



"For the peace of the pure soul of my mother, who was my first teacher in life.

This collection is dedicated for free to friends and acquaintances with faith.

Hoping to embrace her warm embrace in heaven once again."

George Bit Atanus

لَا دِينَارَ

وَمِنْهُمَا يَكُنْ: دِينَارٌ وَدِينَارَةٌ

وَمِنْهُمَا يَكُنْ: دِينَارٌ وَدِينَارَةٌ

يَكُنْ: دِينَارٌ

وَمِنْهُمَا يَكُنْ: دِينَارٌ وَدِينَارَةٌ

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Exploration in the Field of the History and Myths of Ancient Assyria

A Conversation with George Bit Atanus

Mr. Engineer George Bit Atanus is a well-known figure for most Assyrians in Iran, who requires no detailed introduction. Whenever discussions about the history and historians of Assyria arise in Assyrian communities, his name is mentioned as a reputable Assyriologist. This is because Mr. Engineer Georgebit Atanus has dedicated many years of his life to researching and studying various aspects of the history of this ancient nation and its mythology, driven by his profound love and interest in Assyrian history and mythology.

In 1979, at the World Assyrian Congress (AUA) held in San Francisco, USA, Mr. Atanus was recognized as the Assyrian Man of the Year. In recognition of his invaluable efforts and contributions to promoting the history and myths of Assyria and reviving the cultural signs and civilization of this great and ancient nation, he was awarded a diploma of honor.

The opportunity to converse with knowledgeable figures like Mr. Atanus is a very suitable one that we did not miss. To gain more information in the fields of history, mythology, culture, and literature of the Assyrians, I had a friendly chat with this researcher, and what you read is the result of these hours of conversation, hoping that dear readers can benefit from the insights and knowledge of this Assyrian researcher and mythologist.

**President of the Assyrian Association of Tehran and
Editor of the "Karkheh" Magazine
Homer Abramian**



ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE



presents to

GEORGE BIT-ATANUZ

for ASSYRIAN MAN OF THE YEAR FOR YOUR DEDICATION AND CONTRIBUTION
TO THE PRESERVATION OF THE ARTS, CULTURE AND HISTORY OF OUR
ASSYRIAN HERITAGE.

It is with great pleasure that we bestow this humble token of
recognition upon you for your service rendered. We thank you
on behalf of the stateless Assyrians everywhere.



OCT 29 - 1979

Date

Sam Andrews
SECRETARY GENERAL



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Question 1: Mr. Bitathanous, thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to have an interview with you for the magazine "Karkheh," despite your busy schedule. As the first question, could you please introduce yourself in detail?

Answer: I am "George Bit Atanus," born in 1919 in Russia. My ancestors were from "Urmia," who migrated to Russia before World War I and returned to their homeland after the October Revolution in 1927. Initially, I lived in the port city of Anzali for 7 years, and then in 1936, we moved to Tehran. I completed my elementary education at the Russian school in Anzali (Ghazian) and continued my secondary education in Tehran. After completing my military service, I pursued studies in surveying and geodesy, receiving my diploma in 1951 from the University of Calcutta. Subsequently, while working in surveying, I also conducted in-depth studies on the repair and calibration of geodetic instruments, and in 1968, I received an official specialized diploma in this field from the Ministry of Education of Hungary.



Question Two: Have you ever participated and collaborated closely in the activities of Assyrian national groups?

Certainly, I have participated in most cultural activities of our minority.



Question Three: To what extent are you familiar with active national groups and associations today? What is your opinion about such groups and associations?

Answer: Since we Assyrians currently do not have the necessary activities in social, political, etc., my familiarity with such associations is limited.



Question Four: Mr. Bit Atanus, our people know you more as a researcher and historian than as a merchant. As a researcher in Assyrian history, what is your opinion on the myths and literature of ancient Assyria, and how do you see their impact on the civilization of the nations of Western Asia?

Answer: Generally, I have relatively sufficient studies in the history of our people, but I do not consider myself a researcher in this field in the specific sense of the word. In the Assyrian community in Iran, there are individuals who have much more knowledge than I do regarding the history, culture, and epics of the Assyrian people, such as Mr. "Patriarch Mar-Yu Hina Isai," "Shmuel-Bit Yaqub," "Fereydoun Mirza," "Rabimanshi Amir Hochmaki," "Beno Asimo No," and others. However, as you know, the myths and epics of the Assyrians, such as the epic of "Gilgamesh," which has its origins in Sumerian, along with the proverbs from the book of the wise Ahikar, and so on, which we encounter in various languages, all originate from the Assyrian people. Due to their historical antiquity, they undoubtedly have a direct impact on the civilizations of various nations, especially in the Middle East and the Near East.



Question Five: The myths of ancient Rome and Greece have many similarities with each other, and in some respects, their main lines can even be compared to the myths of Iran and India.

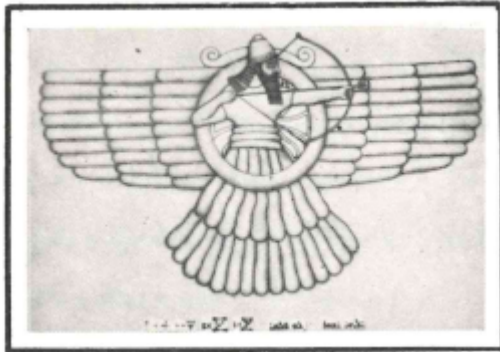
Now, please explain how the myths of the Assyrians differ from the myths of other ancient nations, and can they be considered as inspirations for each other? If so, which one is inspired by the other?

Answer: Generally, there is not much difference between the myths of ancient Greece and Rome and those of the Assyrians. For example, if the Greeks and Romans had gods like Zeus, Jupiter, and Venus, the Assyrians had gods before them.

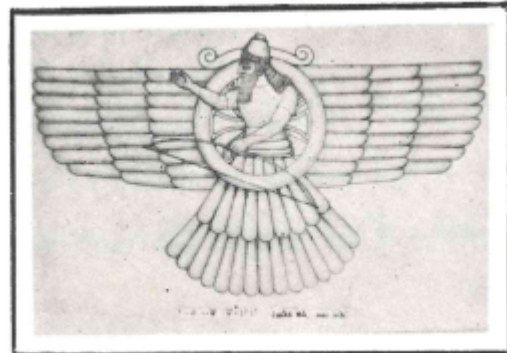


"They have had the following names:

1- The god of Ashur - or the god of gods in the earth and sky, who is our ancestor, is inscribed in the following form."



"The god of Ashur in times of war"



"The god of Ashur in Times of Peace"



"A depiction of the god Ashur in a battle scene on colored ceramic, which is kept on loan at the British Museum."

"Above characteristics are prominent examples of masculinity among the Assyrians. In my opinion, since our history predates the history of ancient Rome and Greece, it is natural that the myths and civilization of Assyria inspired their myths and epics."

Question Six: In ancient Egyptian mythology, we see the name Ashur as the god of gods. How do you justify this phenomenon? Is this the same Ashur, the great god of nations in Mesopotamia, that the Egyptians worshiped, or is it another deity with merely a nominal resemblance? If we accept that the Egyptian god is indeed the lord of lords Ashur, can we say that Egyptian civilization was inspired by Mesopotamian civilization?

Answer: In response to the first part, it should be noted that at that time, there were good relations between the Assyrian Empire and Egypt, and naturally, there was an exchange of information in various fields. Therefore, I believe that the god of gods for both the Egyptians and the Assyrians, or the lords of the nations residing in Mesopotamia, was one and the same. The only noticeable difference in the depiction of these two gods is that since the dove was considered a sacred bird in Assyria, the wings of the dove were depicted on either side of the circular form of the god. In contrast, around the circle of the Egyptian deity, the wings of the eagle were illustrated, as the eagle was regarded as a sacred bird in their eyes.



The purpose of the circle is that people of that time depicted the known nature of their era in a circular form, and in fact, the circle was a symbol of the manifestations of the universe and its creatures at that time, representing their perspective.



دایره بالدار منقوش به بالهای عقاب
مظهر خدای آسمانی مصریان

Winged circle adorned with dove wings
Symbol of the Assyrian sky god

دایره بالدار منقوش به بالهای کبوتر
مظهر خدای آسمانی آشوریان

Winged circle adorned with dove wings

Symbol of the Assyrian sky god

According to scientific writings in the fields of history and mythology, the worship of deities originated about 9,000 years before Christ in the land of Mesopotamia and gradually spread among other nations of that time. To study this matter, one can refer to the new Larousse Encyclopedia regarding the mythology of different nations, and this topic is also confirmed by the Book of Torah.



In response to the second part, as noted in scientific books related to the history of ancient Assyria, published in 1902 by the Institute of Scholars of Ancient Mesopotamian Civilization at universities in England, France, and America, and in the book "Nineveh and Babylon," which was printed in London in 1853, it is observed that the builders of the pyramids and other ancient monuments in Egypt bore symbols on their chests that represented the god of Assyria. Therefore, these artists were likely the same individuals who previously constructed various tall edifices known as ziggurats in Mesopotamia, some reaching heights of up to 90 meters. The purpose of building such tall structures was to bring themselves closer to the great god, including the temple "Esa Gila," which was a place of worship for the great god of the Babylonians named "Bel-Marduk," which the Greeks considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Additionally, the construction of the "Tower of Babel," the "Hanging Gardens," the high walls surrounding various cities, magnificent statues, and the vast palaces with intricately carved walls were all enhanced by various types of colorful ceramics

depicting the history of the conquests and hunts of Assyrian kings. Furthermore, this was related to agricultural matters, irrigation, and canal construction that had been common since the settlement of the Sumerians and Assyrians and was subsequently transferred to Egypt.



Question Seven: As an art critic specializing in ancient Assyrian art, what is your opinion? Do you believe that art, in its true sense, reached elevated levels in the Assyrian societies of ancient times, or did it remain at the levels of unrefined art?

Answer: My view on ancient Assyrian art is as follows. Between the third millennium BCE and the first millennium CE, sculpture or stone carving had not developed significantly. For example, in relevant excavations, figures of animals such as lions or winged bulls found in "Tell Bar Sip," "Larsa," "Kish," "Hadatu," "Mari," and "Ur" do not closely resemble their natural forms. However, over time, it is observed that this art gradually progressed along its path of evolution.

By the first millennium BCE, in the palace of "Sargon II" (Dur-Sharrukin) and in the palace of "Ashurbanipal" in Nineveh, as well as in "Nimrud" (Kalakh), we encounter artistic works that are each a unique masterpiece. Similarly, the artistic motifs adorned with ceramics on the walls of the hall in the palace of "Dur-Sharrukin" possess a special beauty and delicacy, introducing us to the thoughts and lofty spirit of this great leader. It is clear that such geniuses were not ordinary individuals, and it is no coincidence that these symbols   were inscribed before their names.

During the era of "Ashurbanipal," due to his great enthusiasm for art and literature, this art reached its peak of flourishing. An example of this passion for literature is reflected in his special library, and the collection of artistic works in these palaces of Nineveh represents the last exquisite masterpieces from the era of Ashurbanipal. This includes the art of carving and sculpting winged bulls and lions, along with reliefs on palace walls, which, in terms of shape, proportions, composition, and beauty of faces, garments, and cuneiform inscriptions on stones or large clay cylinders—most of which relate to treaties between kings—are such that no artistic criticism can be made against them. In fact, these types of works are complete and highly refined. Examples of these artistic masterpieces can be seen in renowned world museums such as the "Louvre Museum" in Paris, the "British Museum" in London, the

"Metropolitan Museum" in New York, the "Chicago Museum," the well-known "Berlin Museum" in Germany, and also in the "Baghdad Museum." To date, no artist has been found to criticize these exquisite artistic works. Another reason for the completeness of these artistic works is that in the present age, no artist has been able to create a masterpiece that can be compared to these works. It should not be forgotten that these exquisite works of art are made from granite, not marble, which we see in Greece and Rome.

After the fall of Assyria, this art was transferred to ancient Greece and Rome, continuing for about 300 years, with the most famous artists in this field being "Leonardo da Vinci" and "Michelangelo." After this period, it can be said that this art experienced stagnation and interruption. The fundamental reason for this stagnation is that during the time of "Leonardo da Vinci," there was no one else to take his place, as creating such works requires not only hereditary talent but also innate ability—a principle that also applies to Assyria. In the present age, we see that the art of silverworking and carpet weaving is transferred from one generation to the next in certain parts of Iran.

Similarly, the illustrated forms of the quatrains of the wise Omar Khayyam are unparalleled in every respect, captivating people with their subjects, beauty of landscapes, and human proportions in various positions. Certainly, this evolutionary process has taken at least 600 years to reach this level of artistic development.



Question Eight: Mr. Bit Atanus, as a researcher, how have you found Assyrian literature, and what specific characteristics can be observed in Assyrian literature compared to the literature of other ancient nations?

Answer: I believe I have expressed my opinion on this matter to some extent in response to Question Four. Additionally, I thought of a point related to a romantic epic similar to Shakespeare's famous "Romeo and Juliet," which may even be stronger. This epic has been passed down orally in Mesopotamia since ancient times and is still alive today. Fortunately, tablets of this epic, similar to the "Epic of Gilgamesh," have also been found, and the story will be published soon.

The summary of this epic is as follows:

A lover and beloved suffered for many years due to parental opposition, always in a state of distress and separated from each other. Moreover, the slander of neighbors, the jealousy of relatives, and the endless suffering of waiting added to their troubles.

One day, by chance, the lover and beloved meet each other, and from that moment on, everything changes in their eyes. A beautiful and loving world appears before them, and they feel how good their parents are and how neighbors greet them with smiles. Even nature seems to have taken on a special beauty.

As moments pass and the darkness of night approaches, it seems to them that all these scenes lasted only a moment. Unable to bear the thought of facing the previous pains and sorrows due to their separation, they resort to suicide with a dagger. Their parents forgive them, and they are buried in the same place where their bodies lie. From their grave, a tree grows, from which a red liquid, like the blood of those heartbroken lovers, still oozes.

This tree is the cherry tree.

Of course, only those who have loved or are in love can understand my words.



Question Nine: How do you see the influence of the Syriac and Aramaic languages in relation to the development of Islamic history and civilization? To what extent do you think the claim that these languages have a constructive and fundamental impact on the advancement and elevation of the pure religion of Islam can be credible?

Answer: The response to this question requires extensive study and research, as currently, there is not enough reliable evidence available regarding the influence of the Aramaic language on the history and development of Islamic civilization. However, there are existing clues and evidence found in the region, particularly in Iraq and other areas, as well as from various written documents, inscriptions, and other materials related to the religions of those areas in general, and specifically about the pure religion of Islam over the past and present centuries.

It is important to note that the extent to which the Syriac language has influenced the advancement and development of the pure religion of Islam is significant since, at that time,

even before the emergence of Islam, many scholars and researchers were speakers of Aramaic. This reality highlights the critical role that the Aramaic language played in Islamic civilization. In general, whether before or after the prophethood of the Messenger of God, a number of Aramaic-speaking scholars, all of whom were Assyrians and Babylonians, such as “Rabban Serkis Bahira” (especially the latter), had a friendly relationship and interaction with Him.

(Note: "Bahira" means scholar.)



Question Ten: With your permission, we will temporarily set aside specialized issues and focus on current matters. How do you view the Iranian Revolution, and what are your perspectives on this revolution?

Answer: Generally, the main goal of any social and political revolution is to change the existing situation and improve the living conditions of the majority of a deprived society. Especially if the foundation of a revolution is based on religious principles and teachings, it holds more authenticity and undoubtedly can better respond to the demands of the lower and deprived classes of society. Since the voice of the majority is, in fact, the voice of God, we conclude that a revolution like the Iranian Revolution will undoubtedly be successful; however, such success does not come easily unless it is supported by all or at least the majority of various social classes and groups within the nation. To achieve this purpose, it is essential to avoid fragmentation of opinions and beliefs to maintain unity of purpose in every sense.

In my opinion, to reach this goal, the government must appoint insightful and experienced individuals as intermediaries to maintain constant contact between different political and social groups, striving to bring the opinions and demands of these classes closer together and create a kind of harmony among their views. For the successful execution of such a duty, individuals should be selected who possess a broad perspective and are free from class biases—people for whom minority and majority, or Shia and Sunni, or Persian and Turk, etc., are not significant issues.



Question Eleven: Have you seen the draft of the constitution, and if you have reviewed it, what specific interpretation do you have of this draft constitution as an Iranian Assyrian?

Answer: I have read the draft of the new constitution briefly, and it can be said that it is generally comprehensive and good. However, from the perspective of our minority, which has been one of the oldest communities residing in this land, there are shortcomings that need to be addressed and rectified appropriately. Of course, we expected that the honorable officials of the government would consider this matter and that it would not require our reminder. Fortunately, the representative of the Assyrian minority in the Assembly of Experts, Mr. "Dr. Sargon Bit-Oshana," who is trusted and recognized by our minority and is well-versed in the social and political issues of Iran, has noted these shortcomings. From the beginning of the Assembly's work, our legitimate demands have been conveyed to the honorable officials of the government by him.

For example, in Article 5, which states, "All nations are equal before the law," there is no mention of Assyrians. Additionally, in Articles 13 and 14, which pertain to "the recognition of religions," merely referencing Christians is insufficient; it would be better to mention them distinctively to avoid potential issues in practice later on. It is evident that, as mentioned above, the representative of the Assyrian minority in the Assembly of Experts has brought these points to the attention of the responsible authorities, and we hope that the government will fully consider these matters and rectify the aforementioned deficiencies before the approval of this law.



Question Twelve: What is your opinion on this principle of the Constitution that allows Muslim Iranian women to attain positions in the ministry and even the presidency, while not granting such rights to non-Muslim Iranian men (assuming they have competence and integrity)?

Answer: As far as I know, this law does not include provisions for women to hold the presidency. However, in general, I believe that a ministerial position, being a political role, should also have a specialized aspect. The minister should have sufficient expertise and experience in their field, such as agriculture, energy, natural resources, and other areas.

Such a minister would be able to create a proper plan that can continue for years, rather than having each new minister disrupt the previous program and implement a new one, which they believe is correct, at great expense, only for this action to be repeated in the next cabinet.

Regarding minorities, while having competence and integrity should be praised and encouraged, and these individuals can be beneficial in many positions, in regards to ministerial positions, which are part of the ruling body and determine the fate of the majority, as far as I know, minorities cannot be decision-makers and planners anywhere in the world.



Question Thirteen: Article 15 of the draft constitution recognizes the right of sovereignty belongs to the people, and Article 2 of this draft denies any form of cultural, political, or economic discrimination and domination. Article 22 considers all individuals of the nation, regardless of gender, equal before the law. Article 5 establishes individuals' privileges based on piety; however, Articles 50, 76, and 106 explicitly classify Iranian non-Muslim minorities as second-class citizens and prohibit them from holding office or being elected to positions. Do you not think these principles can be seen as contradictory? Is depriving religious minorities of full political rights, as stipulated in the constitution, not an unjust discrimination that clearly affects the rights of non-Muslim Iranians? What is your opinion as an Assyrian of Iranian descent on this matter?

Answer: In my opinion, as Mr. "Dr. Bit-Oshana," our representative in the Assembly of Experts, believes, we Assyrians, who have been one of the oldest indigenous peoples residing in this land, are equal to all our Iranian brothers and therefore, it is necessary for us to enjoy all the rights and benefits that this law provides for the nation of Iran.



Question Fourteen: Considering your understanding of the history and civilization of the Assyrian nation, and consequently your understanding of the character of these people, as well as the current global political situation, how do you foresee the future of Assyrians in Iran specifically and in the world generally?

Answer: We Assyrians have been settled in this region, specifically in the areas of Urmia, Salmas, Sanandaj, and Maragheh, for over 4,000 years. Our population, before World War I, was approximately 500,000 in Urmia and its surrounding villages.

During the political upheavals and World War I, the occupation of those areas by Ottoman forces resulted in the genocide of about one and a half million Armenians living in those regions, prompting Assyrians to begin migrating to other parts of the world such as America, Russia, Iraq, Australia, and more to escape such a fate.

In my opinion, leaving our ancestral homeland is a grave mistake, as the dispersion of a people essentially leads to their extinction.

Of course, there were those who opposed this idea, including the late "Khalifa Ziya Dashto" in Urmia, who stated, "I will be the last person to leave my ancestral land because it would be very difficult for me to leave behind a paradise adorned by the gravestones of my ancestors."

I remember a few years ago when I donated several microscopes for the use of Assyrian school students in Iran; the late Khalifa Dashto wrote in a thank-you letter, "I have never received such a valuable gift from anyone in my lifetime."

This reflects the harsh reality that our minority does not have the necessary cohesion among ourselves as we should. His words inspired me, and I decided to remain in this land among my people and serve them for as long as I live and have the strength to do so.



Question Fifteen: You are surely aware that the Assyrians of the world, after long and persistent struggles, succeeded in forming and establishing a global Assyrian union. Please share your thoughts on this union.

Answer: We have had many small associations under various titles over the past hundred years, aimed primarily at providing financial and medical assistance to low-income and impoverished classes, referred to today as the underprivileged. One of these associations was the Assyrian Women's Association in Urmia, which later moved its headquarters to Tehran, and last year we celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of activity solely in Tehran. As the intellectual, political, and social development of our nation progressed, it became clear that

such small local associations could not play a significant role in fostering national unity at a global level. Therefore, it was decided to establish a global union. I am very pleased with this initiative, as the creation of such a union is, in fact, a significant step forward in social and political matters.



Question Sixteen: Is it possible to imagine and hope that this union, based on the foundations of national councils, could take a leading role for the Assyrian people globally?

Answer: Certainly, acting through national councils is the best method for leading a nation or community, provided that the leaders of the union are not influenced by various biases and fulfill their national and social duties with goodwill and selflessness.

It is not uncommon to see disagreements and differing opinions along the way; however, if everyone's goal is the same, these differences will gradually diminish. All national councils will succeed through unity and consensus under the banner of the Assyrian Union of the World in striving to achieve their objectives. Personally, I have always been hopeful about the realization of this matter and will never be overcome by despair regarding it.



Question Seventeen: In your opinion, what factors should we consider when searching for the causes of the weakness and fragmentation of the Assyrian national forces?

Answer: The most important causes of our national forces' weakness and fragmentation stem from the following factors:

1. Sectarian religious differences.
2. Unjust local or national prejudices, such as Assyrian-Iranian or Assyrian-Iraqi-Syrian, etc. Worse than these is the sense of superiority or egotism, which unfortunately is prevalent among individuals in our minority. These factors, unfortunately, prevent our ethnic group from uniting and coming together.

To combat this issue, two years ago, I designed a medal with the slogan:

"Your salvation and liberation, Assyrian, is in unity."

My goal with this was to encourage and promote greater unity among Assyrians.



Question Eighteen: As an informed personality with national ideals, what common axis do you propose to establish the foundation of collective struggles and national activities?

Answer: The axis for gathering and organizing all tribal and religious national groups into a national hub should involve providing all cultural, social, athletic, and scientific resources. This can be achieved by establishing clubs that reflect modern circumstances and are welcomed by the majority of the enlightened public, along with organizing seminars and regional conferences to elevate the knowledge of the people regarding the history, civilization, science, and art of ancient Assyria, thereby broadening their worldview.

Undoubtedly, such beneficial and constructive activities will eliminate harmful prejudices and bring various Assyrian groups closer together on a global scale. Adopting such an approach will generally bring people from different countries closer together, not to mention individuals from a marginalized and dispersed ethnic group like ours.



Question Nineteen: To realize national ideals and implement a true democratic system, the best-known method today is popular councils. What is your view on this policy and the composition of popular councils regarding the expansion of democracy and the genuine presence of the people in governance and determining their own destiny?

Answer: As you know, since ancient times and after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, our ancestors settled in Mesopotamia, in cities and villages in mountainous and remote areas where communication was challenging. The people had councils to resolve their daily issues, primarily comprising clergy and elders, who were the representatives of the people. The role of these councils was to adjudicate disputes, protect the rights of the weak against the powerful, and prevent injustice and oppression.

Even after thousands of years, this practice still exists in some remote villages in Mesopotamia. The method handed down from those times is what is now referred to as "democracy" in developed Western countries.



Question Twenty: Today, all our people speak of unity and solidarity and struggle to achieve lofty national goals. However, one can hardly observe manifestations of that unity and the strong national bonds in Assyrian communities. What is your opinion on this matter, and what path do you suggest for achieving and establishing a genuine and active unity?

Answer: I believe the answer to this question has been somewhat provided in the response to Question 18. After following the path outlined in Question 18, which involves establishing modern clubs and associations across the country, this action will foster closer ties among various classes. The second step will be to generalize this approach on a global scale among the Assyrian community.



Question Twenty-One: One of the main fundamental problems of Assyrian national activities is the lack of a national budget. Undoubtedly, this is one of the reasons for our people's backwardness in social, artistic, cultural, and even political spheres. What is your personal view on this, and if we are to establish a cooperative bank or fund to achieve this national economic goal, what principles do you suggest?

Answer: It is clear that the lack of financial resources is the greatest obstacle to any constructive and beneficial activity. Naturally, to begin various activities, as previously mentioned, having suitable clubs and cultural and educational centers is effective. I remember having lengthy discussions on this matter with Mr. Homer Ashourian, the representative of Assyrians in the previous parliament, regarding the request for the allocation of 4 or 5 hectares of land along the Vank River from the then-government. You know that these lands usually belong to the municipality, and this was not a large request. Moreover, our goal, in addition to establishing educational, cultural, and welfare facilities for the gathering of Assyrians, would have led to the liberation and development of this region as well. Efforts were made by Mr. Homer Ashourian, but unfortunately, it did not come to fruition. Although

there seemed to be favorable promises regarding this matter, the case was passed from one minister to another, leaving us with nothing but promises.

The establishment of a bank was discussed at the sixth World Assyrian Congress, but due to insufficient financial resources, it did not progress. However, establishing a cooperative fund to assist the disadvantaged through membership fees or fundraising is feasible. Currently, our community's expectation from the Islamic Republic government is that if they truly recognize us as part of the Iranian nation, they should seriously consider our demands and assist us in overcoming the deprivations of the past, and at the very least, allocate one day's oil revenue, which belongs to the people of this land and from which all citizens share in this divine blessing, to the Assyrian Association of Iran. This way, we can fulfill our longstanding national aspirations and express our gratitude to the Islamic Republic government, praying for its officials.


Contrary to the belief of some who consider mere provision for living and sustenance sufficient for humans, in my view, a civilized and progressive society is founded on culture, traditions, and the roots of the ethnic language. It is the duty of a civilized society to preserve the knowledge, art, and ethical standards inherited from the hardships and struggles of our ancestors to guide and lead us. Throughout my tumultuous life, I have always felt a lack within me, until I finally concluded that this deficiency can be alleviated by spending time in an environment, club, or association with fellow believers, where conversing in our mother tongue, which flows like soft music, can soothe our souls and bodies. At the very least, this diversity can create a hopeful difference in our social lives. Indifference is characteristic of wild animals, which do not care whose forest they live in.



Question Twenty-Two: Let's return to your specialized issues and make better use of what has resulted from your long years of research. As a historian, please tell us your opinion regarding the term Chaldean, which is sometimes placed alongside the name Assyria with or without justification. If you accept that the proud name of Assyria is a national political name on the international stage, how do you justify its combination with the name Chaldean?

Answer: The inhabitants of Mesopotamia have always been and are all Assyrian. The north is mountainous and the south consists of vast and fertile plains where not even a single stone can be found. The name of this region is Assyrian (Chaldean), meaning the land without

stones, which, according to Mr. Joseph Benyamin, is derived from the writings of the famous French Assyriologist Professor Francois le Normand. The meaning of the word Chaldea or Chaldeans is as follows:

- Chald means stone, which is the same as the word "kholakh" in Persian.
- (duni) means without.
- (at) or  (atra) means country.

This term later gradually changed to Chaldea, which was part of one of the provinces of the Assyrian Empire, and its inhabitants were called Chaldeans, similar to Azerbaijan (Azerbaijani), Kurdistan (Kurdistani), Khuzestan (Khuzestani), and so forth in Iran. In terms of language, there was no difference among the inhabitants of these regions, while in Mesopotamia, which was composed of several provinces, especially in the north where its capital was Nineveh and in the south where its commercial center was Babylon, there was no difference in language, culture, customs, script, and religious beliefs. The people of that day knew Mesopotamia as the Assyrian Empire, and if you study the Torah, you will see that it discusses Assyria everywhere and does not mention Chaldea.

Of course, there have always been minor differences among the inhabitants of the northern and southern regions, just as in our own country, where we tease each other about local dialects and other customs prevalent in different provinces. These kinds of minor differences among the ethnic groups residing in a country exist everywhere in the world, including in Italy, Germany, England, which have even led to wars, in France, Russia, and the United States (the civil wars between the North and South).

Such differences are also noted in the Torah regarding the tribes residing in Israel, particularly between the tribe of Benjamin in the south and the tribe of Judah in the north, which have always existed. For two thousand years, they fought several times, and each time one side that won imposed its rule over the other. The same situation has been true for our Assyrian lands. Due to the lasting bitterness between the north and south, in 689 B.C., the city of Babylon was destroyed by "Sennacherib," the powerful king of Assyria. Later, as a result of this and the intensification of hostilities, the inhabitants of Babylon and its southern areas revolted against Assyria by signing secret treaties among themselves. Ashurbanipal, Sennacherib's grandson, was angered by this conspiracy and had to conquer Babylon to punish the Babylonians and their accomplices.

After the death of "Ashurbanipal" in 626 B.C., due to continuous wars, the Assyrian Empire weakened to the point that "Nebuchadnezzar," in that same year, expelled Ashurbanipal's younger brother, Shamash-shum-ukin, who had been sent by Ashurbanipal as a representative in Babylon and its surroundings.

The sons of "Ashurbanipal," "Ashur-etil-ilani," who ruled until 615 B.C., and "Sin-shar-ishkun," who ruled until 606 B.C., were unable to show effective resistance against this southern action due to the weakness of the Assyrian Empire for 19 years. After gathering the Akkadian people and forming an army, and signing secret treaties with neighboring countries like "Urartu" and "Media," known for their pillaging and violence, Nebuchadnezzar attacked the northern regions of Mesopotamia. After capturing the cities around the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, including: Kabulni, Maneh, Sakhur, Balikh, Ashur, Rakhailu, Nineveh, Nusaybin, and Haran, finally in 606 B.C., the mighty Assyrian Empire fell and the Assyrians took refuge in the mountains. In 537 B.C., Cyrus opened the gates of the city by signing a secret treaty with "Esagila," the religious leader of the Babylonians, and the city of Babylon was captured without war; thus, the magnificent and rich temples of that city remained untouched.

In my opinion, the cause of the minor differences that still somewhat exist among our peoples originates from that time. Of course, when differences peaked, the northerners also attacked the southern regions and destroyed their cities, but after their anger subsided, they would rebuild the destroyed cities and provide financial assistance to their inhabitants. However, the southerners did not behave this way towards the northerners, which is why the northerners remained aggrieved. When Cyrus attacked Babylon, they did not only help "Balthazar" but were openly happy about it, and these minor local grievances culminated in the situation you observe today. Historical events must be learned from, and the existing minor differences and grievances among the ethnic groups and tribes of a country should never escalate, as such trivial differences can ultimately lead to the destruction of a people and a state.

Contrary to what is said, Babylon was not easily captured and opened by Cyrus simply by opening its gates. According to the book "Babylon" by Martikaficoli, it was not possible to capture the city of the gods, Babylon, even after two years of siege due to the protests and opposition of the Assyrians, whom "Nebuchadnezzar" had relocated from Canaan to Mesopotamia along the Khabur River. Particularly due to inciting speeches, rebellious actions, and the leadership of "Daniel," the opposition escalated into conflict, and three of his

companions, whose names were previously mentioned, went to Cyrus and stated that they had brought the key and the riddle of capturing the city of Babylon for him. They presented a clay tablet that Daniel had obtained after many years of study in the libraries of the city of Babylon, which contained a map of the diversion channels of the Euphrates River. This map was prepared at the order of "Nitu-gris," the queen of Babylon, for the purpose of constructing a bridge over the Euphrates River, one of the seven wonders of the world. The channels were created to divert the main river, which flowed through the city, and after the bridge was completed, they filled them with sand and clay and returned the river to its original course.

Based on the above suggestion, Cyrus's troops had to lift the siege of Babylon and position themselves at the diversion channels, which were hidden from the Babylonians, so that the Babylonians would think that Cyrus's troops had become discouraged after two years of siege and had left. Since an elaborate festival called "Obla," which was celebrated every year to collect autumn harvests, took place in Babylon, all people, regardless of social class, participated in it and engaged in feasting and merrymaking. During this time, Cyrus's troops had to laboriously clear the diversion channels of sand and clay, and on the appointed day at night, by raising the walls of the channels, they changed the course of the river and entered the city of Babylon. This proposal was approved by Cyrus.

The Jews expected the following rewards from Cyrus in return for this proposal:

1. The release of the captives and their return to their homeland.
2. The return of all the golden vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had plundered from their temples. Cyrus agreed to the first request but remained silent regarding the last request because he had already given them to "Esagila," the leader of the Babylonian priests, with whom he had collaborated previously.

The appointed day arrived, and during the festival that was held, the Babylonians began dancing and drinking from the early morning. After sunset, "Alus," a spy for Cyrus who had previously entered Babylon disguised as a priest, got the guards at the gates of the city drunk with abundant food and drink, and after ensuring their ignorance and foolishness, he shot an arrow that had been previously agreed upon with Cyrus's troops to signal that the situation was ready. Part of Cyrus's troops, upon seeing the arrow, raised the walls of the channels and changed the course of the river to open the gates and enter the city. They joined the guards

and collaborated with them, who, along with "Esagila," were already prepared, and opened the gates of the city. They then attacked the palace of "Mudhjalbiya," the king, and since, according to Babylonian customs, no one except the king had the right to carry any kind of weapon at court festivities, all those present were easily slaughtered without defense.

"Nabu-sir," the commander of Balthazar's army, upon seeing the situation, attempted to defend the king by drawing his sword, but unfortunately, before reaching the sword, he was killed by "San-ouri," his treacherous assistant who had collaborated with Cyrus. "Balthazar" was also killed by "Okabaro," one of Cyrus's close associates. Among the attendees, "Aidan Amorum," the judge of Babylon, the prophet Daniel, and "Esme-Idad," a Babylonian priest under the protection of "San-ouri," were saved from death.

After a while, the commanders of the Babylonian army, "Sourma" and "Asma-alim," who had survived the fateful night attack, rose up against the invaders and traitors several times, but were all repelled by Cyrus. Gradually, Daniel's long-standing betrayal became evident to the people of Babylon, and his life was threatened by death, making it impossible for him to continue living in Babylon. Since the Babylonian fugitives were scattered everywhere in the West and were thirsty for his blood, Western Babylon could not provide him with a safe haven. Therefore, he took refuge in the east near the city of Shushtar and spent the rest of his life practicing fortune-telling and deceiving the simple-minded people of that land. It should be noted that among Cyrus's troops, there were also noble individuals, such as the prince "Ostika," who showed compassion for the Babylonian captives and provided them with significant help.



Question Twenty-Three: As someone who, in the position of a historian, is necessarily aware of international political relations, do you think it is correct to refer to the representative of Iran at the United Nations Congress as the representative of Iran, or as the representative of the Kurds of Iran, or the Turkmen of Iran, and so forth? Does this matter not resemble the same designation as the Assyrians and Chaldeans? Since we know that Chaldea is the name of one of the many ethnic groups of the great nation of Assyria, if we can place this ethnic and religious name alongside the name of Assyria, then why shouldn't we say Assyrians, Chaldeans, Jacobites, Maronites, Jlowas, Nestorians, Orthodox Christians, and so on? What is your perspective on this matter?

Answer: In response to the first part of your question, it is evident that when we talk about a representative of a country in the United Nations, this person represents all the ethnic groups and tribes that reside in their country, and there is no need to name each of them individually. The representative of Iran at the UN is obligated to defend Iran's territorial integrity as well as the rights of all individuals living in the country; therefore, it does not make sense to refer to such an individual as the representative of Iran and, for instance, Kurdistan.

As for the second part of your question, as you know, among the various ethnic groups of the time of the Assyrian Empire, one of the most important groups was the Chaldeans, who settled in southern Mesopotamia between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers and the Persian Gulf (at that time, the aforementioned rivers flowed directly into the Persian Gulf, unlike today, where they connect 50 kilometers before reaching the Persian Gulf and flow into the Persian Gulf after forming the Shatt al-Arab). For this reason, the name Chaldea was sometimes mentioned alongside the word Assyria. However, regarding the titles Jacobite, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and Nestorian, it should be noted that these titles mostly refer to different religious sects and have been established by colonial countries over the past 150 years to expand their power and protect their interests through religious propaganda and financial assistance, sowing discord among us.

In this regard, Mr. Hannibal Geyor Gis published an interesting brochure about the religious missions that were in Urmia and its western regions, which every Assyrian must study. Of course, among the various sects, the only relatively old one is the Nestorian sect, which was founded by a person named "Nestorius," who lived between the years 380-452 AD and was also the bishop of the city of Istanbul. His beliefs found followers in certain northern regions of Mesopotamia.



Question Twenty-Four: How have you found the language and literature of Assyria, and in your opinion, what special features can be found in the language and literature of Assyria?

Answer: As you know, the Assyrian language is one of the oldest and most complete languages in the world, rooted in Aramaic. Inhabiting Mesopotamia spoke this language thousands of years ago, and it was so prevalent in those regions that familiarity and fluency in it were considered a point of pride. Even Jesus Christ was not without this privilege, as He

spoke the last words on the cross in Aramaic: "Eli Eli lama sabachthani," which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and then ascended into eternity.

Mandaean is also derived from it. This is similarly true for numbers, where a photocopy of their evolution demonstrates this transformation well.

Based on the above facts, an Assyrian individual has the right to take pride in themselves, just as I take pride in being Assyrian.



Question Twenty-Five: Mr. Bit Atanus, you have shown an excessive interest in collecting inscriptions and specific symbols of the ancient Assyrians at work. We have seen that most of these symbols, such as war standards and the Assyrian star and winged bull, are crafted as coins and medals made from gold and silver in the form of necklaces, tie pins, and cufflinks, which are extraordinarily beautiful and admirable. This artistic work of yours is a source of pride for our nation. However, among the various designs in your artwork, the winged bull with a human head stands out. Could you please explain your particular interest in this design and what the winged bull symbolizes, along with its meanings?

Answer: In general, I have a great interest in all manifestations and inscriptions from the era of the Assyrian Empire, but my particular interest in the winged bull is mainly because, in every museum where one encounters this work, the grandeur, artistic delicacy, and precise proportions of its body have a special impact on the viewer. It is truly a masterpiece of art from that era. Currently, there are 2 pieces of this design in the Louvre Museum in Paris, 4 pieces in the British Museum, 2 pieces in the Berlin Museum, and 2 pieces in the Metropolitan Museum of New York, as well as in the Baghdad Museum, which were discovered in excavations in northern Mesopotamia.

Most of these massive statues were placed at the entrances of royal palaces as guardians facing each other. As for what the winged bull symbolizes, it should be noted that the bull itself represents strength and power. The head of the bull with a human face symbolizes wisdom or the god "Baal," the father of the gods on Earth. The wings signify speed. Any individual or nation possessing these three qualities in that world could maintain its independence. In fact, the situation remains the same today; that is, any nation that is stronger is in the right.



Question Twenty-Six: Why is it mentioned in legends that the winged bull is the same as King Nebuchadnezzar of Assyria, who, due to numerous sins and disobedience to God's commandments, fell into divine wrath and was transformed? Is this false legend considered one of the masterpieces of the Jewish people and the narrators of the Torah?

Answer: I do not wish to recount what is written in the Torah because the readers of the Torah know well that in this so-called incomplete history, written by Jewish authors, the epic

tales of the past, passed down orally, were altered to benefit personal agendas, whether true or false.

Since ancient times, the Jewish people, whose land was called Canaan, have frequently faced invasions from various nations, including the Egyptians, and each time they extended a hand for help to the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians repeatedly suppressed the invaders and rescued them. In return for this aid, the Jews had obligations that they unfortunately failed to fulfill. For this reason, "Ashurbanipal," "Sargon II," and "Nebuchadnezzar" were compelled to occupy their territory, but each time, after a period, they returned it under certain conditions.

When the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, a powerful king (one of whose masterpieces is the famous Hanging Gardens of Babylon), began, at that time the king of the Jews was "Jehoiakim," who refused to fulfill the obligations of his ancestors. Nebuchadnezzar, whose patience had run out with these promises, ended the situation permanently. After conquering Canaan and relocating its inhabitants to Mesopotamia, Nebuchadnezzar ordered that some of the Jewish descendants be familiarized with the civilization and culture of the Babylonians. Among them were Daniel and three of his friends named Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who not only learned about Babylonian civilization but also various secrets and sciences, such as astronomy, dream interpretation, magic, and sleight of hand (which the common people refer to as miracles, a technique used by Moses against the Egyptian king).

Since Daniel was more skilled than others in interpreting the king's dreams, Nebuchadnezzar eventually appointed him as the governor of Babylon. One night, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a tall tree reaching the sky, full of fruit, with various birds feeding on it and animals grazing beneath it. Suddenly, an angel descended from heaven and cut the tree down, driving away the birds and binding the roots of the tree to the ground.

He called Daniel, who interpreted the dream as follows: "The tree is you, whose greatness has filled the world. The angel who descended from heaven and cut the tree signifies that you will be separated from your people and reduced to eating grass and herbs." And indeed, this came to pass, meaning that after a while, the king lost his mind and began eating grass instead of regular food. After a few years, the king gradually regained his health and sanity, returning to his natural state and reclaiming his royal position with the help of his close associates and princes.

In my view, Daniel, who was well aware of all the details of the court, knew that the king was ill and that doctors had recommended a diet of plants and vegetables for his treatment, as is common today in natural medicine, with vegetarian populations existing in all countries. The root cause of Nebuchadnezzar's illness stems from the time he was on his way to conquer the city of Nineveh and passed near the ruins of the city of Assyria, his eyes filled with tears, tormented by guilt over this action and the fratricide. To forget this, he resorted to drunkenness and debauchery; unfortunately, this method did not relieve his troubled conscience, leading to a mental disorder.

As mentioned earlier, Daniel was aware of all these events, and since he did not dare to express such an insult, he interpreted it in the form of a dream as described above. Regarding the winged bull, it should be noted that this image existed 1,500 years before Nebuchadnezzar's reign and had no connection to the events during his illness. If, hypothetically, Daniel had the audacity to compare the king to a bull to alleviate his frustration over the loss of his country, he would undoubtedly have faced the wrath of the courtiers and been subjected to the harshest punishment. Thus, the aforementioned legend is merely a fabrication of the Torah authors, who have always harbored resentment over this defeat.

Interestingly, this narrative was recorded in the Torah after the fall of the city of Babylon by Cyrus and after the freedom he granted them in exchange for their services. However, not all Jews returned to their ancestral lands, including Daniel himself. They realized that living in progressive countries with laws, even if in captivity, was far better and easier than in their own country. For this reason, they have remained settled in these countries until now.

Regarding the first part of your question, in which the Torah writers claim that the winged bull is Nebuchadnezzar, I must say that their main goal in this comparison was, in fact, to humiliate and insult Nebuchadnezzar. If they had understood what the symbol of the winged bull represented, they would never have compared the king to it, as the winged bull symbolizes wisdom, power, and speed—qualities that every person desires.

One day, "Belshazzar" held a magnificent feast called Yubawwa, attended by all the prominent leaders of the people. The grandeur of the feast was such that even all the vessels and goblets were made of gold and silver, taken by Nebuchadnezzar from the temples of Jerusalem. While the guests were indulging in joy and becoming intoxicated, suddenly,

according to the Torah, a hand appeared from nowhere, and a writing was reflected on the wall of the hall reading: "Mene, Mene, Tekel." To interpret it, they sent for Daniel, who explained the meaning of the writing as follows: "Because you and your guests have indulged in these sacred vessels, our God in heaven, Yahweh, has become angry and commanded that this warning appear on the wall: Mene—God has numbered your kingdom and brought it to an end. Tekel—You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting. Peres—Your kingdom will be divided among the Medes and Persians." That very night, Belshazzar was killed during the feast.

Because Daniel had spent many years serving in the courts of kings, he was well aware of the existing tunnels between the palaces and temples and outside the city, and he personally guided the conspirators through one of these tunnels to the king's quarters, leading to his death. As for the so-called writing on the wall, the truth is that Daniel, with the help of his three friends mentioned above, had previously arranged such a plan and inscribed the writing on glass like a prism or magnifying glass, reflecting it on the wall with a light source such as a lamp. This was similar to the art of cinema today. It should be noted that during that time, glassmaking was quite common. However, since all the guests were so intoxicated, this phenomenon appeared extraordinary to them. The result is that today I, unfortunately, must spend sleepless hours reviewing various scientific and historical texts to interpret and explain Daniel's tricks in response to your questions.

In short, Daniel, over the course of about 60 years or more of service in the courts of those three kings, gained fame and official recognition by employing such cunning methods, which he was quite capable of. As previously mentioned, since his country had been destroyed by the Babylonians, he always harbored resentment over this matter. Therefore, he maximized the opportunity arising from the conflict between the priests and the kings and was constantly involved in espionage between these two classes. Using unscrupulous methods in collaboration with his colleagues, he devised a plan to open the gates of Babylon and presented it to Cyrus. Since he was fundamentally the designer of such plans, whenever the king had a dream, he interpreted it according to his own preferences and the information he had about the king's character and behavior.

This disreputable act attributed to Daniel the Prophet (who was not a prophet) is remembered among the people as one of the actions inherited by some contemporary individuals. The lesson we learn from these events is that in most cases, if someone suddenly rises from

nothing to everything, it is undoubtedly morally unreasonable to expect more from them.
This is why the following couplet was created:

"Lord, do not allow the beggar to become respectable;
If respectable, he will become unaware of God."



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Question Twenty-Seven: In the Torah, it is stated that the Babylonians built the famous Tower of Babel with the intention of reaching the heavens and confronting God. As a punishment for their arrogance, God caused the foundations of that great structure to become porous, leading to its destruction. How do you justify this statement from the Torah, and what do you believe was the main purpose of building this tower?

Answer: Initially, the people spoke a single language and lived in the plain of "Shinar" between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This land was very fertile, and the living conditions of its inhabitants improved day by day. As a result of this prosperity, the people became arrogant and decided to build a tall tower that reached the sky. Instead of using stone and lime, they utilized baked bricks and tar in the construction.

Yahweh, the God of the Jews, became angry with humanity's arrogance and caused them to speak in different languages, so that they could no longer understand one another. As a result, they abandoned the construction and scattered throughout the world. From that time onward, different languages emerged. The place where this tower was built was called Babel.

However, in my opinion, the real reason for the halt in the tower's construction was that the bricks surrounding the tower began to crumble under the weight before the structure was completed. Upon noticing this, the builders decided to abandon the project.



Question Twenty-Eight: As a researcher in historical matters, please indicate whether there is a difference between the accounts in the Torah and historical realities, particularly concerning the history of ancient Assyria. If there is a difference, where does this discrepancy lie and for what reason?

Answer: As previously mentioned in response to several of your questions, the authors of the Torah have distorted events and facts related to Assyria and Babylon for their own benefit, documenting them as historical evidence in the Torah.

Fortunately, the discoveries and excavations by Layard, the famous British archaeologist who worked in Mesopotamia, especially in the region of Nineveh about 150 years ago, led to the discovery of the library of Ashurbanipal, which contains around ten thousand clay tablets inscribed in cuneiform. After the discovery and reading of these tablets, which was

accomplished with significant effort by scholars, it became evident that all the accounts in the Torah related to the history of the Assyrian people are far from the truth and are entirely false.

Further research on these tablets has clarified more facts regarding the history of the Assyrian people and confirmed the bias of the Torah's authors.



Question Twenty-Nine: Do you believe that the narrators of the Torah have not been biased? In other words, can it be said that due to national and religious prejudices, and perhaps also racial biases and sometimes the animosity of the authors of the Torah, they have distorted the truths and presented historical realities in a way that politically weakens and demeans the Assyrian nation, which rightfully has been called the torchbearer of human civilization, and portrays the Jewish people as a special and favored nation of God?

Answer: In response to this question, I completely agree with you, and the truth is as you have pointed out. I have expressed my opinion in this regard in response to several previous questions.



Question Thirty: Between the narratives of the Torah and the verses of the Holy Quran, many significant discrepancies are observed. In your opinion, what is the reason for these discrepancies and what is their source?

Answer: I must admit that this issue has not occurred to me until now, and consequently, I do not have a study regarding these textual discrepancies. If you are interested in obtaining accurate information and a reasoned response to your question, I recommend consulting the religious authorities of Islam as well as Jewish rabbis. If you receive a satisfactory answer, I would greatly appreciate it if you could clarify this matter for me as well.



Question 31: Now that we are discussing the Holy Quran, we know that a group of people in Medina known as the Ansar, who were the most devoted companions of the Prophet of Islam

and Imam Ali, played a significant role in the advancement of Islam, were Christians. But how can it be proven that they were also Assyrians?

Answer: As you have stated and everyone knows, a group of devoted companions of the Prophet of Islam and Imam Ali, known as the Ansar, were Christians or "Nasara," derived from the word Nasr and Ansar. Additionally, we know that before Islam, apart from the Assyrians, who were the indigenous inhabitants of those regions, there were no other Christians. According to the theory of "Lewis Aywaz," centuries before the emergence of Islam, philosophical schools and civilizations related to the Assyrians and Babylonians existed in those lands, belonging to the indigenous inhabitants, and these truths cannot be denied. Even after the emergence of Islam, although the Arabic language gradually developed and replaced other local languages, the remnants of the peoples of those lands have always strived to preserve their mother tongue, which is Aramaic.

To prove this, one can refer to issue number three of the "National Geographic Magazine" dated 1978. In this issue, there is an illustrated article about a village in present-day Syria called "Maaloula," known as a stronghold of Christianity, with about 1,500 inhabitants. Although they are taught in Arabic at school, their custom is to learn Aramaic at home to preserve their mother tongue, a practice that has continued for 2,600 years among the monasteries and families of the Assyrian people in Mesopotamia. It should be noted that before the fall of the Assyrian Empire, there were colleges and higher educational centers in the cities of Nisibis and Harran where medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and other sciences were taught at a high level. After several years, this knowledge was transferred to the University of Jundishapur, where Assyrian professors taught in Akkadian, which was the official language of instruction at that time, alongside the most renowned professors, 11 of whom were from the Bukhayishua family, including:

1. Bukhayishua the Great - Georgius Bukhayishua, head of the Jundishapur hospital.

This is the same physician who was summoned to Baghdad when the Abbasid Caliph Mansur fell ill and the doctors of Baghdad were unable to treat him. The Caliph encouraged him to accept Islam and stay permanently in Baghdad, but Georgius replied that he preferred to be in Hell or Heaven with his ancestors.

The Caliph smiled and stated that since you came, I have been cured of all the ailments I was accustomed to, and then sent him back to Jundishapur with a thousand gold coins and a servant (from the magazine "Youth," issue 105, dated 1336).

After the University of Jundishapur, the first university in Europe was established in the city of Krakow, Poland, 900 years ago, and after a hundred years in England, and 50 years later in France, and later in other countries.

Additionally, during the reign of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, contemporaneous with Abu Rayhan al-Biruni and Ibn Sina, one of the most prominent scholars of the time was an Assyrian named Abu Sahl Masihi, who was a close friend and collaborator of Ibn Sina.

It should be noted that in Mesopotamia, there are still tribes that have not converted to Christianity or Islam, remaining followers of their original religion, which is over 9,000 years old, worshiping the One God, the Heavenly God, whom Noah also followed.

The enlightening philosophy of this can be seen after translating the famous Hammurabi tablets, revealing that the teachings of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were all inspired by the school of those writings. According to Mr. Quryakous, who lived among these tribes for 40 years, they are still awaiting the return of Nebuchadnezzar to free them from the oppression and misery they have endured for thousands of years, just as Christians and Muslims await the second coming of Jesus Christ and Imam Mahdi.

The members of these tribes look at us Assyrian Christians with disdain and keep their distance, stating that we are not true Assyrians. The criticism they have is, "What fault did you find in the religion of your ancestors that you went and followed the religion of Christ?"

In my opinion, their statements are entirely logical. Although I am not a fanatic and respect the enlightening teachings of all religions, whenever **ܐܠܗܝ ܐܬܪܝܐ** the "god of Assyria" is mentioned, my attention is drawn to it involuntarily, and a special smile appears on my face. This proves that despite the passage of thousands of years, the blood of my ancestors still flows in my veins, and if one day we are to return to the customs and traditions of our ancient religion, I will be the first to lead the way, and I hope that my dear fellow believers will agree with me on this matter.

However, to prove with certainty that a group of the Prophet of Islam's companions were Assyrian Christians, one only needs to refer to the book "Assyrians in Two World Wars" by the late Yaqub Malik Ismail. This book states that in reward for the valuable services that Assyrian priests provided to the spread and development of Islam, a formal decree was issued by the Prophet Muhammad, signed by 33 of his closest companions, including Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib, which stipulated that this people should be free from any oppression and able to worship God and perform their religious duties freely, and that they should be assisted in maintaining their places of worship. Anyone who acts against this decree would be considered an enemy of Islam.

The names of the signatories of the aforementioned decree are as follows:

1. Abu Bakr al-Sadiq
2. Umar ibn al-Khattab
3. Uthman ibn Affan
4. Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him)
5. Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan
6. Abu Darda
7. Abu Dharr
8. Abu Huraira
9. Abdullah ibn Mas'ud
10. Abdullah ibn Abbas
11. Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib
12. Fudail ibn Abbas
13. Zubair ibn al-Awwam
14. Talha ibn Abdullah
15. Sa'id ibn Yazid
16. Sa'id ibn Abdullah
17. Sibt ibn Qais
18. Yazid ibn Bait
19. Abdullah ibn Yazid
20. Sahl ibn Mas'ud
21. Uthman ibn Mas'ud
22. Dawood ibn Ghabah

23. Abu al-Aliya
24. Abdullah ibn al-Qas
25. Ibn Hudayfa
26. Ibn Isa
27. Ibn Du'ayya
28. Umar ibn Basir
29. Hashim ibn Asiya
30. Hasan ibn Thabat
31. Ka'b ibn Malif
32. Ka'b ibn Ka'b
33. Ja'far ibn Abu Talib. May God's peace be upon them all.

This document was in the possession of Mar Benyamin Shimun, the Archbishop of the Assyrians, until 1915, but was lost due to war and the migration of the Mar Shimun family. It is reportedly currently kept in a museum in Istanbul.



Question Thirty-Two: Now that the discussion about the spirituality of the clergy has come up, allow me to digress. Do you believe, in your opinion, that the foundation of politics is separate from religion?

Answer: In my opinion, these two do not generally align because the foundation of religion is based on good thoughts, good words, and good deeds, which elevate a person to the heights of honor. On the other hand, politics involves lies, espionage, bribery, and other unpleasant human actions that, in contrast to religion, lead a person toward annihilation.



Question Thirty-Three: In today's chaotic world, in the global struggle, all nations face two opposing forces: the oppressors and the oppressed. On one side are the colonial and imperialist forces, and on the other, the oppressed peoples.

If we do not say that throughout history, the struggles of nations have always been supported by the capitalist and bourgeois forces, we can at least assert that in the broader struggles between capitalism and the proletariat, the church and Christian clergy have remained

indifferent, merely engaging in prayers and rituals within church corners until the Renaissance, which can also be referred to as the religious Renaissance.

During World War I, Mar Shimun, the martyr and late leader of the world's Assyrians, stepped into the field of struggle as a spiritual leader, and although we cannot say it was the first time in church history, we can assert that he served as a prominent example and symbol of true spirituality, taking the lead in the struggles of his people. After Mar Shimun, there were fighting and diligent Christian clergymen like "Bishop Hilarion Capucci," a great leader of the Palestinian people, and Father Ernesto Cardinal, a spiritual leader of the Nicaraguan people and spokesperson for the Sandinistas, as well as Father Helou Kamara, who ignited the flames of revolution against oppression and imperialism throughout South America.

In the Islamic world, especially since the Constitutional Revolution to today, the names of fighting Muslim clerics shine brightly in the history of Iran, with prominent figures such as Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Taleghani leading the way.

The absence of fighting Christian Assyrians, especially in recent years within the Assyrian community of Iran and the world, is profoundly noticeable. In your opinion, how can the Christian clergy and churches be invited to this vast and generous banquet of the Assyrian people's struggles, and how can their presence in this field of battle be a blessing?

Answer: As we know, there has always been a confrontation between the oppressor class and the oppressed. When oppression exceeds a certain limit, the oppressed have no choice but to revolt, making it very difficult, if not impossible, for the oppressor class to confront them.

For example, we can mention the uprising of Kaveh in Iran, Stepan Razin and Pugachev in Russia, and the French Revolution. Subsequently, the Russian Revolution led to the overthrow of the authoritarian regimes of the time, as well as the recent revolution in our own country. It can even be said that World War I, in which two colonial powers faced each other for global domination and control over small and weak nations, was ignited for this very purpose.

During the conflicts, many small nations in those areas were trampled underfoot by these forces. For instance, in the northeastern Ottoman Empire, approximately 1.5 million Armenians and 200,000 Assyrians were massacred.

The remnants of the Assyrian people, after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, migrated to the mountainous regions of the Nimrod Mountains in southeastern present-day Turkey, establishing shelters known as "eagle's nests." They engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry and used old rifles for hunting and self-defense. However, they lacked the strength to resist the Ottoman armies equipped with modern weapons of the time.

Thus, they were forced to leave their homes and migrate to the western parts of Azerbaijan, where they defended their existence under the leadership of the late Patriarch Mar Benjamin Shimun, collaborating with tribal leaders like General Agapetros Elyin, Malik Qanbar, Rafael Khan, Malik Khushabe, and others.

It is noteworthy that the British incited this small and fighting nation against the Ottoman armies for their own benefit, promising them support to reclaim their ancestral lands and autonomy. However, as always, they broke their promises. For accurate information on this matter, every Assyrian individual must read the book "The British Betrayal of the Assyrians" by Yusuf Malek and the book "Our Smallest Ally" by Father Vigran. The latter book's cover humorously and critically states: "Can it be said that we have played the game, by those to whom we gave promises and who served us Because they trusted those promises?"

Regarding how to benefit from the presence of Assyrian clergy, I believe that due to the multiplicity of religious sects and divisions among them, this task will not be possible unless, like 200 years ago, everyone unites under one sect and fully utilizes their spiritual leaders for the benefit of the nation. Alternatively, if the current religious authorities can consolidate their powers and work towards a common goal, it would be a positive first step.

We expect our spiritual leaders, just as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus appeared to guide and prevent the dispersion of their people, to also step onto this path and dedicate their efforts to the unity and solidarity of those under their leadership.

To substantiate this claim, one can refer to the Gospel of Matthew 15, where a woman approached Jesus seeking healing for her sick daughter. Initially, He refrained from healing her, stating that He had come only for the salvation of the lost sheep of Israel, adding that it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs. From this narrative, it can be concluded that the leaders of each nation must primarily focus their efforts and activities on the benefit of their own community and country.


Regarding Bishop Capucci, I believe a spiritual figure should engage in religious and spiritual teachings rather than through the trafficking of arms, as this may lead to future troubles, and the same applies to the other religious officials you mentioned. It is unclear to us whether they come from the heavenly God or earthly deities and enter the field of struggles, leading us around like sheep.

Therefore, encouraging and motivating our community's spiritual leaders to fight, when our ultimate goal is not entirely clear, and due to the fragmentation and division of our people—which is a significant weakness—and lacking a reliable support base, will not yield effective results.



Question Thirty-Four: We return to the main topic of our discussion, which primarily aims to benefit from your expertise regarding the history of Assyria, its myths, and ancient Assyrian art. We talked about your artistic works, where you vividly bring to life the bas-reliefs related to the myths and history of the ancient Assyrians in various artistic forms, and we discussed the winged bull and its representations.

Another motif you frequently feature in your works is the Star of Assur. Please explain what this motif signifies, in which era of Assyrian civilization it was created, what its actual colors are, and whether these colors have a specific meaning or are merely decorative.

Answer: In the history of our people, there is fundamentally no symbol known as the Star of Assur. What is referred to as a star in various Assyrian publications is, in fact, called Shamash (), the sun god, which resembles a star and is related to the history of our people; it is commonly referred to as the Star of Assur, though this is not correct. I have studied this image closely, and after extensive research on bas-reliefs and tablets, I have given it a realistic shape and proportion that you have observed.

Shamash itself is depicted in two forms in our history: one with four rays and four groups of light rays, each group having one, two, and three rays, and the other with eight rays, which also has seven and eleven light rays. This motif symbolizes the generosity of life for all beings on Earth. The various forms you will see below are derived from ancient documents that were inscribed on stone tablets.



Fortunately, I have in my possession one of the small examples made of ceramic and glass, which was worn as a pendant. It is unique, featuring raised patterns and a thick ray of light that branches out from the center of the circle in four directions. It likely dates back to three thousand years before Christ.



In the space between the branches, there are eight spheres that may represent the chart of known celestial bodies in the universe.

1. One of these circles, known as Sin, represents the moon and is the symbol of the god of irrigation and gardens. Sin also means "the sun of the night." Additionally, Ishtar is mentioned as the goddess of Sin in various texts.
2. Mirodakh, which is the star Mars, was recognized for its red color since ancient times.
3. Bel, which is the star Saturn.
4. Nabu, which is the star Mercury.
5. Pavo, which is the star Jupiter.
6. Shamash, representing the sun, and the other two likely represent the star Venus, which appears twice every twenty-four hours, once in the morning and once in the evening.

Regarding the colors: If you have noticed, you will see that in the carvings on the rocks, the symbol of the "Goddess of the Sun" is colorless and reflects the color of the stone itself, while in the ceramic designs, its color is gold, symbolizing the fiery sun and the giver of life on Earth.

About 35 years ago, when I became familiar with the history of my people, my pride in being Assyrian increased day by day. That year coincided with the first World Olympic Games held in Berlin. As an athlete at that time, I envied the participating countries and their flags, asking myself why we could not have a flag and participate ahead of our sports team in such competitions? The difference was that if I were carrying my nation's flag, I would never lower it in front of the podium of world leaders, as I believe no one deserves to have a country's flag lowered before them except in front of the Great God "Ashur," who is also the name of our ancestor.

Years passed until the Assyrian Union (AUA) was formed, and individuals from the nation were requested to study and propose the type and shape of a flag for the Assyrians for future meetings. Since I had been thinking and researching this for years and had some ideas ready, I presented my draft at the sixth Congress of the Assyrians held in Yonkers, which was unanimously approved in that session. The reason for its approval was that I had not created anything new; rather, my goal was to extract, gather, and revive what we had in our ancient

history. Since this was the desire of every Assyrian, it was accepted without question and resonated with the audience.

It should be noted that in my proposed design, all elements were things we had in our history. My only task was to arrange these elements so that their combination would be visually uplifting and honorable.

My next task was to color this flag, and the meanings of its colors are as follows:

1. The color of the central image, which is Shamash, is gold, representing fire, the life-giver of all beings on Earth, while the four main rays of the central image are light sky blue, symbolizing joy.
2. The three branches that extend from the central feathers to four directions either represent rays of light or symbolize rivers. I chose the second hypothesis and extended them in the shape of rivers, signifying that just as we migrated from this center to all corners of the world, I hope we will return to our homeland through those same paths. These rivers are the Tigris, Euphrates, and Zab, with the Euphrates in blue, symbolizing abundance; the central image in white, representing peace; and red, symbolizing blood and pride.

Additionally, at the top, the image of the goddess Ashur is depicted in her original colors from colored ceramics, which are currently kept on loan at the British Museum. At the top of the flagpole is the standard of Sargon II, made of gold, which always hovered over the king so that the army leaders would be aware of the commander-in-chief's location.

The only question that arose was why you did not use the color purple, which was supposedly favored by the Assyrians at that time, in this design. My response to this question was that in our history, we see images and colored ceramics of all kinds of colors, especially blue and gold, and there is no evidence that the color purple was exclusive to us. As you know, there are seven primary colors: red, yellow, green, blue, purple, white, and black, which relate to all nations of the world. Additionally, purple is a combination of red and blue, and the Phoenicians specialized in producing it in various shades in the ceramics industry. Their ceramic products in the Mediterranean region were renowned for this color. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that this color was exclusive to the Assyrians; we used all colors, including green, which was especially favored by the Assyrians due to its scarcity in the southern Mesopotamian nature.

It should also be noted that religions and sects have also used colors as symbols of their faith, such as blue, favored by Christians; red, favored by Buddhists; white, specific to Hindus; green, a symbol of Islam; and gold, favored by Japanese Shinto.

Furthermore, regarding the meanings of the names of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, according to Mr. Fereydoun Mirza, the word Tigris or **ܕܝܓܠܬܐ** Diglat or Taqla **ܬܩܠܐ** means "date," which is abundantly planted around this river.

The Euphrates or **ܦܪܬܐ** Perat means **ܦܚܝܬܐ** "abundance," as agricultural practices, canal construction, and irrigation have been prevalent since the settlement of the tribes in that region. Therefore, people lived in ultimate comfort and self-sufficiency regarding agricultural products and other goods, and for this reason, this river was named "Perat."



Question Thirty-Five: Most believing Assyrians are very interested in closely familiarizing themselves with your very artistic works. Have you ever thought about organizing an exhibition of your creations for public use?

Answer: In response to this question, I must inform you that:

Firstly, I do not yet consider myself capable of showcasing these types of works that I am interested in, and moreover, they are not for sale. Additionally, most Assyrians who know me personally are familiar with these activities of mine.

Secondly, these artistic symbols that I intend to create are meant to keep the history of ancient Assyria alive and are mostly prepared for the Assyrian Universal Alliance (AUA). They are awarded to individuals who have made significant contributions to their nation or have provided exceptional services, as per the request of the AUA or other Assyrian national associations and clubs for encouragement and appreciation.



Question Thirty-Six: May I request that you provide us with a few examples of your designs for publication in the "Karkheh" magazine?

Answer: No problem.



Question Thirty-Seven: I sincerely thank you again for taking a few hours of your precious and valuable time to conduct this interview with us, and I hope that in future opportunities, you will allow us to disturb your honorable time to gain insight.

Answer: Although preparing answers to these questions took a lot of time, I am pleased that this information may be beneficial to the enthusiasts of our nation and possibly provide some joy to the gentlemen. The only point I would like to remind you of is that I expected you would have referred to one or two significant points in your questions, which unfortunately did not appear, as undoubtedly the designers of these questions have invested considerable thought and time in creating them.

One of these points is the Ishtar Gate, where we encounter forms of a dragon and a calf on either side of its entrance. It is also clear that the innovator and the creators had a specific purpose for these designs. To interpret and explain the meanings of these shapes and designs, I have reviewed and studied many books related to the history of Assyria, but unfortunately, I found nothing related to the meanings of these symbols. The only time I realized what these statues represent was while I was busy creating them. This is because foreign Assyriologists, no matter how knowledgeable they may be, cannot have the same interest and feeling that I hold for the history of my people, which occupies all my thoughts and spirit.

Regarding this topic, I discussed it with a few archaeologists and sought their opinions. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, they were unable to critique my interpretation of the

meanings of these shapes, and it was here that I felt a sense of pride and satisfaction, resolving to continue my studies in this area.

The second topic is the reason for the fall of the Assyrian Empire.

The third question I raise and ask all dear Assyrians is: what happened after the downfall of the Achaemenid dynasty at the hands of Alexander the Great that the Assyrians were unable to rebuild and flourish their country, even though they had several opportunities and suitable conditions for reviving their nation?

If it is possible for you to prepare the aforementioned unanswered questions, I would be very grateful if you could send them to my address so that I can create a satisfactory response from the collection of multiple answers for myself and those interested.

And my fourth question is: why did the Babylonians, when they felt the great threat of invasion from the east, respond to the call of "Nabu-Sardaru," the worthy commander of the army of Sardanapalus, who had gone to the city of Nippur in southern Babylon to gather forces, whereas, in the northern pages of Mesopotamia, where the Assyrians had turned after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, there was no response to this great commander's request?



Continues

The cuneiform script that includes the names of Assyrian kings serves only a decorative purpose.

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