar Faces in Unfamiliar Places: Assyrians in the California Heartland 1911-2010* (2010), which is the history of the settlement of Assyrians in Turlock, California. Her most recent work is a biography on William Daniel titled *William Daniel, Portrait of An Assyrian Icon* (2015), published by the Assyrian Association of San Jose.

Arianne has numerous publications in professional journals, encyclopedias (Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups; Encyclopedia Iranica, Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples) and Assyrian periodicals (Journal of the Assyrian-American Studies, Assyrian Star, Nineveh). She has been very active in Assyrian educational programs sponsored by various Assyrian organizations in the Bay area. She was also one of the contributors and editors of *Tapestry*, a collection of poems in Assyrian and English and *Sympathy and Satire*, a collection of plays by the well-known Assyrian poet and composer, William Daniel.

Presently she is preparing *Kateeny Gabbara* (in the three volumes) for reprinting, and *Discourse on the Spelling Method in The Assyrian Language* both by William Daniel. She also has two manuscripts in print: *The History of the Assyrians in Hamadan*, co-authored with Hannibal Gevargis, the second a translation of *The Last days of Atla Kandy* compiled and edited by Eddy Davoud.



### **Sunday, May 1, 2022, 1 PM "Joseph D. Joseph, MD: A Link in the Assyrian Chain of Medicine"**

Samir Johna, MD, is a Clinical Professor of Surgery who has held many positions in southern California and is author of dozens of medical articles as well as books, including one directly related to his Assyrian heritage, *George M. Abouna: The History of a Pioneer in Transplant Surgery*, Author House, Indiana, USA, 2004. 167 p. Born in Iraq, and conscripted into the Iraqi military, he advanced his educational training at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles following his bachelor's degree from the University of Baghdad College of Medicine. His many honors and awards include being a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. He is active in community service related to his profession but also takes the time to provide frequent commentary on Assyrian media.



### **Sunday, May 15, 2022 1 pm "Sources and selected details of the life of Dr. Joseph D. Joseph, a son of Qarajalu, a man of Santa Clara County"**

Vladimir Moghaddasi. Born in Tehran, Iran, Vladimir's father, Yaghoub's family origins are in the village of Qarajalu in the Urmia region of Iran where his family had lived for generations since 1800. Tombstones, family genealogy and historical testimonies attest to the deep roots of this family in the area. The family name refers to the fact that in the late 1800s, his grandfather, Alexander (Saando) made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the holiest Christian urban area due to the central place that it holds in the life of Jesus Christ.

Trained as a software engineer, Vladimir moved to Los Angeles in 1991, along with his wife Monica Moradkhan, and then to Silicon Valley in 1993. They were married in Iran in 1990. Monica's grandfather Rev. Pnoiel Moradkhan was born in Qarajalu and her father, George, was born in Urmia. Vladimir has been active for decades in the Assyrian community, serving in leadership positions at both the Assyrian Evangelical church and BrightStar Christian Academy in San Jose, California. He and Monica have supported important Assyrian cultural activities such as Mesopotamian Night, for over a decade the chief fund-raiser for the work of the Assyrian Aid Society of America in Iraq. They are also active members of the Assyrian American Association of San Jose and have been supporting the Seyfo Center, the Assyrian Genocide Research Center.



### **Sunday, June 5, 2022, 1 pm "Reflecting on the Old Country: The Assyrians of the Urmia Region"**

Nicholas Al-Jeloo holds a BA in Classical Hebrew from the University of Sydney (2005), an MA in World Religions from Leiden University (2006), and a Ph.D. in Syriac Studies from the University of Sydney (2013). He has previously worked as a research assistant for the Peshitta Institute at Leiden University, the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney and the Syriac Language Research Centre at the University of Divinity's Whitley College. He has also taught Classical Syriac at the University of Sydney and the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. Since moving to Istanbul in 2018, he has worked as an English language instructor at Kadir Has University's preparatory school, including a semester in the iLearning Centre, as well as two years in the University's Academic English Program, and now lectures in its Core Program. His research in socio-cultural history, which he has presented and published internationally, focuses on indigenous Middle Eastern minorities, documenting and preserving their cultural heritage, and especially Syriac epigraphy and codicology. He is additionally interested in exploring the history of the Middle East and Islamic World, as well as interfaith and intercultural relations, from an interdisciplinary perspective.

# THE GENOCIDE CHRONICLES

By Professor Arianne Ishaya

***This column commemorates the survivors of the WWI Assyrian genocide who came to America, worked hard, and made many contributions to their adopted country.***

***The family histories of the Assyrian old-timers were collected by Arianne Ishaya, professor of anthropology, in Turlock in 1981-1982.***

*This narrative details the ravages of World War I upon the Assyrian families who lost the main breadwinner during the war. Orphaned children and widows had to come under the care of the sole surviving brother, forming a joint household of 20-25 destitute people. This is an insider view of the strain in family relations during the war.*

*Jerusha Bourang was 74 years old in 1982. Like the rest of these family histories, the original is in Assyrian. No changes have been made in translation in order to preserve the tone and the style of the original. The passage of time has sifted Jerusha's memory of all details. The episodes are described with so much brevity and precision that the account has almost the quality of a ballad. Yet the passage reveals much more than a mere sequence of events. We can clearly see the structure of loyalties in the Assyrian family which even the brutalities of war could not weaken. We see children who languish in poverty and boredom and to whom even going to the doctor seems a Disneyland affair. We see men who, overpowered by misfortune, became hard and unheeding, and the women who, in spite of every loss, still had room in their hearts for compassion and caring. Last, we can clearly see that although a mere child of six or seven at the time, Jerusha must have gone over those events in her memory in later life. Her description is definitely opinionated, at times critical, and at all times very emotional. The scars from*

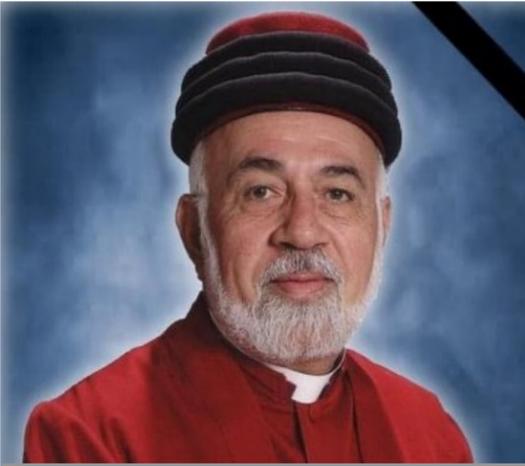
*the past wounds are there to see. And now the account:*

**Jerusha:** My mother bore many children. She used to carry one on her back and another in her belly. I guess there were 12 of us; but only three survived. My dad died in 1913. His brother, my *mamou* (term for paternal uncle), took us in. We lived in the village of Gavilan. When the warning came that the Turks and the Kurds would attack, my *mamou* sent all the children to the nearby village of Gouchie and left us with a Kurdish friend so that we would not be taken into slavery. Shortly after, my *khaloo* (term for maternal uncle), who lived in the city of Urmia, had come to the village and had inquired about us. My mother had broken down in tears because she could not move her children to safety into Russia. So my *khaloo* who had brought a "droga" from Russia, loaded the furniture of three households on it. (This is how many we were.) He put us kids on top and we started off towards the Russian border. On the way the wheels got stuck in the mud. Instead of discarding the load and disentangling the wheels, they gave up and we started on foot. My *khaloo* begged the Russian cavalymen who were passing by<sup>1</sup> to snatch the kids before we were taken over by the enemy in pursuit. Those Russian soldiers were kind. Each picked one of us and put us in front of them on the horse and covered us with their mantle. (It was winter.) They fed us their rations taking for themselves only so much as not to starve. At night they warmed us up in their bosom. Thus they took us across the border into Russia. There we waited until our mothers and uncles arrived. They

*This is in 1915 when the Russian forces retreated from the region of Urmia causing panic among the Assyrians some of whom followed them into Russia to escape the impending massacre of Christians by the Ottoman Turks, and the local Muslims.*

came empty-handed, having lost everything to the marauders. They had not salvaged a thing. We were left hungry and cold. But for the Russians, refugees and particularly orphans were almost sacred. My *khaloo* took my mother, my brother, and me to the interior to beg. For a long time my uncle made money selling the clothes that were donated to us. My younger sisters, my *mamou*, and his family stayed back in the border town. They lived off what we brought back from begging, yet my *mamou* made out like my mother owed him something. While we were on the begging route, my little sister Youlia had caught pneumonia and had died. She was blond and fair. When we returned, we did not see her around and kept asking for her. They said she is out playing. As it got dark, we continued to ask where she was and they kept giving us excuses, and all the while they had buried her. So finally we found out. My mother cried that night and did not let a soul sleep. As summer came, we returned back from Russia to our village (Gavilan). The village was in ruins; but the stable was intact. Our two water buffalos and a cow were there too. They had gone to pasture on their own during the day and had returned to the stable at night. Even our gadroon" (wagon) was lying there in good shape. Our barn was intact too. How God looks after the orphans! We all went and lived in the barn. The fields were ready to be harvested. That year all the village people-those who had returned-used our buffalos and wagon to bring home their harvest. One day my mother cried and cried. She could not stop. My *mamou* reproached her for not being thankful to God for His blessings. He asked her to stop for the sake of the only son she had left. She said those were not tears of sorrow, but tears of joy for seeing that her son, Elia, had grown enough to replace his father. (That season my brother Elia had worked like a man in the fields.) Then my older sister, Shoulamit, came down with diphtheria. She used to get sick every time we moved. Every now and then *mamou* took her out for a breath of fresh air. She got pretty bad at one time during the night and my mother asked uncle to take her out. But as he was helping her up, her feet wobbled and she lay unconscious in his arms. Then they stretched her on the floor and faced her towards the sunrise. She was dead. Then my mother started lamenting and supplicating asking God to take her instead. You see, the Sahabi (American Missionaries) were against

our way of animal sacrificial rites (Church of the East). They said Jesus sacrificed himself for mankind and let there be no more sacrifices. So *mamou* would not allow it in the family. He had become a staunch Presbyterian. That is why my mother had to offer herself as a sacrifice. Mother went on her knees and circled Shoulamit seven times all the time supplicating God to save Shoulamit and take her instead. My *mamou* could not stand it anymore. He said "Khanna, you make my heart bleed." Then he vowed his prize water buffalo as a sacrifice. "Let there be no human sacrifice", he said. We heard the buffalo gasping that night; it was dying. And uncle said "God has heard me". But two days later my mother died too and Shoulamit recovered. So we gave two lives for her, and were left with no one to care for us. Shoulamit was the eldest, but she was not with us for very long. My *mamou* gave her in marriage at the age of 14 to a priest with long, white beard. On her last day with us, she beat us all up, and then she left in anger. But my eldest cousin Ester, *mamou's* daughter, she was good to us. She would sneak into the barn and bring us food. Then I got an earache, and kept whining until my *mamou* got mad and said "Will someone take this girl out and shut her up?" My *khaloo* was due in town the next morning. He postponed his trip. He put me on the horse and took me to Gouchie. The doctor washed my ear and I got well. But shortly after that Ludia, my youngest sister, started complaining of an earache. They shoved her around and said "Don't listen to her. She has seen her sister go to town; and wants to get a horse-ride too." But she kept whining until Ester took her on her back and carried her to Gouchie. It was an hour's walk. The Russian doctor had washed her ear; but had asked that she be brought back again, and again. A couple of times Ester took her. But then Ester's mother forbade her and said that the kid is enjoying the back-rides and is using earache as a pretext. Ester promised she would not carry her on her back. A couple of times Ester sneaked her out and made Ludia walk until they were out of sight. But when her mother found out, she absolutely forbade the Gouchie trips. Ludia suffered from ear ache until a lump appeared under the right side of her neck; then another appeared on the left side. They grew until they choked her to death. That is how we lost our Ludia. She was a very pretty girl. She was 9 when she died. This is the fate of orphans....



The Holy Synod of  
The Ancient Church  
of the East



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للكنيسة الشرقية القديمة

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†Gewargis Younan  
By Grace: Secretary of the Holy Synod  
Bishop – Diocese of Eastern USA & All Europe  
Ancient Church of the East  
February 11, 2022

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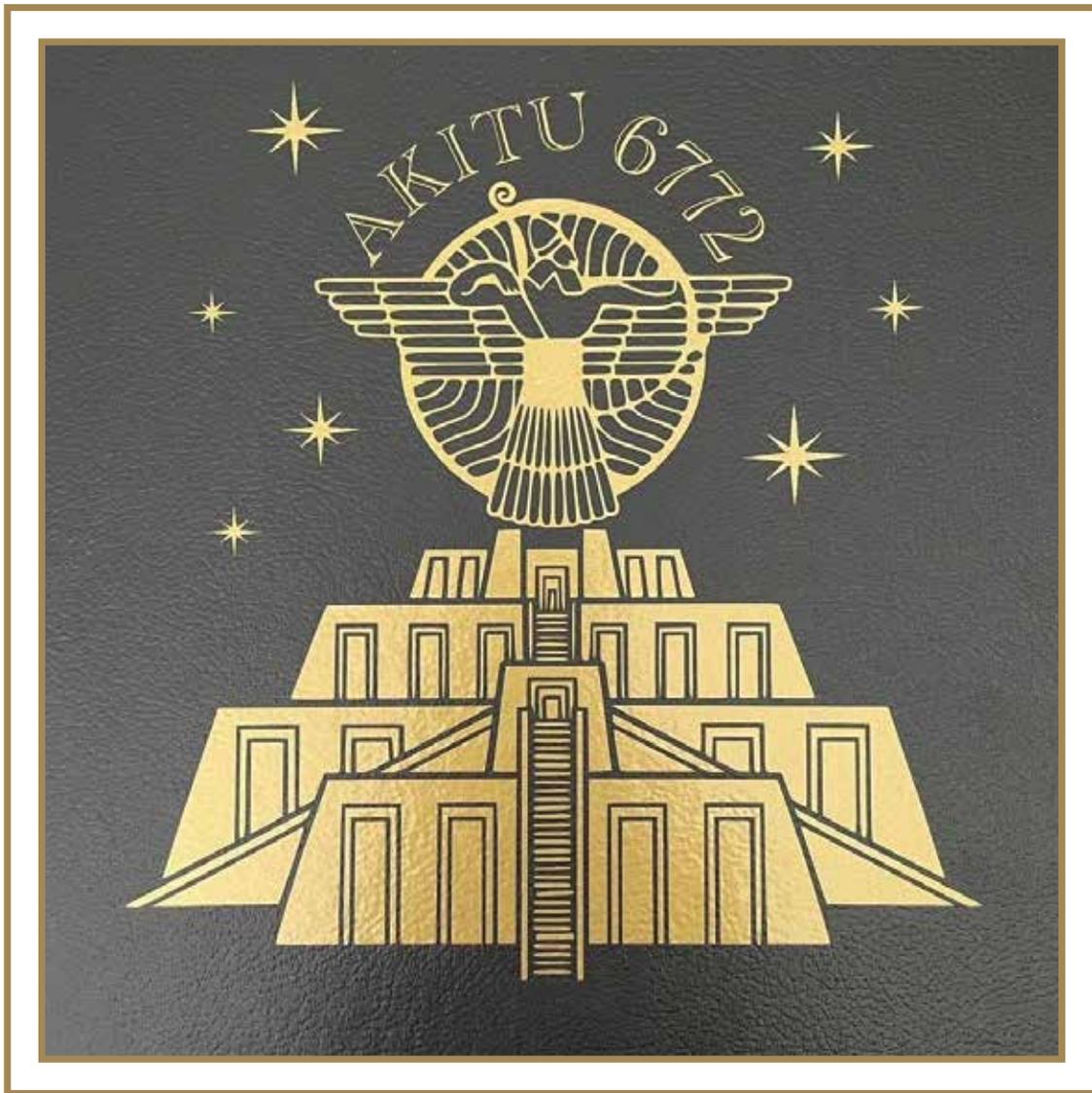






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