



# NINEVEH

CULTURAL | EDUCATIONAL | SOCIAL



**Kha B'Nissan Celebration Year 6773**

San Jose by AAASJ • Saturday April 1st 2023

# CONTENTS

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF DANIEL APRIM DEKELAITA NOVEMBER 1936 – FEBRUARY 2023



On Sunday, February 12, 2023, Daniel A. DeKelaita passed away at the age of 86. Daniel was born of ethnic Assyrian ancestry in Mosul, Iraq in 1936 during a period of political unrest following the British occupation. He immigrated to the United States in 1955 and shortly thereafter became a U.S. citizen. In 1960, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, serving 2 years in the 163rd Medical Battalion. Daniel later earned a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics and Master of Science in Physics, completing studies at both U.C. Berkeley and San Francisco State University. He was a proud member of the Assyrian Community of San Francisco for over 50 years and advocated support for Assyrian refugees in the Middle East. He is preceded in death by his parents Aprim and Elishwa, and his siblings Saul, Jonathan, Warda, and Esther. He is survived by his wife Ineke and daughters Ingrid, Christina, Daniella, son-in-law Ken Hanson, and grand-children Johanna, Sierra, and Daniel Rethmeier and Kole Hanson, as well as extended family and friends. He will be deeply missed by the many lives he touched and his memory will live on forever in our hearts.

*Daniel was laid to rest at Cypress Lawn Memorial Park, Colma, CA*

On behalf of the Assyrian Foundation of America, we express our deepest sympathy to the family. Daniel was not just a regular member, he was a pillar to the Assyrian Foundation of America. Daniel will be deeply missed by the many lives he touched and his memory and legacy will live on forever.

To view Daniel's online obituary and to share memories and photos please go to: <https://clcafamilly.com/share-memories/daniel-deKelaita-obituary/CS-20220909-127694>



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>2 In Memory of</b><br/>Daniel A. DeKelaita</p> <p><b>4 Mashki Gate: Stunning Ancient Rock Carvings Found in Iraq</b><br/>Tiffany Wertheimer BBC</p> <p><b>6 AKITU Art Exhibition</b><br/>Atra Givarkis</p> <p><b>9 4,000-Year-Old Assyrian Tablet Discovered</b></p> <p><b>10 The Assyrian Genocide Resolution HCR 2044</b><br/>Linda Youkhana</p> <p><b>14 Kha B'Nissan celebration</b><br/>San Jose by AAASJ</p> <p><b>16 Assyrians celebrate Akitu 6773 with song and dance</b><br/>Julian Bechocha</p> <p><b>16 The 1000-Year-Old Bible Portraying Jesus Found in Turkey</b><br/>Andrei Tapalaga</p> <p><b>18 An Interview with Michael Mikho: Host of Moor U La Moor</b><br/>Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.</p> | <p><b>22 Mount Nisir and the Foundations of the Assyrian Church</b><br/>Simo Parpola</p> <p><b>27 Nineveh Donations</b><br/>1/01/2023 - 3/31/2023</p> <p><b>28 A Brief History of the Maronite Church</b><br/>Michael A. Younan</p> <p><b>30 In Memory of</b><br/>Solomon Sliwo (Sawa) Solomon</p> <p><b>31 Books in Review</b><br/>Rabel Betshmueel - Selected Works 2000-2020<br/>Efrem Yildiz - Grammer of the Modern Assyrian Language</p> <p><b>32 Professor Yacoub on the French Recognition of the Assyrian Genocide</b><br/>Abdulmesih BarAbraham</p> <p><b>38 Interview with Sabri Atman</b><br/>Fehmi Barkarmo</p> <p><b>39 On Children</b><br/>Kahlil Gibran</p> <p><b>40 The Rebellion - A Manifesto for Contemporary Assyrian Artists</b><br/>Rabel Betshmueel</p> <p><b>41 Assyrian Language Section</b></p> |
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Opinions expressed in NINEVEH are those of the respective authors and not necessarily those of NINEVEH or the Assyrian Foundation of America.

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By Tiffany Wertheimer BBC News  
Image Source, Getty Images

The Mashki Gate was one of the largest in Nineveh and was an icon of the city's size and power. The gate was reconstructed in the 1970s but was destroyed with a bulldozer by IS militants in 2016.

The militant group ransacked and demolished several ancient sites that pre-date Islam in Iraq, denouncing them as symbols of "idolatry".

Mr Khodr said that when the marble slabs were positioned at the gate, they were partly buried. The sections underground were preserved and bear the carvings seen today; whatever was above-ground was wiped smooth over the centuries. The excavation team, which comprises experts from Iraq's Mosul University and the

United States' University of Pennsylvania, is working to restore the Mashki Gate site to how it was before IS bulldozed it.

More than 10,000 archaeological sites have been found in Iraq. Neighboring Syria is also home to treasured ruins, including the site of the ancient city of Palmyra, where the grand Temple of Bel was destroyed by IS, in 2015. However, it is not only militants, vandals and smugglers who have damaged archaeological sites in Iraq. US troops and their allies damaged the ruins of Babylon when the fragile site was used as an army camp after the US invaded Iraq in 2003. A 2009 report by Unesco, the United Nations cultural agency, found troops and their contractors "caused major damage to the city by digging, cutting, scraping, and levelling".

## Mashki Gate: *Stunning ancient rock carvings found in Iraq*

Archaeologists in northern Iraq have made an exciting discovery - unearthing beautiful rock carvings that are about 2,700 years old.

They were found in Mosul by a US-Iraqi excavation team working to reconstruct the ancient Mashki Gate, which Islamic State (IS) militants destroyed in 2016. Iraq is home to some of the world's most ancient cities, including Babylon. But years of turmoil have seen many archaeological sites looted and damaged by militants and military action. The eight marble reliefs show finely chiseled war scenes, grape vines and palm trees.

They date back to the Assyrian King Sennacherib, who ruled the ancient city of Nineveh from 705 to 681 BC, the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage said, in a statement seen by AFP. The powerful king was known for his military campaigns, including against Babylon, and his vast expansion of Nineveh. It is believed the relics once adorned his palace, and were then moved to the Mashki Gate, Fadel Mohammed Khodr, head of the Iraqi archaeological team, told AFP.

This carving shows an Assyrian soldier pulling back an arrow, ready to fire  
Image Source, Getty Images



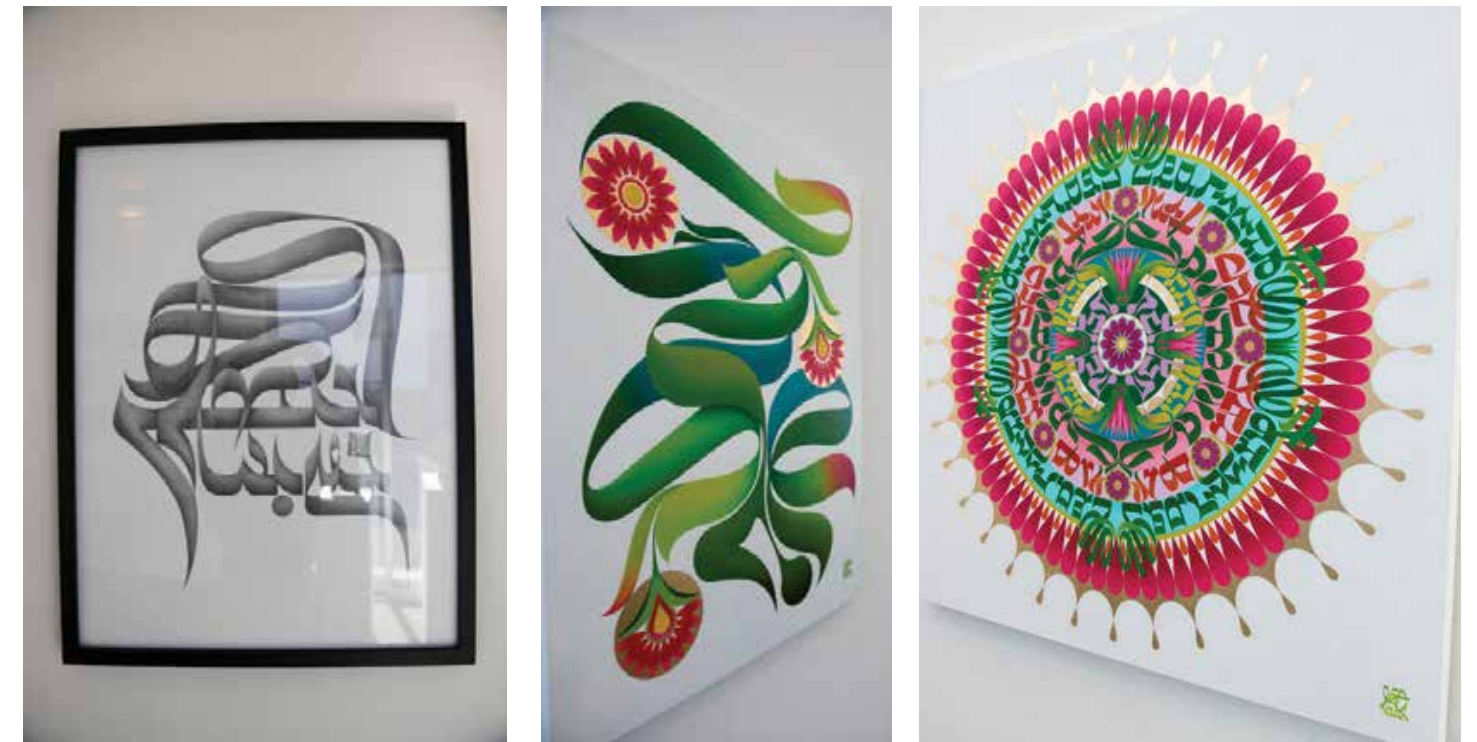


**AKITU ART EXHIBITION**

*by Atra Givarkis*

This year's group exhibition of contemporary Assyrian Art is inspired by the Assyrian new year Akitu, the oldest recorded celebration of the new year. It is an exhibition of artworks inspired by Assyrian culture, tradition, history, language and collective memories connecting each member of our Assyrian community around the world to each other and nation's past to present struggles to exists and stay connected to its roots.

In my artworks, I explore the beauty of Assyrian calligraphy outside its traditional boundaries into world of painting. I like to play with shapes of each alphabet to form complex calligraphic compositions. My passion blooms in colors and details. In my recent artworks, my inspiration came from my memories of my hometown, Urmi, during springtime. I depicted serenity of rainy weather mixed with the smell of freshly plowed soil, wildflowers and herbs blooming in bunches. I am celebrating an ancient language and tradition together in my paintings. Each piece I create is simultaneously an extension from the past, where I have come from and what I have experienced and learned, as well as a preview of the future to where I am going.





### 4,000-Year-Old Assyrian Tablet Discovered Is an Ancient Prenuptial Agreement

*Courtesy of mymodernmet.com*

Archaeologists in Turkey recently made an interesting discovery when examining a 4,000-year-old Assyrian tablet. The cuneiform engravings seem to indicate that it's a sort of ancient prenuptial agreement, detailing everything from divorce to fertility issues.

Unearthed at the Kültepe-Kanesh UNESCO World Heritage site in Turkey's central Kayseri province, this prenuptial agreement gives incredible insight into marriage in Assyrian culture. The area was a settlement during the Old Assyrian Empire dating between 2100 BC and 1800 BC and over 1,000 cuneiform tablets were discovered in 1925. This particular tablet is on display at the Istanbul Archaeology Museum and is the earliest known mention of human infertility.

Professor Ahmet Berkiz Turp from Harran University's Gynecology and Obstetrics Department shares that, according to the tablet, the wife should allow her husband to hire a hierodule—a female slave acting as a surrogate—should the couple not conceive within two years of marriage.

“The female slave would be freed after giving birth to the first male baby and ensuring that the family is not be left without a child,” explains Berkiz. As divorce was not an option for infertile couples in Assyrian culture, and monogamy was valued, this clause gave a way to continue in the marriage and grow families who struggled to conceive.

But that's not all. If grounds for divorce were met, the tablet laid out the terms of payment for both spouses. According to the study recently published by researchers in the medical journal of Gynecological Endocrinology, the inscription reads: “Should Laqipum choose to divorce her, he must pay [her] five minas of silver—and should Hatala choose to divorce him, she must pay (him) five minas of silver. Witnesses: Masa, Ashurishtikal, Talia, Shupianika.”

It just goes to show that this complex Mesopotamian society struggled, and resolved, marital conflict in a way that's not so different from today.



## The Assyrian Genocide Resolution HCR 2044 at the Arizona State House of Representatives



By: Linda Youkhana

Wednesday March 15, 2023 marked a historic moment at the State Capitol in Phoenix Arizona. The House of Representatives along with the Arizona State Senate both voted and unanimously passed Resolution HCR 2044 regarding the Assyrian Genocide of 1915 which was introduced by House Speaker Mr. Ben Toma at the House of Representatives & State Senator Mr. Anthony Kern at the State Senate.

Historically this Resolution is the first of many Assyrian Genocide Resolutions that has recognized the Martyrdom of the Assyrian Nation and Church Leader the Late Mar Benyamin XXI Shimun in a Paragraph written by our Holy Father His Holiness Mar Awa III Royel, Patriarch of the Assyrian Church of the East.

The First and Second Reading of the Resolution were waved and went directly to the Third Reading then Voting at both the House and Senate of the State of Arizona.

Present during this auspicious occasion was H.G Mar Aprim Khamis bishop of the western diocese who began the proceedings with prayer both in English and in Aramaic. Also present, Father Kando Kando and Deacon Sam Abraham of Saint Peter's Parish in Glendale AZ. Father Khoshaba Sholimun and Deacon Dr. Youil Mamook of Mar Yosip Parish in Gilbert, AZ. Deacon Shmoil Bolis From St. George Ancient Church of the East in Glendale, and Elder Deacon, Dr. Steve Ovanessoff from Saint Apkar Armenian Church in Scottsdale representing the Armenian



Church and Community. Mr. Sam Darmo to which we extend our sincere gratitude for his tireless efforts in researching & compiling hundreds of documents that ascertain historical moments of the Assyrian Genocide of 1915 added into Resolution HCR 2044 presented on this day. Proud Assyrians of Arizona were honored and elated to witness and partake in this memorable event alongside several representatives of the Assyrian Democratic Movement, Assyrian Universal Alliance, Abnaa Alnahrain, Assyrian Aid Society and Assyrian American Association of Arizona and beloved faithful, renowned singer and devoted patriot of her Assyrian Nation, Linda George.

Assyrian American community in Arizona continue to work diligently alongside many elected government officials to ensure they do their part for their community and the best interests of their Assyrian brothers and sisters nationwide.



REFERENCE TITLE: Assyrian Genocide; recognition

State of Arizona  
House of Representatives  
Fifty-sixth Legislature  
First Regular Session  
2023

## HCR 2044

Introduced by  
Representative Toma

A CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

RECOGNIZING THE ASSYRIAN GENOCIDE.

1 Whereas, the denial of genocide is widely recognized as the final  
2 stage of genocide, enshrining impunity for the perpetrators of genocide  
3 and demonstrably paving the way for future genocides; and

4 Whereas, the Ottoman Empire committed the crime of genocide against  
5 the Assyrian people, killing at least 300,000 innocent Assyrians and more  
6 than one million Armenians, Greeks and other Christians by way of mass  
7 executions, death marches, torture and starvation during the First World  
8 War; and

9 Whereas, the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act of  
10 2018 establishes that atrocities prevention represents a United States  
11 national interest and affirms that it is the policy of the United States  
12 to pursue a government-wide strategy to identify, prevent and respond to  
13 the risk of atrocities by strengthening diplomatic response and by  
14 effectively using foreign assistance to support appropriate transitional  
15 justice measures, including criminal accountability for past atrocities;  
16 and

17 Whereas, the majority of the Assyrian population was displaced from  
18 their homes and forced to escape to neighboring and faraway communities  
19 and countries, with many refugees fleeing to the United States. Today,  
20 Arizona is honored to be home to a vibrant population of more than 25,000  
21 Assyrian-Americans. This thriving community is a proud reminder of  
22 survival and perseverance in the face of extreme injustice; and

23 Whereas, the most notable victim of this tragic period was the  
24 ethno-martyr and Catholicos Patriarch Mar Benyamin Shimun XXI, the leader  
25 of the Assyrian Nation and Church; and

26 Whereas, the Assyrian Genocide remains unrecognized by many  
27 countries and organizations across the globe, including the United States.  
28 Therefore

29 Be it resolved by the House of Representatives of the State of Arizona,  
30 the Senate concurring:

31 1. That the members of the Legislature affirm that it is the duty  
32 of the United States to:

33 (a) Commemorate the Assyrian Genocide through official recognition  
34 and remembrance.

35 (b) Reject efforts to enlist, engage or otherwise associate the  
36 United States government with denial of the Assyrian Genocide or any other  
37 genocide.

38 (c) Call on the government of Turkey to acknowledge the genocides  
39 against these mentioned populations, to issue a formal apology and to take  
40 prompt and meaningful steps toward restitution.

1 (d) Encourage education and public understanding of the facts and  
2 relevance of the Assyrian Genocide in comparison to modern-day crimes  
3 against humanity.

4 2. That the Members of the Legislature acknowledge that the Ottoman  
5 Empire's campaign against its Christian minorities that occurred between  
6 1914 and 1923 constituted genocide against Assyrians, Armenians and  
7 Greeks.

## Kha B'Nissan Celebration Year 6773 San Jose by AAASJ • Saturday April 1st 2023



## Assyrians celebrate Akitu 6773 with song and dance

By Julian Bechocha  
Courtesy of RUDAW April 1, 2023

ERBIL -

Unusually cold temperatures did not put a damper on Assyrian, Chaldean, and Syriac celebrations of Akitu, the Assyrian-Babylonian New Year, in the northern parts of Iraq on Saturday, 4/1/2023.

Akitu marks the revival of nature in the spring and is dedicated to the rebirth of the ancient Mesopotamian god Marduk and his victory when he created the world out of chaos.

The festival, also known as Kha b-Nisan (first of April in the Suret language), is typically celebrated with large gatherings in the community's ancestral homeland of Duhok and the Nineveh Plains. Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syriacs play music and dance while wearing traditional costumes.

It is known as the world's oldest holiday.

Iraqi and Kurdish leaders extended their congratulations to the Christian community and reaffirmed the values of coexistence and religious equality.

"We reaffirm our commitment to protecting equality, human rights and liberties, and consolidating peaceful coexistence, mutual acceptance, and tolerance among all religious and ethnic communities in Kurdistan," Kurdistan Region President Nechirvan Barzani said, assuring Christians that the Region "will remain the homeland of everyone." K-Region Prime Minister Mansour Barzani also sent his best wishes to the community, "hoping that it will be a year full of peace, security, and prosperity, and an end to all tragedies."

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani labeled the festival as "an exceptionally rich cultural and civilizational heritage... a testament of the value of our national diversity that consolidates our unity and prosperity."







1000-year-old bible with the painting of Jesus (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

## The 1000-Year-Old Bible Portraying Jesus Found in Turkey

### Gold pages and images of biblical figures

by Andrei Tapalaga | Nov 9, 2022 | Religion |

Historical and especially religious objects have been hunted by contrabandists even since the 10th century, but the Turkish authorities have been able to track down a group of professional criminals that have been stealing valuable historic and religious objects for years now. In 2015, their hiding spot was discovered in Tokat. The objects found in their trove were supposed to be smuggled out of the country and sold for huge amounts of money.

Besides different jewels, swords, and paintings, a very worn-out and distorted

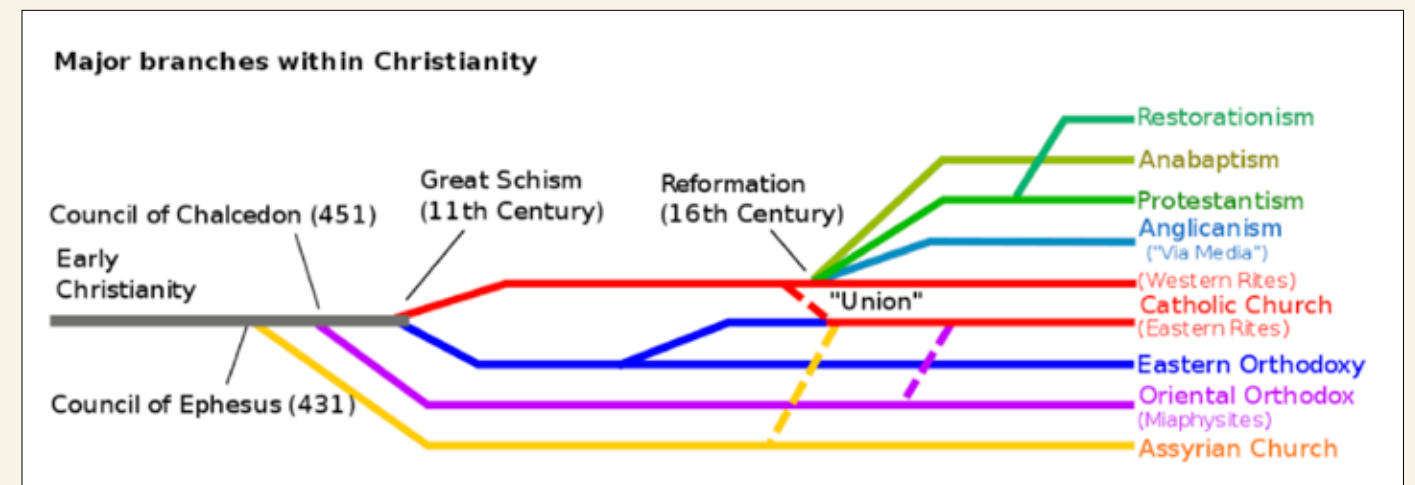
bible was found. The Bible itself didn't look very valuable until authorities discovered that every single one of its pages was made from gold. Specialists have taken a better look at the bible to assess its age and it seems that the bible is at least 1000 years old. This has been specified due to it being written in old Assyrian (Sureth), a language that since the 5th century had slowly died. The origin of the Bible is harder to define as old Assyrian was spoken in different locations such as Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. These contrabandists have been well known for stealing religious artifacts out of museums

and even churches that have such types of religious objects on display. The problem is that the criminals who found this object had not taken care of it, therefore deteriorating its quality even more. The Bible is beyond the point of being restored, but it's still a very rare and valuable piece.

Due to these smugglers, many historic objects go missing. This is due to the demand created by private collectors of antiques that would go as far as paying criminals to steal such objects for them. This is not because they want to obtain historic objects for a cheaper price, but because most of the rare historical objects within museums are not for sale, no matter how

astronomical the offers may be. This piece is so rare that the Turkish authorities are still trying to trace where exactly it was obtained, would this be from a museum or maybe even a new historical discovery?

It is imperative to mention how valuable this find is, as it will offer new perspectives on the way Christianity evolved in the early centuries. The earliest information about Christianity can be found in the Codex from Leningrad, which offers information from as early as the 3rd century. A better understanding of the development of Christianity in the early centuries might give us a new perspective on it and the definition of its different branches:



Major Branches within Christianity (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Note: These are the major branches of Christianity, there are smaller branches that have been formed in the later centuries.

Many think that the first or "original" branch of Christianity is Catholic, but it's actually Assyrian. This is supported by the language in which this very old bible has been written!



## An Interview with Michael Mikho: Host of Moor U La Moor

by  
Elizabeth Mickaily-Huber, Ph.D.

**EMH:** Hello Michael. Firstly, thank you for agreeing to do this interview. To start off, can you please tell our *Nineveh Magazine* readers a bit about yourself and your background?

**MM:** I'm 33, born in Chicago to my parents, Sam and Sreenis (Serena) Mikho. I attended DePaul University and received a Bachelors of Science in Graphic Design. I currently work as a UI/UX Designer for a startup. I am also on the board of directors for the Assyrian American Cultural Organization of Arizona (AACO), as well as head of the Culture & Heritage committee. I have a younger brother named Canon who is equally patriotic and serves as the treasurer of the organization. Most importantly, I have been involved in our church, the Assyrian Church of the East, from childhood, serving the Lord and His church as a member, volunteer, and youth teacher over the years. I always try to spend my time equally between Assyrian nationalism and serving God. Giving all things their proper weight and not neglecting one over the other. All these things are a part of my identity and so I must live and act in that way.

My father came to America along with his sister from Iraq in the 70's and worked full-time as a bellman in the Orington Hotel in Evanston, IL, while also studying computer science full time at DeVry College (now university). He worked hard to put himself through college while sending money back home to his widowed mother and sisters. My father

loved education and tried to instill in my brother and I the characteristics of hard work and how to be gentlemen, always making us aware of how to conduct ourselves with respect for others as well as our selves. "Sit up straight", "Don't have your back turned to someone", "Speak clearly and make sure to look people in the eye when talking to them". He prepared us for the professional world at a very young age, and we soaked it up simply out of respect and admiration for him.

When my mother came to America in the early 60's she was still a little girl. Two of her brothers had escaped the Baathists a couple years prior and settled in America to help make the transition for the rest of the family easier. Soon there would be thirteen people living in one apartment. My grandfather, who was known as Rabi Aprim Benyamin ("Rabi Aprim") (though never a teacher was called Rabi because of his advanced knowledge in *Sureth* as well as other languages) had bought an apartment building. Over time, his three sons married and had families of their own. At that time families stuck together so, as they had children of their own, my mother being the youngest of all five of them, would take care of her nieces and nephews after coming home from Northeastern University where she was studying to be an accountant.

As for myself, my parents took a very active role in our upbringing. They paid attention to our

innate personalities and nurtured what they saw was good, pruning or mending as needed until we matured. Taking after my father, my brother Canon was the more technical and analytic one, between the two of us. He could read something once and become an expert on the topic. Academics came easy to him and he excelled in it. I, on the other hand, had gravitated more toward the side of life that gave it beauty, culture, art, philosophy, and such. I first started with fine art, spending most of my time either drawing in my room or playing soccer with friends. Over time, I developed some still sketch portraits and developed a reputation at church for being the artist among our youth. People had been saying it so often that I thought to myself, "There's no way I'm the only Assyrian artist, is there? And so, began a quest to discover like-minded creative Assyrians. Since then, my desire to develop a rich and thriving Assyrian community, comprised of knowledge and beauty, has not subsided. It has taken shape through various projects and initiatives, involvement in organizations, and volunteering at church.

**EMH:** You came up with a great idea to teach Assyrians to use real Assyrian words as opposed to words borrowed from other languages. Please tell our readers about your *Moor U La Moor* ("Say and don't say") concept and what led you to create this platform?

**MM:** The program *Moor U La Moor* originated in the 60's and existed as radio and television segments in various Assyrian media programs throughout the world. My grandfather, Rabi Aprim, hosted one of those segments on the *pres qala* (radio), while living in Chicago. I had originally learned about the program through stories that my mother would tell me. She loved her father very much and so would glow up with a smile as she would tell me amazing tales about how he spoke eleven languages or about the work he had done for our church, writing various prayers and announcements to assist our clergy. The more I learned about my grandfather, the more I admired him. That alone peaked my interest about *Moor U La Moor*. What made me take action is more relatable, especially to second generation speakers. Growing up in America, speaking Assyrian takes a back seat, as we live in a society that heavily pushes assimilation and so our *Sureth* weakens. Many of us are ridiculed and made fun of for mispronouncing or using words

incorrectly. This is very discouraging and deters speakers from using *Sureth* at all. I, on the other hand, have always liked a challenge.

When I learned that my *Sureth* needed work, I would teach myself to become more proficient. In that process, I started to suspect that some of our words sounded more Arabic than Assyrian and was disappointed in my parent's generation for using Arabic in their *Sureth* while criticizing us for using English in ours. When one considers all that, on top of the general fragility of our language, action must be taken and swiftly. So, I began working with friends, Robert Oushana, creator of [www.learnassyrian.com](http://www.learnassyrian.com), and Ninos Warda, author of many Assyrian e-books, to compile a list of words that we either suspected or were confident were borrowed. At the time, we had the content but I knew I couldn't produce the same kind of program (radio or television) because those mediums aren't as popular as before the rise of social media. I realized that I could reach more people on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. Fast forward a few years and Instagram created "the reel," which I felt was the perfect object for this kind of content.

**EMH:** What's your favorite Assyrian word and why?

**MM:** My favorite word to tell people isn't Assyrian is *doonyeh* (world). That's because its language of origin is neither Arabic nor Persian. In fact, it is borrowed from Hindi, specifically the Goojurati dialect. Assyrians know that we often borrow words from Arabic or Persian because we have lived among those speakers in Iraq, Syria, and Iran – this part is obvious. But people are always thrown off by Hindi. We forget that we also have strong historical connection in India due to the historical presence of the Assyrian Church of the East there. The words we borrow tell the story of where we've been. If we dive deeper into why words are borrowed we can learn more about culture in a beautiful way. There are 3 words that Assyrians can use to refer to the word for "world" that would not be borrowed, but native:

1. *Tewil* is used to represent the earth, as a planet.
2. *Ur-ah* is used to mean the world in which we live, categorized under humanities.
3. *Alma* is used to mean the people of the world, all

of humanity.

It's important to note that some sources attribute the origin of *doonyeh* to Arabic. The website Assyrianlanguages.org, however, sources the word's origin to Hindi. Though it is unclear to me which one is more accurate, I rely on our dictionaries as my primary source of linguistic truth.

**EMH:** Can you please provide our readers with a link so they can follow you?

**MM:** You can follow my page on Instagram @ murulamur  
<https://www.instagram.com/murulamur/>

**EMH:** In what ways do you believe that social media can increase Assyrian presence on the world stage?

**MM:** Social media is simply today's popular media. It has both advantages and disadvantages which are recognized by all professionals who use it. Social media is accessible and engaging. You can reach your audience wherever they are with a few clicks. You can also get them to interact with your project very easily relative to older mediums. However, social media is also very distracting. With the easy reach of your audience comes the onslaught of other accounts fighting to steal the attention of your audience. There's also the short attention span of the audience that is created due to a plethora of options. This is harmful to our memory function. My thoughts are that we, and by we I mean everyone, should not rely on social media. However, we should also not neglect it completely because it is a very effective way to obtain information. I would tell users to be very mindful of what type of content you train the algorithm to resurface to you through likes, comments, saves, and time spent. Conceptually the word to use to guide you is "focus".

As it pertains to Assyrians and the nationalistic work I do, though, I believe there's a place for Assyrians on the world stage, I don't wish to concern myself with what other people think about us. I'm too preoccupied with what Assyrians think about themselves, both as individuals of an Assyrian identity and as members of a collective ethnic group. When an Assyrian becomes excellent in his or her vocation and preserves a sense of patriotism, that individual will become a strong and valuable addition to our community. When our

community is filled with these types of people, then its strength will grow exponentially and the world will take interest.

**EMH:** How can social media be used to increase the interest of Assyrian youth in their unique language and heritage?

**MM:** The answer to this question will always be marketing. To those who understand what marketing truly means, this answer will suffice. One must meet one's audience where they are. Yesterday, it was Facebook, today it's Instagram, tomorrow it will be TikTok, and tomorrow comes faster than we can keep up. Time will pass and social media will have a new name, but marketing will still be the answer. It is how we come to understand the value a message brings to an audience. Knowing your audience is the key, and what you have to offer has to be something they want. If they don't want it, then you're dealing with a fundamental problem that requires more grassroots movements.

I don't presume to know how to use social media to reach our youth. I come from the camp of "if you build it, they will come". I had a vision for *Moor U La Moor* and I would see that vision realized despite the level of engagement I thought it would or wouldn't get. This is also a concept in branding and marketing that is often mentioned. Rather than trying to make your brand seem appealing to your audience, simply be true to the brands' core principals and the audience will be drawn to you, be it who you expected or not. I think part of why people find *Moor U La Moor* engaging is because it's bite sized. Posts range from 30 seconds to 1.5 minutes. Nevertheless, the audience gets the main point right away. It starts with a shock off the bat. "Moor *ataa*, u la moor *baydakh*" and right away the spectators find themselves shocked because they learn that they are doing something wrong. The correct Assyrian word for flag is *ataa*, although most people use the borrowed word *baydakh*.

**EMH:** You exhibit a strong and close connection to your Assyrian language and heritage. Has this always been the case? Or was there a pivotal moment in your life that brought that connection to life?

**MM:** It's more been a steadily growing sense of

duty to myself, as well as a love for the beauty of our language. My brother and I were always taught to speak *Sureth* at home, to the point where my parents wouldn't answer us unless we would repeat our sentence in *Sureth* as opposed to English. Over the years, I had to become more proficient in English and while that language got stronger, for some reason my *Sureth* got weaker. Perhaps it was negligence or lack of a formal structure (like school) which is required.

I also think that one big detriment is that, as we become working professionals, we build an English vocabulary of highly technical and modern words which are taught to us in a formal setting, keeping up with or even creating new words. How would an investor say "infrastructure debt asset" in *Sureth*? Or a designer navigate all the tools in Adobe software in our language? Or a medical professional use medical terms in *Sureth*? In the English-speaking world, if we had to talk about our jobs in Assyrian, we would often not find an adequate word in our language, and so it becomes more practical to use English, which is a sad fact. However, this is where we each need to step up and be proactive rather than complacent. I am not a linguist, not even close. I've never studied language and only in recent years have I been able to read and write in *Sureth* with decent competency. However, because I am Assyrian I need to make sure that I stay true to that part of my identity and take responsibility to grow my knowledge for this language that I love and that belongs to me.

**EMH:** What other projects do you have in the pipeline?

**MM:** Currently, I spearhead a book club at AACO where we learn about various aspects of Assyrian identity. We read books on ancient and modern history, modern Assyrian nationalism, culture, and so on.

**EMH:** You play the role of one of the the Magi (Three Wise Men) who went to see baby Jesus in the movie "The Passion of Blessed Mary" by Frank Gilbart. How did you land that role? What was going through your mind as you took part in one of the most touching scenes of the film?

**MM:** In fact, I was simply asked to serve and I did.

Originally, I was asked to help by filming behind the scenes footage and acting as a gaffer on the set, as I prefer to be behind the camera rather than in front of it, but they needed someone to play one of the Wise men and asked me, so I was happy to serve.

**EMH:** What was it like to be part of a film that has an all-Assyrian cast and is completely in the modern Assyrian language? It's quite a rarity, but I hope it will spur Assyrian cinematographers to continue pursuing themes that appeal to Assyrian audiences.

**MM:** It was a very beautiful site to see everyone working together for such a fulfilling reason. It wasn't my first time on a set, and I was very aware of how difficult and detailed making a film is. I mean, it takes a lot of hard work to make a bad film, let alone a good one. So, I was overjoyed to see everyone working together with relative ease. Everyone pitched in and worked tirelessly. It was an experience that was filled with a lot of intense emotion. It was fun, exhausting, spiritual, and amazing. I'm just grateful to have been a part of it and proud of the leaders who made it all possible.

**EMH:** Are there any other topics or thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

**MM:** I will speak to the reader here. To my brothers and sisters: I ask you all to "live with intent". If you say you are Assyrian, then be the very best Assyrian you can be. If you say you are a Christian, then what kind of person would you be if you didn't serve God with all your heart? Each breath we take is a gift and the next one is not promised so seize the day without delay!

**EMH:** Thanks for your time Michael! I'm pleased to have had this opportunity to learn more about you. God bless!!







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# A Brief History of the Maronite Church



By Michael A. Younan

Writing the history of the people who lived after the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C. is very important to enlighten the readers of this subject. The Assyrian Empire extended particularly toward Syria to the shore of Mediterranean Sea. (word Syria is derived from the older "Assyria").

The policy of the Assyrian kings was moving peoples of the occupied regions and inhabit them in the Land of Ashur (Assyria), and bring Assyrians in their place and inhabit them in the occupied regions. This method led to the presence of Assyrians in that geographical region even after the Roman rule, which ended in the year 467 A.D. Even the Assyrian empire ended administratively, politically and militarily but the Assyrians remained in Hakkari, Midiat, Nusaybin/Nisibis, Tur-Abdin and Urhai (Edessa in Greek and SanliUrfa in Turkish) along the current Turkish-Syrian border, and south to Aleppo, Antioch, Hama, Homs and Syrian desert (Badiat-Al Sham) and coexisted with "Mandaean ethnic groups. The Greek historians called this geographical region with multiple names such as: Mat Assur, Aram-Naharain and Padam-Aram.

The Assyrian founded small kingdoms (Malkouta) in Urhai, Nusaybin and Haran by the name "Osroene" and made the city of Urhai its capital ruled by a dynasty of kings by the name "Abgar". King "Abgar Ukama V" (circa, 9-46 C.E.) whom himself and his kingdom were Evangelized and adopted Christianity after Jesus Christ ascension. The Assyrians were the first gentile people to embraced Christianity in the mid of the first century.

Thereafter, Christianity spread in the aforementioned geographical region.

In the mid of 4<sup>th</sup> century, an Assyrian priest by the name Youkhanna Maron who was living near Orontes River, left his town in the vicinity of Antioch, Aleppo and Celeucia and lived in a hermitage in the remote mountain. There he founded a diocese under the authority of ancient Patriarchate of Antioch. There was also a pagan cult of the god Nabu near the village of Kfar-Nabu. St. Maron Beatified the Temple and turned it a *house for Christian worshippers* to worship God alone. Then he resumed his pastoral duties. With time, the number of his students increased and they began to call themselves "Maronites" after the name of their teacher. Saint Maron's lifestyle had a great influence on his students who followed him.

In the year 410, Saint Maron died, his students, (the monks) built the *House of "Maron"* in the year 452, located between Aleppo and Hama, his students of (the House, Beith Maron) were strong supportive of Christological doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. They held to the teaching that Jesus Christ was both God and Man, Having two natures, one divine and one human.

From the beginning, the Maronite Church used in its Liturgies and Eucharist Syriac dialect (Unfortunately misrepresented as Syriac language) Syriac is the western dialect of the Assyrian mother language used by the inhabitants of western Euphrates River due to the fact that the Alphabet of the Syriac dialect was not innovated yet until mid of 8<sup>th</sup> century. The truth is, the Maronite Church used the old Assyrian language (Pshitta, meaning simple translation). Thereafter, they used the Arabic language as of the 7<sup>th</sup>. century. The Gospel is read in Arabic (written in Syriac characters, *Karshuni*)

After the Chalcedonian Ecumenical Council in 451, the "Jacobites", under the Byzantine sphere (opponents to the decisions of the Chalcedonian Council) differed with the Maronite Monks over Christological issues. The Maronites were subjected to persecutions some of which were bloody and painful incidents (there is no need to

mention them here, history bears witness to them). As a result, the Maronites began to migrate gradually to nearby the northern mountains of Lebanon. They were welcomed by their Maronite brothers who had preceded them from the aforementioned geographical region in Syria today. Thus, the Maronite Church spread in the Levant during the reign of Emperor Moric (582-602) and continued its affiliation with the Archdiocese of the Holy See of Antioch. There is also a Maronite Monastery east of the city of Hama on the Orontes River valley (wadi nahr al-Asi).

Following the 3rd. Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in the year 680, the Maronite church elected the First Maronite Patriarch by the name "Youkhanna Maron Al-Serugi" from the Monastery of Saint Maron on the Orontes River valley. Afterward, the Patriarchat Seat was moved to several towns in Lebanon, and finally settled in the town of Bkerke. The Maronite Church and people had a long history of suffering and tribulation.

In the year 1182, the Maronite Church entered in full Communion with the Roman Catholic Church but preserved the Rite of the Antiochene Church and its own traditions as an Eastern Church.

After 1454, the Holy See of the Roman Apostolic Catholic Church began to address the head of the Maronite Church "Patriarch of Antioch", thereafter, "Patriarch of Antioch and all Levant" (Al-Mashriq). As an example witness, that the Maronite people, with all due respect, are of Assyrian origin. While living in the mountains of Lebanon, there was a Maronite family by the name "Assemani" one of their children, born in 1768, by the name Yosip, This blessed family raised their children with good faith and education. Yosip graduated from "the Maronite College" in Rome (Pontificio Collegio del Maroniti) He was appointed to work in the Vatican Library as a Librarian. He was delegated to different countries to collect ancient Assyrian rare books. After he was ordained Metropolitan, he began to translate three books from Assyrian language into Latin Language. He was educated in Assyrian, Arabic and Latin Language. He was assisted by Yosip, his brother's son, and by Mar Estephanos Assemani, Metropolitan of the city of "Epiphania" (old name) in Syria. "*I apologize for misspelling in translating the names from one language to another*"

All of the above, is preserved in the Vatican, in the "Bibliotheca Orientalis" Archives.

Had there not been any interference by the Roman and Byzantine emperors, and the Roman Catholic Church, *the Church of the East*, (the mother Church, Eita d'Madinkha) would not have split into several Eastern Churches. All of the aforementioned events and disagreements in the seven Ecumenical Christian Councils which happened from the year 325 to 787, in each Council, new controversies emerged in the one Church of Jesus Christ.

Where it not for that, the Church of the East (the mother Church) would have been only one historical and original designation *the Church of the East* as it was in the first three centuries of believers of the Assyrian people (indigenous Assyrian Christians).

This divergence on part of the believers of the Maronite Church, affected all aspects of life with the Assyrian Church of the East, with all due respect.

This is the historical truth and reality. But the church has been adopted by several labels made by capricious of human being or clergies who submit to other forces (the strong weakens the weak for his own interests). This is the case with sister Churches, to name only our own Churches such as: the Syriac Church, the Maronite Catholic Church and the Chaldean Catholic Church. Thus the *Church of the East* became victim of Christological controversy. The history of Christianity is, from its infancy, a history of debates and divisions to present days!

I coexisted in Lebanon with many believers of the aforementioned sister Churches with affection and respect, because I believe that we are all of Assyrian origin: people, historical race, nationality, land, civilization, language and culture whether we like it or not. The clergies and prelates of our Churches, should explain the real facts and history to our respected faithful for general benefit. We all face same ordeals, future and destiny.

Respectfully,

Michael A. Younan  
California

IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
**SOLOMON SLIWO (SAWA) SOLOMON**

DECEMBER 1944 – APRIL 2023



Solomon Sliwo (Sawa) Solomon passed away on April 2, 2023, at age 78. His Memorial Service took place on April 15, 2023, in Lebanon, Tennessee. He was interred in Mt. Juliet Memorial Gardens.

Solomon was born on December 18, 1944, in Baghdad, Iraq, from a Timari ancestry. His great grandfather was Malik Youkhanna Badawi of Timar. In 1962, Solomon moved to the United States, settling in northern Michigan. Four years later, he moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana where he earned a B.A. in Liberal Arts in 1969. In 1985, Solomon moved to Chicago where he developed an intense interest in Modern Assyrian History.

In the following years, his articles began appearing in Assyrian publications in the U.S. and Britain, but most especially in *Nineveh Magazine*, for which he was a regular contributor. In the early years, he received much encouragement from Julius Shabbas, one of the founding members of the Assyrian Foundation of America. The subject of Solomon's articles almost always included rare photos of Assyrian personalities, events, and places related to modern Assyrians. Solomon also published several books: *The Assyrian Levies*, *A Short History*, *A Family History*, *Prominent Assyrians* (published in 2001). He also contributed several chapters found in the book *Modern Assyrian History* that was published in 2002. Additionally, Solomon volunteered for Tenna HealthCare for over 15 years.

Solomon was married to Joan who passed away in 2015. His stepson Timmy passed away in 2016. Solomon is survived by his sister Khatoon in Fort Wayne, Indiana, his brothers, Joseph and David in Tampa, Florida, his stepson Tom in Lebanon, Tennessee, 19 nephews and nieces, and 44 grandnephews and grandnieces.

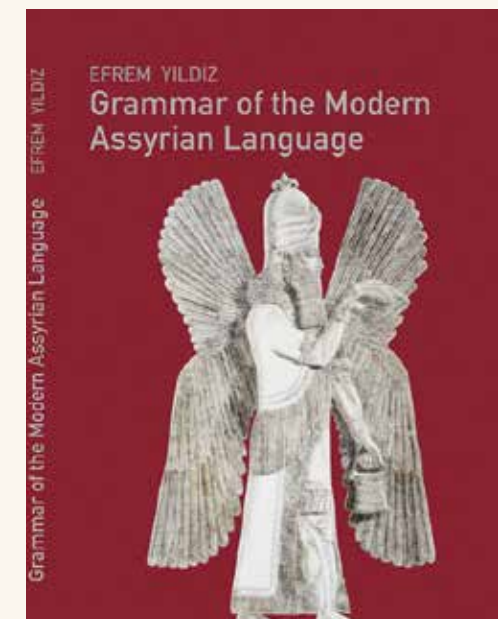
The crew of *Nineveh Magazine* will always remember his many wonderful contributions to the publication over the years. May he rest in peace. He will be sorely missed.

# Books in Review

**Rabel Betshmuel Selected Works 2000-2020**



**Efrem Yildiz  
 Grammar of the Modern Assyrian Language**







Professor Joseph Yacoub and his wife Claire Yacoub

## Professor Yacoub on the French Recognition of the Assyrian Genocide

By Abdulmesih BarAbraham  
Courtesy of [www.AINA.org](http://www.AINA.org)

The French Senate passed a resolution on Wednesday, February 8th (AINA 2023-02-09), calling on the government to recognize the genocide of the Assyrian-Chaldeans of 1915-1918 and to make the day of April 24 a joint day of commemoration for the Armenian and Assyrian-Chaldean genocides. After the discussion the resolution was adopted by 300 votes to 2.

In the shadow of WWI, the Assyrians (also known as Chaldeans and Syriacs), living in southeastern region of the Ottoman Empire, too were deported, expelled and massacred by the Ottoman Empire, in the same manner as the Armenians. France recognized the genocide of the Armenians in January 29, 2001.

The proposal for the resolution under the title *On the recognition of the genocide of the Assyro-Chaldeans of 1915-1918*, was tabled by Senator Valérie Boyer (Member of the Republicans - LR) and co-singed by LR Group leaders Bruno Retailleau and Hervé Marseille. It gained immediate support from more than 70 senators when it was recorded into the Senate on January 6, 2023.

The five-page explanatory section of the resolution cites Professor Joseph Yacoub as an expert. According to Professor Yacoub, this “genocide and looting of land and property was accompanied by severe attacks on the cultural heritage: Historical monuments were destroyed and left abandoned, churches desecrated, and schools demolished. Libraries of rare books and valuable manuscripts were squandered and destroyed, such as those of the Chaldean diocese of Seert or the Assyrian patriarchal seat in Kotchanes, a small village in Hakkari now abandoned, or the monasteries of the Syriac Churches in the Tur Abdin region.”

I had the opportunity to talk to Professor Yacoub right after the resolution passed. He was not only present among the Assyrian personalities and representatives of various institutions following the historic Senate session, but also had a decisive part along the process to this resolution, In this interview, he speaks about the importance of this decision and the process that lead to it.

**Abdulmesih BarAbraham AB:** Professor Yacoub, thank you for your readiness to this interview. Please allow me first to congratulate the Assyrians in France and in particular you as a scholar and expert for pushing for the recent recognition of the Assyro-Chaldeans Genocide by the French Senate, which was accepted by an impressive majority. It seems it was the first time in France that the question of the genocide of the Assyrian-Chaldeans has been submitted to the Senate, followed by a vote.

**Professor Joseph Yacoub JY:** First of all, thank you very much dear friend Abdulmesih.

Wednesday February 8, 2023, is not an ordinary day. We are facing history. The motion for a resolution to recognize the Assyro-Chaldean Genocide of 1915-1918 was examined in a public session by the French Senate and adopted by an overwhelming majority of votes casted: 300 for and 2 against!

We owe this to the initiative of these noble children of France: Senator Valérie Boyer and Senator Bruno Retailleau, whose perseverance and tenacity have paid off. We salute in the same vein the continuous work accomplished by our dear and faithful friend François Pupponi, former MP of Val d’Oise and former mayor of Sarcelles. We express our deepest thanks and gratitude to these three pioneers.

How to explain this positive vote of the senators and how to analyze it?

The current dramatic news related to the Eastern Christians in Iraq, Syria and Turkey undoubtedly contributed to this. In this context, the situation of the Assyro-Chaldeans, a community that suffered persecution, migration and dispersion, has led us to re-visit the history. In doing so, parallels were drawn between the persecutions by the Islamic State (ISIS) and the genocidal and ethnocidal tragedy committed by the Ottoman Empire in 1915-1918.

This explains why this tragedy has gradually entered people’s consciousness, and French politicians have seized upon it to place it in the public debate, since 2013, hoping to bring it to a successful conclusion.

**AB:** Indeed, the decision marks a historic event. Reading the explanatory section of the passed resolution, you are particularly cited there. This speaks for your engagement in the background in the preparation of this resolution. Could you elaborate on this.

**JY:** It is the result of a long work of research and memory, which today finds a favorable echo.

Let’s start at the beginning. In my opinion, there can be no recognition without prior knowledge, knowledge being the mother of all battles, then comes communication. This work focused on our people, small in size, began in the 1980s. This renewal has two components: intellectual and political.

At the intellectual level, this meant serious academic research, which consisted of consulting unpublished rare documents and archives of various Western countries, to which must be added literature in Aramaic-Syriac and Arabic, written by eye-witnesses. It was then necessary to classify them in a synthetic way and to analyze them in the light of the international norms adopted on genocide, thinking in particular of the work of the lawyer Raphaël Lemkin. This work made it possible to break the silence surrounding the Assyrian question by giving it a solid basis and a foundation that validates it. It now enjoys a scientific status. This has resulted in publications in the form of books, studies in periodicals and numerous press articles and interviews. Since then, symposia and conferences have followed one another, with echoes in the media.

At the political level, the research work was accompanied by fieldwork aimed at public authorities (local, departmental and regional elected officials and government authorities) and the media. Here, we must mention the tireless work undertaken by the Assyro-Chaldean community, particularly in the Val d’Oise Department, which, having fled Turkey from 1980 onwards, had kept the memories of the suffering and calamities endured by their people in 1915.

The role of the associations is important to note. Active for 35 years, interlocutor of the public authorities, the two oldest associations, *Association des Assyro-Chaldéens de France (AACF)* and *Union des Assyro-Chaldéens de France (UACF)*, must be mentioned for their activities of publicizing the question, as well as the role of the Assyrian diaspora in the world (Germany, Sweden, the United States), which drives a growing fight on this subject, the motto being: Not to forget! In this context, I must also mention the work done by people like yourself, dear Abdulmesih.

Thus, gradually, a broad consensus has emerged to position the issue in the public debate.

**AB:** Following your writings and published book over the last years, they appeared in very prestigious publications. Key themes are history, culture, religion and the genocide of Assyro-Chaldeans. Just about two weeks in the run-up for the decision of the French Senate, an important article of yours was published in the internationally renowned *Le Figaro* under the title *The official recognition of the Assyrian-Chaldean genocide is a duty of memory*. In it, you appeal to the long French tradition of solidarity with Oriental Christians. What historical circumstances do you base that solidarity on?

**JY:** Indeed, to grasp the significance of this act of recognition, we must go back in time in order to discover that France has always shown solidarity with the oppressed minorities of the Middle East and has shown particular benevolence towards the Assyro-Chaldeans.

Here, the past is remembered in our memory. With respect to the genocidal and ethnocidal tragedy of 1915-1918, France had taken a particular interest. Political and religious circles, intellectuals and the media had denounced these massacres. Let us recall that between 1915 and 1925, the Assyro-Chaldean question was an international topic, widely debated, even if the memory of their tragedy was somewhat obliterated between 1925 and 1970, to reappear from 1980 on.

Author of numerous works and a canon of Beauvais, Eugène Griselle (1861-1923), was an active advocate of the cause of the Assyro-Chaldeans in 1917 through his publications and his actions. Denys Cochin (1851-1922), MP of Paris, minister, writer and member of the French Academy, published an article in *Le Figaro*, on July 13, 1919, entitled *Pour L'Arménie* (for Armenia), in which we read: «A new massacre of Christians is imminent. The rest of Urmia's women and children are in danger. The Nestorian and Armenian people ask for help immediately. Any delay may be fatal.» Further he added: «Turkish fury did not distinguish between the Greek Orthodox, the Catholics, the Nestorians, the Chaldeans, or even the Yezidis, who are neither Christians nor Muslims and preserve, it is said, sacred books of fabulous antiquity, and the worship of the gods of Nineveh and Babylon.»

Men of letters have also been noted for their defense of the Assyro-Chaldeans, such as Frédéric Masson (1847-1923), perpetual secretary of the French Academy.

It should also be remembered that Frenchmen fell with the Assyrians in June-July 1918 on the Turkish-Persian front, in Urmia and Khosrava. We think in particular of Mgr. Jacques-Emile Sontag, son of Alsace, and Mathurin L'Hotellier, son of Brittany, along with two Assyrian martyrs: François Miraziz and Nathanaël Dinkha.

That being said, France's relationship with the Eastern Christians and the Assyro-Chaldeans date from before the tragedy of 1915, connections having been woven over the centuries. James (Yacoub) of Assyria in Tarentaise and Abraham of the Euphrates in Auvergne already mark a presence of Mesopotamia in Gaul in the 5th century. The historian Gregory of Tours in the 6th century (540-594) evokes these Orientals present in France who welcomed the Merovingian king Gontran in Orleans. Moreover, these Orientals spoke Aramaic, the language of Christ.

The nineteenth century inaugurates a crucial period. Through its works, France contributed to resurrect a people and its civilization, namely Nineveh and Babylon, long disappeared under the rubble. Thus, the funerary slab that enclosed it was lifted, to borrow this beautiful metaphor from Doctor Paul Caujole, head of the French Ambulance in Urmia. A world that we thought had become forever mute, collapsed and lifeless, is now coming back to life.

In this respect, the role of the French consuls in Mosul, in particular Paul-Emile Botta and Victor Place, was decisive. As early as 1847, archaeological pieces arrived by river to Le Havre to be placed in the Louvre Museum.

**AB:** You just cited the article on the front page of the *Le Figaro* from July 13, 1919, in which the French readers were informed that "a new massacre of Christians is imminent. The rest of the women and children of Urmia are in danger. The Nestorian and Armenian people ask for help immediately. Any delay may be fatal ... Turkish fury did not distinguish between the Orthodox Greeks, the Catholics, the Nestorians, the Chaldeans, or even the Yezidis." Can we say that at the end of WW I the French authorities and public were aware of the deportations and massacres took place in East Anatolia and along the Border of Persia?

**JY:** Yes, that is absolutely correct. Studying the French documents of the time and by scrutinizing the accounts and testimonies, we can see that the orders came from above, conceived by the Ottoman central power, the overall organization was methodically planned, the acts premeditated, and the execution systematic. The Dominican Hyacinthe Simon, who witnessed the massacres in Mardin, wrote in 1919: "The spring was not in our mountains, but in the capital; and I will deny the existence of the sun rather than the truth of this axiom: "The Young Turks of Constantinople have massacred the Christians of Turkey."

Speaking of responsibilities, another Dominican, Jacques Rhétoré (1841-1921), who was also present in Mardin, challenged the Turkish authorities for their crimes in these terms: "These ministers of Constantinople who decreed the massacres, and these high officials who accepted the mission carrying them out."

Even the daily American press reported. The *New York Times* for instance published on January 13, 1915, an article entitled: Christians in great peril, reporting on the precarious situation of the Christians of Turkey. The subtitle pointed to a clear ideological intention of the government and its desire to homogenize the country by turquifying it. Talaat Bey declared, the newspaper wrote, "that there is room only for Turks in Turkey".

As for the massacres of Christians in Persia, conducted on the orders of the Turks, we can quote the American Presbyterian missionary Dr. William A. Shedd, who clearly blames Turkey during its occupation of the Urmia region from early January until May 20, 1915: "The Turks recruited large Kurdish forces from the region of Sujbulak and from the eastern districts of Turkey; with minor forces from Urmia and Salamas they assembled against Khoi and came to join the Turkish forces in Van under the leadership of Djevdet Bey. (...) During the months of Turkish occupation, there was never a moment of real security for the Christians. (...) During this period, the Turks were guilty not only of the actual failure to protect the Christians, but also of the direct massacres committed under their orders."

It was the same in 1918 on the Turkish-Persian front, where French diplomacy was very active.

**AB:** Could you briefly remark on the position of France with regards to the demands of the Assyro-Chaldean delegations consisting of civil and religious leaders from all denominations during the post-war peace conference held in Paris 1919-20? Was France attentive to their demands?

**JY:** Yes, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, many Assyro-Chaldean delegates, both civil and religious, presented themselves, demanding autonomy for their homeland. One of the texts presented, we found it at the Municipal Library of Lyon, as a document of President Edouard Herriot.

**AB:** It seems France had very extensive knowledge of and interaction with the Assyro-Chaldeans and their Churches, which certainly served as a historical reference for the present Senators and facilitated their decision. But, what were the key arguments of the resolution that at the end of the day convinced the overwhelming majority of the Senators?

**JY:** In my opinion, it was the discovery of the genocide of 1915-1918, along with that of the Armenians, that was the driving force.

**AB:** A *Le Figaro* article cites Senator Pierre Ouzoulias clearly saying that Assyro-Chaldeans were co-victims of the Armenian Genocide, but their genocide needs to be recognized on its own. In addition, Senator Valérie Boyer was cited talking about France's role as a protective power towards the Christians in the Ottoman Empire and history that goes back to the capitulation in the 16th century. Could you explain this in more detail?

**JY:** Indeed, the 16th century saw the beginning of the era of Capitulations with the Ottoman Empire, by King François I and Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent. Since then, agreements have been concluded which allowed France, through its diplomatic and cultural representatives, to play an important role in the East, particularly in the field of education, until today.

France has also established since the 16th century, missions in Persia, where Assyrians have lived for more than 2000 years.

**AB:** How did the French press comment on this recognition and the Senate's decision?

**JY:** The event was widely and positively reported by the French media. I will mention in particular the daily newspaper *Le Figaro*. The journalist Jean Chichizola, deputy editor-in-chief, devoted two articles to the event, one before the vote, the other after the vote, whose titles and dates are as follows: "Towards a recognition of the genocide of the Assyro-Chaldeans" (February 6) and "The Senate recognizes the Assyro-Chaldean Genocide" (February 10)

**AB:** The resolution calls on the government to recognize the genocide of the Assyro-Chaldeans of 1915-1918 and to make the day of April 24 a joint day of commemoration for the Armenian and Assyro-Chaldean genocides. How are the chances that the French government accepts this call? The reason I raise the question is that German government up to now did not act on the Genocide Resolution passed by the Bundestag in 2016.

**JY:** At the outset, what is important to note is that the resolution adopted by the Senate recognizes the Assyro-Chaldean people as a distinct people, as well as its tragedy. In other words, the Senate text goes beyond commemoration, calling for the inclusion of this genocide as such. By emphasizing it as non-collateral to other massacres, that is to say, as singular, which cannot be confused with others. However, if we look at the texts recognizing the Armenian Genocide, adopted by the US House of Representatives and the [German Bundestag](#), we see that they recognize, indirectly if I may say so, the Assyrian Genocide (under different names), which nevertheless remains confined to the explanatory memoranda, without going further. Hence the importance of direct recognition, as the French Senate is doing today, is very important.

It was therefore important to make the Assyrian-Chaldean Genocide a separate theme, to do justice to it and endow them with the status as a distinct people, with their own uniqueness, added to that of our Armenian brothers.

For years, personalities have been fighting for the recognition of the Assyro-Chaldean genocide, in the name of truth and to honor the memory of the victims. Members of Parliament are now working to have a text tabled in the National Assembly. Steps are underway.

We hope that the French government will give a favorable response to this resolution.

With this resolution, a new page is opened which marks the passage of the Assyro-Chaldeans from a people classified on the margins of history to a people now included in history.

*Professor Joseph Yacoub is honorary professor of political science at the Catholic University of Lyon and was the first holder of UNESCO's Chair of "Memory, Cultures and Interculturality." He is an expert on minority issues, human rights and Eastern Christianity. He is the author of numerous books and articles on the Assyro-Chaldeans and the Oriental Christians. His most recent book (co-written with his wife Claire Yacoub) is *Martyrs par amour en Perse. Mgr Sontag et ses trois compagnons (Martyrs for Love in Persia. Bishop Sontag and his three Companions)*. Joseph Yacoub is born in Hassake, Syria. His parents, originally from Iranian Azerbaijan (Salamas district), suffered during the Turkish genocide of Assyrians during World War I, taking refuge in Georgia before settling in Syria in 1921.*

*The interview was conducted in French and translated.*

## « La reconnaissance par le Sénat du génocide des Assyro-Chaldéens est un événement historique »

### TRIBUNE

#### Joseph Yacoub

professeur honoraire de sciences politiques à l'Université catholique de Lyon

Joseph Yacoub, professeur de science politique, se réjouit dans une tribune au « Monde » de l'adoption le 8 février par le Sénat d'une résolution reconnaissant le génocide des Assyro-Chaldéens commis par l'Empire ottoman en 1915-1918.

Publié hier à 06h30, mis à jour hier à 06h30 | Lecture 3 min.

Article réservé aux abonnés

Le Sénat français a adopté le 8 février par une écrasante majorité des votes exprimés la résolution présentée par [Valérie Boyer](#) et [Bruno Retailleau](#), portant sur la reconnaissance du [génocide des Assyro-Chaldéens](#), commis par l'Empire ottoman en 1915-1918. C'est à l'évidence un événement important et historique. Pour la première fois en France la question du génocide des Assyro-Chaldéens est soumise à un examen public, suivi d'un vote.

L'actualité dramatique des chrétiens d'Orient en Irak, en Syrie et en Artsakh a sans doute contribué. Dans ce cadre, la situation des Assyro-Chaldéens, communauté qui a souffert des persécutions, de l'errance et de la dispersion, fait qu'on a remonté l'histoire.

Ce faisant, on a établi un parallèle entre les persécutions par l'organisation Etat islamique et la tragédie génocidaire et ethnocidaire des Assyro-Chaldéens par l'Empire ottoman en 1915-1918. Ceci explique que cette tragédie a progressivement fait son entrée dans les consciences, et des politiques s'en sont alors saisis pour l'inscrire dans le débat public.

#### Grande tragédie appelée « Seyfo »

Il faut rappeler que des propositions avaient été soumises à l'Assemblée nationale au cours des dix dernières années, même si elles n'ont pu franchir les différentes étapes. Pendant des années, [François Pupponi](#), ancien député du Val-d'Oise et ancien maire de Sarcelles se bat pour la reconnaissance du génocide assyro-chaldéen, au nom de la vérité et de la mémoire des victimes.

Que s'est-il passé ? Le début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle est à l'origine de leur drame et restera dans leur mémoire collective, celui de la grande tragédie, appelée *Seyfo*, c'est-à-dire « l'épée ». L'étendue des ravages et le champ des blessures sont énormes. Le drame de 1915-1918 a profondément bouleversé leur vie et détruit leur société. Les hiérarchies sociales et religieuses ont été ruinées et complètement désintégrées. Ce fut le point de départ de leur dispersion dans le monde.

**Archives de 1984 :** [Le massacre occulté des Assyriens d'Irak](#)

Rappelons qu'entre 1915 et 1925, les Assyro-Chaldéens étaient une question internationale largement débattue, même si la mémoire de leur tragédie s'est en quelque sorte estompée entre 1925 et 1970, pour réapparaître à partir de 1980.

Ces massacres ont eu lieu sur un périmètre très large, en Anatolie orientale, au Hakkari, à Mardin, Diarbékir, Kharpout, dans le Tur Abdin, au nord de l'Irak, précisément en Azerbaïdjan, sur le front turco-persan, dans les mêmes conditions et presque sur les mêmes lieux que les [Arméniens](#) et dans [un dessein analogue](#), qui visait, selon des objectifs arrêtés, à homogénéiser l'Empire et « turquifier » le pays.

### Les ordres venaient d'en haut

Ce génocide n'est pas une terre inconnue. Nous possédons en effet une documentation abondante, en plusieurs langues, qui relate au jour le jour ce qui s'est passé et montre que ces massacres furent des actes « combinés et concertés » par les autorités ottomanes et qu'il ne s'agit nullement d'actes isolés ou incontrôlés. Elle émane le plus souvent de missionnaires sur place, de journalistes, de rapports diplomatiques établis par les Etats et par de nombreuses personnalités qui, très tôt, avaient attiré l'attention sur ces massacres.

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Découvrir

Un exemple. Un Français Eugène Griselle (1861-1923) a intitulé son ouvrage en 1918 : *Syriens et Chaldéens, leurs martyres, leurs espérances, 1914-1917* ([Bloud et Gay](#)), dans lequel il décrit les massacres et donne la parole à des témoins oculaires assyro-chaldéens.

**Lire aussi :** [Qu'est-ce qu'un « génocide » ?](#)

Ce génocide était accompagné d'atteintes graves à l'héritage culturel. Des monuments historiques ont été détruits, des églises et des cimetières profanés, des écoles démolies, des bibliothèques et leurs riches manuscrits dilapidés. C'est ce qu'on appelle un ethnocide. Plus de 250 000 Assyro-Chaldéens-Syriaques – ce qui représente plus de la moitié de la communauté – ont péri des mains des Ottomans, des irréguliers kurdes et d'autres ethnies qui furent utilisées à ces fins.

En lisant les documents de l'époque et en scrutant les récits et les témoignages, on constate que les ordres venaient d'en haut, conçus par le pouvoir central, et l'organisation était méthodiquement planifiée, les actes prémédités et l'exécution systématique. Le Français Hyacinthe Simon (1867-1922), témoin des massacres à Mardin, écrit dans un rapport de 1919, remis aux frères dominicains : « *Le ressort n'était pas dans nos montagnes, mais dans la capitale ; et je nierai l'existence du soleil plutôt que la vérité de cet axiome : "Les Jeunes-Turcs de Constantinople ont massacré les chrétiens de la Turquie".* »

#### « Et demain, qui parlera l'araméen »

Parlant des responsabilités, Jacques Rhétoré, présent également à Mardin, met en cause, dans son rapport remis en 1920 également aux frères dominicains, les autorités ottomanes en ces termes : « *Ces ministres de Constantinople qui ont décrété les massacres, ces hauts fonctionnaires qui ont accepté la mission de les exécuter.* »

Que stipule cette résolution ? Elle contient quelques réflexions sur la mémoire et l'histoire qui contribuent à l'identité des peuples, tandis que l'oubli et la négation portent atteinte, écrit-on, au respect de la dignité humaine. Aussi, demande-t-on à la France de ne pas faillir « *à son devoir historique et moral de protection des minorités chrétiennes d'Orient pour ne pas faire rougir l'histoire !* » et on ajoute : « *Et demain, qui parlera l'araméen, la langue du Christ parlée par les Assyriens, les Chaldéens et les Syriaques ?* »

En termes de recommandation, la résolution invite le gouvernement français à reconnaître officiellement l'extermination de masse, la déportation et la suppression de l'héritage culturel de plus de 250 000 Assyro-Chaldéens par les autorités ottomanes, entre 1915 et 1918, comme un génocide. On l'invite aussi à condamner publiquement ce génocide et à faire du 24 avril, qui est la date retenue de commémoration annuelle du génocide des Arméniens, celle aussi du génocide des Assyro-chaldéens.

Avec cette résolution, une nouvelle page s'ouvre qui marque le passage des Assyro-Chaldéens d'un peuple classé en marge de l'histoire à un peuple désormais inséré dans l'histoire.

¶ **Joseph Yacoub** est le coauteur, avec **Claire Yacoub**, de « *Martyrs par amour en Perse. Mgr Sontag et ses trois compagnons* » (Salvator, 2022).

**Joseph Yacoub** (professeur honoraire de sciences politiques à l'Université catholique de Lyon)

## Interview with Sabri Atman

**Former President of Seyfo Center in Sweden Fehmi Barkarmo has interviewed Sabri Atman where the reader gets an insight into the organization's activities and plans for the near future.**

**Q:** First, you came to Europe from America after a long time. As far as I know, you held almost 30 meetings and speeches in different European countries for two months. Before you start your impressions here, could you briefly summarize Seyfo Center's work mainly in the US?

**A:** Of course. I have been in America for ten years. Without interruption we carry out Assyrian Genocide Seyfo work together with our team there. Our work is going very well. Conferences and similar enlightenment activities were held in all cities and states where our people live. By translating many books into English, we have reached tens of thousands of people.

We have good relations with Armenian and Greek institutions. We lobby as much as we can. A significant level of awareness has been achieved in the United States, both among our people and among the American public, about the Assyrian genocide of Seyfo.

Our activities have paid off. As a result of these efforts, many American states recognized the genocides in 1915 and in Simele in 1933. In the coming period, we will increase the number of states that have recognized the Assyrian Genocide.

**Q:** It is obvious that you, together with members and sympathizers of the Seyfo Center, have persistently pursued activities and achieved several concrete results in the United States, but how would you describe the situation on the European continent after a two-month tour of Europe?

**A:** First, I met friends who have not lost hope after all and are still embracing the activity. This gave me great hope for the future.

But I also noticed fatigue and some resignation on the part of some individuals and institutions. Some institutions have ceased to be centers of attraction. I did not meet any young people from these institutions, and this is a very frightening development. There are many reasons for such a development, the description of which goes far beyond this interview. I can only say that some of the reasons are



beyond us while others are due to external factors.

That a mentality that tries to sustain itself by making up "newspaper news" about and creating antagonisms between different segments and circles that are doing important work on the national front within our people, distancing itself from friendship and solidarity with neighboring peoples and seeing itself as the only legitimate representative of our people has become dominant in certain institutions among our people is startling and worthy of reflection. It is particularly important to be aware that such parallel thoughts and activities that serve the interests of the Turkish state are far from unifying among our people.

There are similar developments in other European countries. Fatigue, pessimism, inability to regenerate, etc. But such a situation and environment also create leaders and collectors. I hope we can stop this bad trend.

In two months, I had many meetings and speeches. In all these events I received very warm attention and positive response from the public and participants. I am very pleased with this.

Many activities that could be implemented in many European countries took shape in my mind. It is time to take the activities about the Assyrian Genocide to a higher level.

The situation our people and institutions are in is not encouraging, but it is not right to spread pessimism. It is not the time to complain about the darkness. It is enough for everyone to start with themselves and light a candle. When this is done, it will appear that our path is illuminated, and the darkness will flee from us.

Many thanks Sabri and we look forward to hearing more successes in your work.

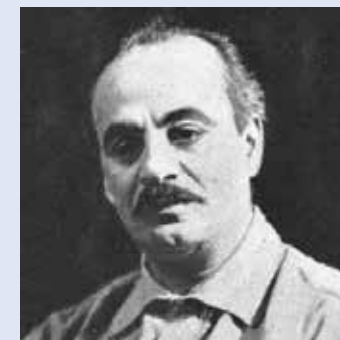
## On Children

**Kahlil Gibran - 1883-1931**

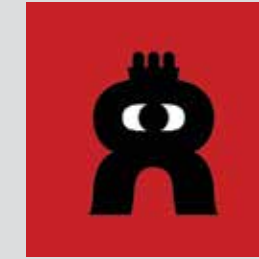
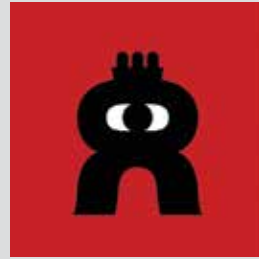
And a woman who held a baby against her bosom said,  
Speak to us of Children.  
And he said:  
Your children are not your children.  
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.  
They come through you but not from you,  
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,  
For they have their own thoughts.  
You may house their bodies but not their souls,  
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,  
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.  
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.  
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.  
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows  
are sent forth.  
The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends  
you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies, so He loves also the bow  
that is stable.

**From The Prophet (Knopf, 1923). This poem is in the public domain.**



**Kahlil Gibran, author of *The Prophet*, was born January 6, 1883, in Bsharri, Lebanon.**



The Rebellion - A Manifesto for Contemporary Assyrian Artists

I am ancient in my desire to make original art. I feel alone, but not lonely, in creating. Artists of Assyrian decent should inspire new thinking and create reverse assimilation via the creation of art. I offer the points below in support of new contemporary art created by Assyrians seeking global engagement.

1. We reject the direct replication of ancient art for the purposes of self-expression and creative output.
2. We reject closed-minded views that favor traditional European expressions of art and beauty over abstract art.
3. We reject banal art. If it doesn't contribute to higher levels of practice, then you shouldn't be looking at it.
4. We reject that we were and reaffirm that we are.
5. We accept that borrowing, integrating and respecting other worldly cultures only makes us stronger. Engage with art in its totality, not just with Assyrian art.
6. We accept the notion that nationalism in art is akin to the sun: get too close and you burn out; stay too far and you become cold.
7. We accept that art is a bridge that connects the Assyrians to the world and the world to the Assyrians.
8. We accept that wearing crazy and colorful socks makes us feel braver and more unpredictable, leading us to uncharted waters and in turn, greater success in life.
9. We seek beauty, simplicity and craftsmanship when making art. If we don't have it, we invent it! We are deeply committed to originality.
10. We spread art to all four corners of the human experience: spiritual, physical, emotional and mental.

Art and immortality march together, arm in arm.

Signed:

Rabel Betsmuel

هذه دهة - تمننا في النهج الحديث

يطلبنا في هذه دهة، نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا. في ذلك نكسرهم: اننا في كلنا كسوف فينا. نحن نعلم اننا نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا. نحن نعلم اننا نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا. نحن نعلم اننا نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا.

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3. نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا (نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا).
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10. نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا (نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا).

نريد:

نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا

Translated by: Yousip Audesho

هذه دهة: نريد ان نعطي يدنا لنكون فينا

# ذمت تہا لہذا

ترجمہ: ملکینہ بیگم مسعود



خلیفہ بن زاید (1918-2001)

مُكَلِّبًا حَبِيْبًا دَسَكِيْبًا  
 حَسْبُكَ هُوَ وَجِبْتَا مَكِّيْبًا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَلْإِبْرَةِ وَتَا وَحَضِيْبًا

جہ لَمَّعَا مَبْرُ لُھُفُنَا  
 جہ حَمَلًا وَدَحْمَةً مَنَّا  
 وَبِیْ هَتَا حَمَّ حَمَّوْنَا  
 كَا حَسْبُكَ وَلَا تُكَلِّبْنَا

خَاوًا وَوَلِيًّا هُوَ حَقًّا  
 هُوَ حَسْبُكَ هُوَ حَقًّا  
 هُوَ وَجِبْتَا وَتَسْعًا لِقَا  
 حَمَّ ابْنًا هُوَ وَوَلِيًّا

مَنْ كَلَّفْنَا وَهَمَّنَا  
 مَنْ أَدَعَا كَلَّفْنَا  
 حَمَّوْنَا مَكِّيْبًا مَكَّنَا  
 هُوَ وَوَلِيًّا... حَمَّوْنَا حَمَّوْنَا

هُوَ أَتَا لِقَا حَسْبُكَ  
 هُوَ حَقًّا وَتَسْعًا حَسْبُكَ  
 حَقًّا حَقًّا لِقَا حَسْبُكَ  
 حَقًّا مَكَّنَا وَتَسْعًا

هُوَ تَسْعًا مَكَّنَا حَسْبُكَ  
 تَسْعًا وَتَسْعًا هُوَ مَكَّنَا  
 هُوَ حَقًّا تَسْعًا حَسْبُكَ  
 جہ ہَا اَحْبَا وَتَسْعًا حَسْبُكَ

حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 هُوَ مَكَّنَا لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ وَوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا

وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا

وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا

وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا

وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا

وَجِبْتَا حَسْبُكَ لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا  
 لَمْ يَلْمِ الْوَلِيَّ الْوَلِيًّا













# سلسله

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