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Cultural - Educational - Social

# NINEVEH

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City of Kamishly, Syria

Asfar & Najjar family's successes and contributions that had lasted for a half a century. Due to the confiscation of all the farming lands, machinery, and equipment, the Assyrian community in the Jazeera region was gravely affected. This was another major catalyst that advanced the migration of a great portion of the Assyrian community toward Europe, the United States, and Australia. The social implications were grave indeed, only to be revisited two decades later, when the Khabour River was dried out due to deliberate policies of some corrupt government officials,

own farming businesses. Their philanthropic work included building schools, churches, hospitals, orphanage homes, and youth centers. In 1943, the main Assyrian school in Kamishly had an operating deficit and was in jeopardy of closing; A&N Co. quickly secured the funds to pay the teachers and administrators salaries. The school continued operating successfully for many years. Another major project partially underwritten by A&N Co. was the donation of forty percent of the funds needed to build an electric power plant in the city of Kamishly.

which resulted in further exodus of Assyrians from the Jazeera region.

The population of the city of Kamishly was comprised of a two-third Assyrian majority until the late 1970s when, along with the Assyrian exodus, a wave of Kurds began moving in from Turkey and northern Iraq. Today, the Assyrian population is down to about twenty-five percent of the total population in that region.

In 1958, Syria and Egypt declared the unification of the two countries, which was the beginning of disastrous policies that changed Syria from being a major wheat exporter to having food shortages. By 1963, the private land confiscation by the government had commenced. The final nail in the coffin came in 1967, when the Ba'ath regime confiscated almost all of the Asfar & Najjar farmlands, plants, and machinery, as well as all of their projects. Two decades later, Syria had wheat shortages and flour was rationed.

This is the tragic ending of the

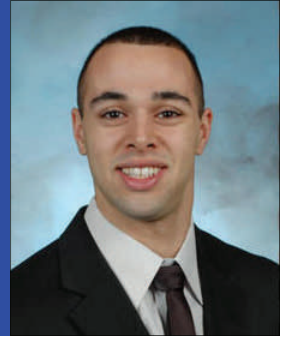
St Mary Assyrian Church - Diar Bakir



# Philip Shahbaz

## Assyrian Actor & Pastor

By: Andrew Davoodian, Berkeley, California



When asked whether or not he would be willing to answer a few questions and if he was familiar with the magazine, Philip Shahbaz replied, “I’m VERY familiar with Nineveh Magazine... a publication that is such a cornerstone of the community.” Perhaps one of the multiple reasons behind Philip’s strong connection to the community is the fact he was born in Assyrian-dense Chicago, Illinois on July

1, 1974. Another reason stems from the fact his father is Iraqi-born Pastor George Shahbaz, active missionary and

longtime pastor of Turlock’s Assyrian Presbyterian Church.

Philip spent his teenage years in Turlock, California until moving to Spokane, Washington to attend Whitworth University, where he earned his B.A.’s in General Communications and Theatre Arts. Philip furthered his studies when earning a Masters in Education from Azusa Pacific University in Southern California. Upon doing so, he engaged in the field of higher education for nearly a decade up until 2006. During this time, he instructed his educational program at Azusa Pacific University which focused on strength, leadership and teamwork – proudly named one of US News and World Report 50 Best Programs. His students described him best saying he is a “great professor” with “an unbelievable passion” and “such a huge heart.” It is no wonder Philip’s program gained national attention.

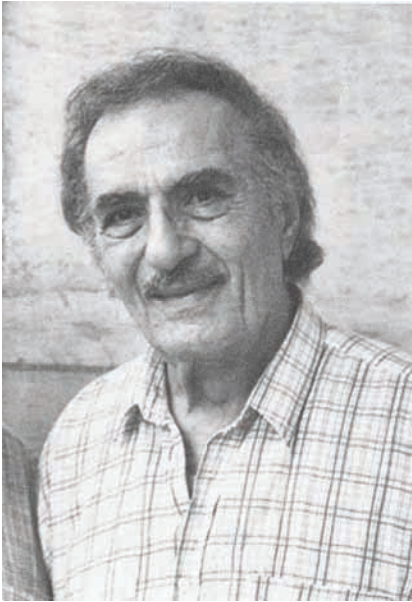
In similar fashion, it comes at no surprise to trace Philip’s impeccable personality to his success as an Assyrian-American film, television and voice actor. Best known for





# Remembering Iloosh Khoshabe

By Kitty Benjamin



Iloosh Khoshabe (also known as Richard Lloyd or Rod Flash) was an Assyrian born Iranian actor who performed for 45-46 years. He was well known in Iran, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Portugal, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. He was born in 1932 to Assyrian parents Jendou and Parida Khoshabe and raised in Geotapa, Iran. He was one of 2 sons and 3 daughters.

His paternal grandfather was Malik Hormuz of Arshtratt Dizen.

He moved to Tehran and became a self-taught and trained weightlifter and body builder. At the young age of 16 years old he became the national weightlifting champion in Tehran. He continued his training and began throwing spears and hammers at 17 years old and became the national champion of Lansing.



In 1956 he traveled to Los Angeles and Sacramento in the United States to compete in weightlifting and body building competitions and won both. After returning to Iran, a famous Iranian director Dr. Kushani saw Iloosh and wanted him to play in the first Technicolor movie to be made and shown in Iran. It was called "Amir Arsalane namdar" - a very popular Persian legend, Iloosh played the lead role. He continued to play film roles in Iran and became very popular. Besides a fantastic physique he was very handsome, men and women admired him.



In 1962, an Italian movie director was looking for a new face to play in legendary films to be made in Italy and other European countries. He saw Iloosh and hired him to play Vulcan in the movie Vulcan Son of Jupiter, which also starred Bella Cortez, Gordon Mitchell and Roger Browne. At this time in the movies, the fighting and action were performed by him and not by stunt men, this is true for all of his movies. This by far was Iloosh's favorite film.

Thirty-eight years ago I had the pleasure of visiting Iloosh at his home in Tehran. He was in between



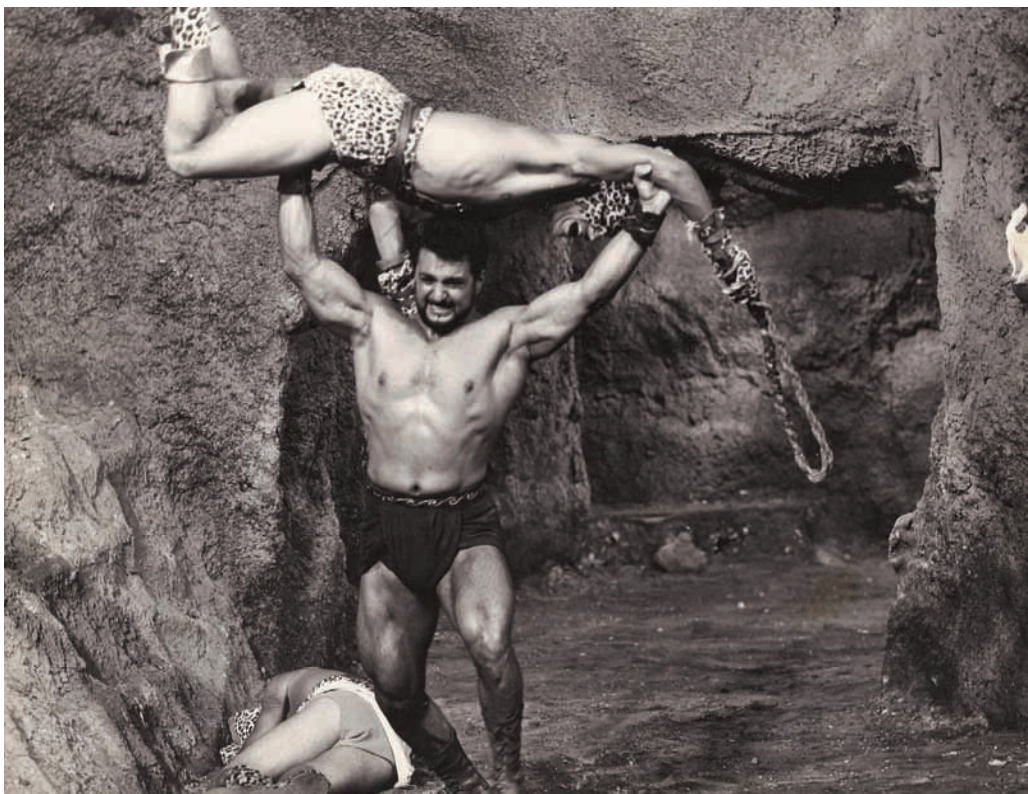
films and on holiday. When I walked into his home, it was hard to not notice the large weights that reminded me of the wheels on a train! We met his family, mother, sister, nieces and nephews. We also met his friend and Italian actor who was also visiting. We had a wonderful time. I felt his pride for being Assyrian when he would speak to me first then translate into Italian for his friend. Despite his size, he was a very humble and thanked us for coming to visit him. As proof that we did meet, a bet I had with a friend back home, we took a few pictures together.

When brainstorming topics for my television show on KBSV- Assyrian Sat, I remembered my time with Illoosh and his contribution to the arts. It took me four phone calls to finally reach him. A dear friend in San Francisco, Nathan Nessari was able to put me in touch with him. When I called him, he thanked me but was quick to say he was old now and that his Assyrian people never honored him or remembered him. He said when he was visiting in the United States; Turlock, Los Angeles, and Chicago no one in the community acknowledged him for his work as an actor or bodybuilder. He said he was hurt and returned to Iran. But he did say that "I'm proud to be an Assyrian, I'm born an Assyrian and will die an Assyrian." A short time after our conversation, he was admitted to the hospital with a pulmonary issue and remained there until he passed on April 19, 2012 with his family at his side.

At the end of 2011, Illoosh was honored with medals of

recognition for his outstanding contributions to the world of film and acting by both the countries of Iran and Italy.

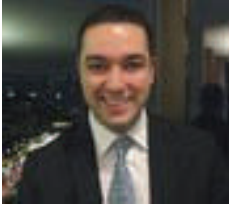
I am proud to have known Illoosh and so happy that I spoke to him one last time before he passed. We focus so much on our history, but what about our future- the history that our following generations will remember? I believe and hope that fellow Assyrians will honor Illoosh's memory by recognizing and supporting our actors, performers or professionals, so that no one will ever have to die feeling the way Illoosh did.



- Ghezel Arsalan, 1956
- Bijan Va Manljeh, 1958
- Dandane Afie (The Dragon's Tooth) 1961
- The Severn Tasks of Ali Baba, 1962
- Hercules, Samson and Ulyses, 1963
- The Invincible Brothers Maciste, 1964
- Hossein Kord Shabestar, 1966
- Keshtye Noah, 1968
- Ahmad Chakmei, 1971
- Jangjooyah-e Koochooloo, 1973
- Due Magnum .38, 1975
- Sesso E Volentieri, 1975
- The Viper, 1992
- Yaran, 1993
- Gard-e Vizheh, 1995
- Cold Enough for Snow, 1997

# Work Life Balance: My career as a doctor and beyond

## Dr. Ramsen Azizi



When deciding on what career path to chose I found it somewhat easy to fall into the medical profession, my father is a gynecologic oncologist. Having the fortune to be able to watch surgeries and shadow him at the hospital, I knew this was my calling but wasn't sure which field was

my niche.

I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois and really enjoy living here. My Assyrian parents Freidoon and Louisa Azizi arrived here from Iran in the 1970s. I received my undergraduate degree from Loyola University and attended Chicago Medical School for my doctorate and completed my residency at Saint Joseph's Hospital in Lincoln Park. After watching many surgeries in different fields, plastic surgery appealed to me the most. The creativity and freedom within it allows me to think outside the box. I love being presented with an anatomical problem and applying my studies and creativity to solving it. I have spent the last few years at Saint Joseph's increasing my exposure to the field by working with several prominent plastic surgeons.

The best advice I can offer to anyone pursuing medicine is to volunteer at a hospital. It's hard to get a feel for what the job entails unless you spend a good amount of time in the hospital. Even spending one day in the hospital will give you a wealth of knowledge as far as if you see yourself doing this as a career. It's a long road so you should really know what you're getting signing up for. One of the best things about medicine is how much variation there is between all the different specialties. Radiology, ophthalmology, pathology, physical medicine and rehabilitation and surgery are all so different and it's possible to find a field for different lifestyles and personalities.

The last thing to know about going into medicine is that you must have BALANCE in your life! You don't want to become a robot that studies all day and has no idea of what is going on outside the hospital. You will never be able to relate to your patients if you become a withdrawn doctor. I am consistently able to connect with patients early on because I always make a point of going out and enjoying life after I was done studying. I am very big into music and have produced electronic music for the

last 14 years. Prior to that, I played piano, guitar and drums in various bands. I also consider myself a foodie. I have watched food shows since I was a little kid and still follow Anthony Bourdain and Top Chef. In fact, I base most vacations around big food cities. I'm also that nerd taking pictures of my food, capturing the moment so I can remember it later!

Like I said, it's important to do things outside of medicine. The way I see it, if you are doing hobbies that are very different than your daily work activities, the better doctor you will be.

# THANK YOU!

A special thank you to Mr. Zack Cherry for accepting the AFA's invitation and the priceless presentation; Mr. Raman Betoshana for performing the Assyrian National Anthem "Roomramma"; Mr. Andrew Davoodian for being the event's master of ceremony and Mr. George Zaia and Medius Corp. for donating the DVDs of last year's AFA event.

A special thank you to the following individuals for their generous donation towards the Silent Auction.

Mr. Paul Benjamin - Gift Certificate "PKB Visions Photography"

Mr. Narsai David - 6 bottles Narsai Cabernet Sauvignon

Mr. Jacob Malikzadeh - One case of St. George Cabernet Sauvignon

Dr. Robert Karoukian - "Sargon of Akkad Bust" and "Gilgamesh statue"

Mr. John Yelda - Gift Certificate "Sailing on the Bay"

Mr. and Mrs. Sargon and Sonya Warda - "Assyrian Pastries and Samovar Gift package"

Mr. Fredy Tamraz - Gift Certificate "Brunch at Ella's"

Ms. Donatella Yelda - "Assyrian Alphabet Canvas Print"

# AFA'S TRIP TO RENO 2012

By Wilson Karamian



short stop in Sacramento to pick up more Assyrians from the Sacramento community to join us. This year Sargon Shabbas left his extensive file of stories and jokes home and only had a few to share with us but it wasn't long before everyone was trading stories and singing.

We arrived at our centrally-located Hotel and Casino, checked in mid-afternoon and it wasn't long before our members started trickling down to the casino and midway. As we wandered the casino, we would run into members of our group and trade tips on which slot machines were paying off. This year we had coupons for discounts at their Ice Cream Shoppe and tried out several of their unique flavors.

We enjoyed Sunday morning by taking a stroll around the city and enjoying the sights. It's too bad we didn't know ahead of time about the 5K & 10K race that started and ended on Sunday morning a block from the hotel. We could have brought our sneakers and joined in on the fun! Reno doesn't do anything half-way either.

While most other places have rock-climbing walls build for outdoor enthusiasts, Reno has a whole building set up for folks to be able to climb up the outside of an 8-story building! We stood on the sidewalk until we got kinks in our necks watching whole families, parents and kids, scaling the outside of the building. How convenient! Just a few blocks from the hotel.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Flora Kingsberry and her team for organizing this year's trip. They did a great job planning a wonderful, fun-filled event that all enjoyed immensely. We especially appreciated the services of Super

Sightseeing Tours and their driver, Gary. The bus was clean and well-kept and we appreciated Gary's optimism and his assistance in locating all the misplaced items our group finally found.

What a difference a year makes! Last year we left Hercules bound for Reno in a typical, overcast almost drizzly Bay-Area morning but this year it was a beautiful, sunny spring morning holding the promise of a gloriously, warm California day. The beautiful weather set the mood for the journey to Reno, Nevada on Saturday May 5 for a weekend of games, music, good food and the camaraderie of warm and fun-loving, fellow Assyrians.

As usual, the bus was waiting for us in Hercules at 9:00am and we were happy to see that Gary was again our driver. We felt very safe in his capable hands after getting us home safely last year through that big snow storm! It didn't take long to get the baggage, food and drinks loaded, and to get settled in. Once on the road, Flora Kingsberry and her team made sure everyone had donuts, hot coffee, yummy, home-made Moyshava cheese (Jajik) sandwiches and snacks. To our great surprise the bus made an extra





in an introduction by Dr. Robert Karoukian.

Mr. Cherry conveyed to the attentive audience several aspects of his study. These topics included the meaning and variations of the Ashurbanipal's name, such as Ashur-bani-apli (Ashur refers to the god, bani means to build, and aplu means heir or son). In fact, contrary to what many of us believe and know today, Ashur was never given as a stand-alone name. Rather, it was always followed by ensuing words denoting specificity from the deity, as seen with the name Ashur-bani-aplu.

Our special presenter went on to discuss the intricacies of the pictograph and logograms, the cuneiform numbering system, how to approach clay tablets in terms of orientation and using a reed stylus, and the significance of scribes in the marketplace and their roles in recording economic transactions.

All of which was done in a detailed manner using the plethora of slides he had prepared. Furthermore, Mr. Cherry then went on to create a distinction between libraries and archives, stating that libraries contain literature while archives are strictly records. Of course, he tied all the details together with Ashurbanipal's Library at Nineveh.

Mr. Zach Cherry finished his presentation with a heartfelt acknowledgment of the support and commitment AFA has provided him personally. He went on to say

*"... of all the Assyrian organization across, none compared to AFA in terms of their actual deeds, unselfishness and willingness to help progress our community in crucial facets such as education and well-being worldwide."*

In conclusion, one of the highlights of the evening was a

special announcement made by President Yelda. The conference room full of eager listeners were informed that through the efforts of Donatella Yelda, soon, there will be an inscription recognizing the Assyrian Foundation of America both in English and Assyrian, at the base of the pronounced memorial statue of the bridge's Chief Designer Joseph Strauss

standing tall at the Golden Gate Bridge Plaza on the south end of the bridge.

The AFA took the opportunity and made a gift of \$10,000 to the Joseph Strauss Legacy Circle in this year which marks the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge. President Yelda pointed out that this contribution to the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy demonstrates that though small in number, Assyrians make a positive impact in the community they live in, not to mention gaining a much needed recognition.

It is truly remarkable to have such recognition at a spot that attracts millions of visitors from around the world each year.

The Assyrian language and community will forever be validated in their support for the communities they settle in and having a plaque at the base of the Joseph Strauss Memorial in front of one of the Wonders of the Modern World is a lasting testament to this. What a beautiful way to indeed promote, preserve and propel our culture.

The AFA is currently working with corporate contributions to raise the \$10,000. If you are interested in being part of this historical event please send your check to P.O. Box 2660, Berkeley, CA 94702 or go to our website [www.assyrianfoundation.org](http://www.assyrianfoundation.org) and make your donation via PayPal. Please make sure to note in the memo that the donation is for the GGB Plaque.

The image shows a poster for an appreciation event. At the top, there are two lines of cuneiform script. Below that, the text reads "APPRECIATION EVENT" and "APRIL 29, 2012". In the center is a photograph of a golden, circular plaque with intricate designs. To the left of the plaque, the text "ASSYRIAN FOUNDATION OF AMERICA" is written vertically. Below the plaque is a quote: "A fundamental aspect of human nature is the need to identify with one's origins. For unless you know where you came from and what you came from, you cannot know who you are or what you are, and if you don't know that, you cannot reach the fullest level of self-realization of which the human spirit is capable." (Dr. Joel Elias)



# Lecture by Mr. Zack Cherry Summarized

By Donatella Yelda

WOW! is the only word that can describe Mr. Zack Cherry's lecture on April 29, 2012 at the Assyrian Foundation 2<sup>nd</sup> Appreciation Event. The full lecture was videotaped by Mr. Freidoun Gol and will be available in the near future on DVD.

Mr. Cherry's presentation shed light on the education of the Assyrian emperor Ashurbanipal who ruled between 668-627 B.C., hence his role not only as a "ruler" and a "priest" but also as a "scholar". Mr. Cherry stated that he chose the subject of "education of Ashurbanipal" to highlight the efforts of the Assyrian Foundation of America in promoting education in general and above all studies within the disciplines of Assyriology, Syriac Studies and Mesopotamian Archaeology among our Assyrians, men and women alike,



name Sitti Maani i.e., Lady Maani.



Picture # 1: King Ashurbanipal and his queen Libbali-Sharrat, a relief from Nineveh depicting the famous banquet scene in Ashurbanipal's garden.

for the benefit of our Assyrian nation.

The presentation began with an account on the earlier explorers of Mesopotamia and the earlier decipherers of the cuneiform writing system. From the 15th to the 19th century travel and trade penetrated ever farther east from Europe and the earlier exploration report on record is that of the Italian traveler and explorer Pierto della Valle in early 1600, who later married an Assyrian lady by the

Mr. Cherry explained the discovery, the process and the initial steps taken to decipher the Akkadian cuneiform writing system. Which began with the discovery of a bas-relief of the Achaemenian king Darius I at Behistun (Persepolis) in Iran from 6th century B.C., that contained a trilingual

inscription written in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian helped scholars to decipher the Akkadian cuneiform writing system by comparing the names of the kings in the Akkadian text with the same names in the Old Persian text. (*The Old Persian language was already known to scholars.*) One of the decipherers of cuneiform who attempted to decipher Darius I's trilingual cuneiform inscription was Henry Rawlinson (1818-1895). The clue to Rawlinson's decipherment of the Persian version was the

Persian royal names “Darius” and “Xerxes”.

To provide the audience an idea about the Assyrian cuneiform writing system and its development as well as to illuminate the process of learning and education in ancient Mesopotamia, a detailed account on the invention of the cuneiform writing system and the development of the cuneiform signs thru millennia beginning from ca. 3200 B.C. To ca. 600 B.C. was given, including information on Ashurbanipal’s lineage, his Father: Esarhaddon. Mother: Esharra-khamat. Spouse: Libbali-Sharrat. Born as the third eldest son of the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. Ashurbanipal became king of Assyria shortly after his father’s death in 669 B.C.

The information on the ideology of kingship in Assyria was provided as follows: 1) the king was the representative of the gods, chosen to maintain the divine order on

earth; 2) He was created as a being superior to ordinary man; and 3) He exhibits unique physical perfection and mental balance.



Picture # 3: An inscription on this relief read as follows: “I am Ashurbanipal, king of the universe, king of Assyria. In my might, on foot I seized a fierce lion of the plain by his ears. With the aid of Ashur and Ishtar, lady of battle, I pierced his body with my lance”. (a relief depicting the king as a hunter).

Additionally, instruction and training were required to prepare the Assyrian king for his role as a

“commander in Chief,” a “priest,” and as a “scholar”. The king’s education consisted mainly of two parts: 1) practical skills. 2) Traditional scholarly knowledge.

The subjects of the king’s education included: 1) scribal disciplines for instance basic scribal education such as forming clay tablets, handling the stylus and mastering wordlist and literary texts; 2) The art of war; and 3) The art of government.

The source materials for the education of Ashurbanipal consist of the following: 1) Ashurbanipal’s inscriptions; 2) Administrative documents; and 3) Visual sources in form of reliefs uncovered in Nineveh. It should be noted that Ashurbanipal was one of the few rulers to refer specifically to the education he received in his youth.

The Assyrian kings’ education was completed in bet reduti, the “tablet house” where they received a thorough training in all aspects of Mesopotamian learning and wis-

dom.

Mr. Cherry continued to describe the library of Ashurbanipal, considered the most famous and representative library from the ancient times. It was found in the Assyrian palaces at the Assyrian imperial capital Nineveh. Ashurbanipal tried to collect copies of all known cuneiform literature, having the towns of southern Mesopotamia searched for clay tablets. One agent of the king reports with joy his discovery of a tablet from the time of Hammurabi, already over one thousand years old at the time of Ashurbanipal.

In his presentation Mr. Cherry spoke about a hymn by Ashurbanipal to the Assyrian national God Ashur and was recited in full in its English translation. An excerpt of the hymn reads as follows:

*“The exceedingly great one, king of the gods, the omniscient; venerable, surpassing, the Illil of the gods, he who decrees the fates! Ashur, exceedingly great lord,*



Picture # 4: Ashurbanipal, relief showing the king’s lion hunt.

*omniscient; venerable, surpassing, the Illil of the gods, he who decrees the fates!*



Picture # 2: Ashurbanipal, the ‘perfect king’ on horseback, hunting wild asses. Notice the stylus tucked under his belt.



*Let me magnify Ashur, the superlatively strong, the king of the gods, and the lord of the lands! Let me proclaim his greatness, magnify his praise! Let me proclaim the fame of Ashur, let me extol his name; let me glorify the praise of the god who dwells in the Ek-*

Picture # 7: Ashurbanipal carrying a basket containing “sanctified earth” for the building of a temple.

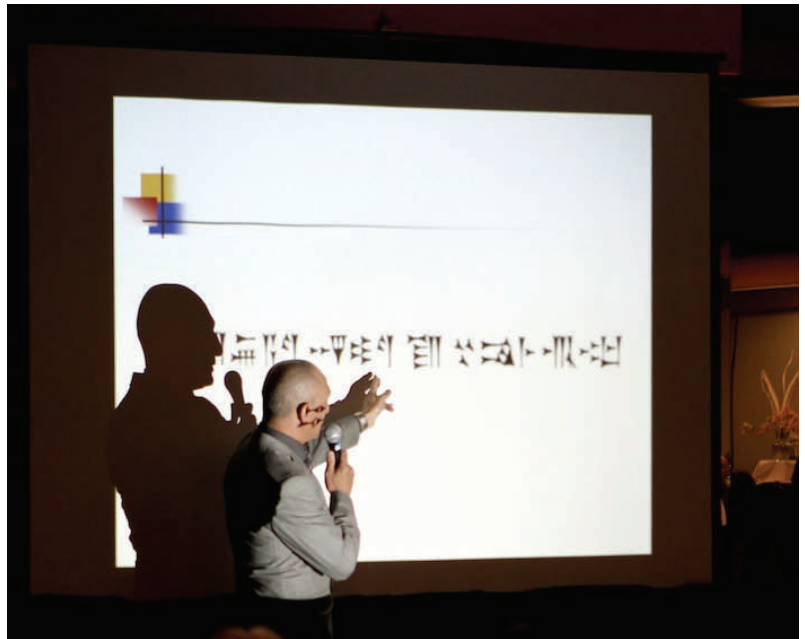
*hursaggalkurkurra! .....”*

Mr. Cherry recited part of the aforementioned hymn in its original language i.e., the ancient Assyrian language to give the audience an opportunity to enjoy hearing how the ancient Assyrian language was approximately pronounced.

An account of Ashurbanipal’s education was given according to his royal inscription where he says:

*“I learnt the lore of the wise sage Adapa, the hidden secret of all scribal art. I can recognize celestial and terrestrial omens and discuss them in the assembly of the scholars. I can deliberate upon the series ‘If the liver is a mirror of heaven’ with able experts in oil divination. I can solve complicated multiplications and divisions which do not have an obvious solution. I*

Picture # 6: Acting as a priest, Ashurbanipal in front of an alter pouring out a libation over four lions he has slain.



*have studied elaborate compositions in obscure Sumerian and Akkadian which are difficult to get right. I have inspected cuneiform signs on stones from before the*



Picture # 5: A modern picture of Ashurbanipal inspired by an ancient relief, see picture #6.

*flood, which are cryptic, impenetrable and muddled up. This is what I did all of my days with a select companion: I cantered on thoroughbred and rode spirited purebreds. I grasped the bow and let fly the arrow, as befits valor. I threw quivering lances as if they were darts. I held the reins and like a charioteer I made the wheels turn. Like a craftsman I shaped aritu and kababu shields. I mastered the great technical lore of every single expert. At the same time, I was learning behavior befitting a ruler and I acted all the time like a king”.*



# Yet another Success! The 2nd Annual Member's Appreciation Event - April 29, 2012

By Wilson Karamian

Last year's Member's Appreciation event was a complete success with hundreds of attendees enjoying warm hospitality at the well - managed event and this year was more of the same. The Board of Directors and volunteers did a wonderful job preparing delicious food with tea served in beautiful samovars. A wide choice of Assyrian books by Assyrian authors was available for purchase so members had an opportunity to expand their libraries. A silent auction with many Assyrian statues, wine, pictures and a beautiful, tiered platter filled with pastries brought many bids.

True to the Foundation's mission of inspiring young Assyrians to get involved, Andrew Davoodian, one of the student members, was asked to preside as Master of Ceremonies for the event. We need more Assyrian students to get involved to carry forward the Foundation's mission as it is getting ready to proudly celebrate their 50 year anniversary. The 1<sup>st</sup> 50 years has been very productive and the next 50 years has the promise of being even more successful.

The Board took this opportunity to present Mr. Daniel DeKelaita an appreciation plaque for all his efforts and hard work managing the commercial building as a Foundation investment. Mr. Dekaleita (Danny as he is lovingly known by all) is a true gem and the AFA is very lucky to have him as a long time devoted member. In his acceptance speech Danny stated that none of the work he has done for the AFA would have been possible without the help of his wife Mrs. Roelfina Dekaleita, who has tirelessly and quietly helped him with everything throughout the years.

Also recognized was the efforts of Ms. Donatella Yelda who arranged for a plaque to be added to a statue of Joseph Strauss at the Golden Gate Bridge Plaza in San Francisco commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the bridge. This is a very important opportunity for the Assyrian people to gain recognition and let the world know that they are not only a race of people from history books but also a race that cares for their community.

The location of the statue ensures that millions of visitors every year will pass by and read the inscription which will be written in both Assyrian and English, a rare concession made

by the park commission.

The speaker of the event Mr. Zack Cherry from Sweden presented a fascinating lecture about our language from Cuneiform to the Assyrian script. Mr. Cherry explained the discovery, the process and the initial steps taken to decipher the Akkadian cuneiform writing system. Which began with the discovery of a bas-relief of the Achaemenian king Darius I at Behistun (Persepolis) in Iran from 6th century B.C., that contained a trilingual inscription written in Old Persian, Elamite and Akkadian helped scholars to decipher the Akkadian cuneiform writing system by comparing the names of the kings in the Akkadian text with the same names in the Old Persian text. (*The Old Persian language was already known to scholars.*) One of the decipherers of cuneiform who attempted to decipher Darius I's trilingual cuneiform inscription was Henry Rawlinson (1818-1895). The clue to Rawlinson's decipherment of the Persian version was the Persian royal names "Darius" and "Xerxes".

As a token of his appreciation for the AFA, Mr. Cherry presented the AFA with a cuneiform writing of the name "Assyrian Foundation of America" that was written by Mr. Cherry himself and it was dedicated to the current AFA's president Ms. Jackline Yelda. The cuneiform writing is currently displayed on the AFA's website [www.assyrianfoundation.org](http://www.assyrianfoundation.org) and will be part of the AFA's official letterhead.

*Mr. Zack Cherry (to the right) and Mr. Andrew Davoodian.*







# Golden Gate Bridge Ribbon Cutting Ceremony May 25, 2012

By Donatella Yelda

This year marks the 75th Anniversary of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge and for a gift of \$10,000 to the Joseph Strauss Legacy Circle the AFA has had an opportunity to support the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy's mission to preserve our beautiful national parks at the Golden Gate for future generations and demonstrate that Assyrians are alive and always make a positive difference in the community they live in. Additionally, for a lasting recognition the AFA's name (the "Assyrian" name) will be inscribed in both English and Assyrian on a plaque, placed at the base of the Strauss statue at the

day May 25, 2012, the Assyrian Foundation of America's Board members and their families proudly joined the distinguished civic leaders, local and federal dignitaries including San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee, Gov. Jerry



From Left to Right - Ms. Donatella Yelda, San Francisco Giants CEO Larry Baer, San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee, Mrs. Anita Lee, Mrs. Nanajan Yelda, Mrs. Margaret Karoukian Ayoubkhan

Brown and Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi at the bridge's southeast plaza, where newly constructed and renovated buildings were wrapped like presents in wide silver ribbons with bows, eagerly waiting the unveiling of the new visitor facilities at the bridge plaza and where the Joseph Strauss statue proudly stands. After the ribbon cutting ceremonies, the AFA members were led to the Joseph Strauss statue, where a temporary banner with the names of Strauss Circle members, including the Assyrian Foundation of America was placed. The temporary banner is scheduled to be replaced by a permanent metal recognition banner with the AFA's name both in English and Assyrian sometimes in December 2012 or January 2013.

The AFA is currently working with corporate contributions to raise the \$10,000. If you are interested in being part of this historical event please send your check to P.O. Box 2660, Berkeley, CA 94702 or go to our website [assyrian-foundation.org](http://assyrian-foundation.org) and make your donation via PayPal. Please make sure to note in the memo that the donation is for the GGB Plaque.



From Left to Right - Mrs. Margaret Karoukian Ayoubkhan, Ms. Donatella Yelda, Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Mrs. Nanajan Yelda, Ms. Jackline Yelda, Ms. Romena Jonas

Bridge plaza where millions of people from all over the world visit every year.

On Fri-



From Left to Right Back Row - Mr. Sargon Yelda, Mrs. Gail Jacob, Mrs. Margaret Karoukian Ayoubkhan, Ms. Donatella Yelda, Mr. Raman Adam  
Front Row - Mrs. Flora Kingsbury, Mr. Martin Jacob, Ms. Jackline Yelda, Ms. Romena Jonas, Mrs. Nanajan

# Christians in Syria live with an Uneasy sense of Security

Courtesy of AINA

Muslims dominate this nation of 22 million people, but Christians can be found at all levels of Syria's government, business community and military. The 2 million Christians here trace their roots to ancient communities and have survived under many rulers as Christian enclaves in other Arab nations, such as Saudi Arabia, have withered.

The rebellion of hundreds of thousands of Muslims against Assad that began in March 2011 has not seen Christians abandon their support for the Alawites, the Muslim sect to which Assad belongs and that has controlled Syria for decades. Christians have largely remained quiet as Assad's forces pummeled rebel cities and towns with artillery, killing close to 10,000 people, according to the United Nations.

Many of Syria's Christians continue to stand by the regime not out of support for Assad but out of fear of civil war if rebels gain strength, or worse, if they win and install an Islamist government hostile to religious minorities. Christians are seriously endangered in other parts of Syria too. Not only are they generally assumed to be pro-Assad, but also a strongly Islamist element amongst the rebels will attack them simply because they are Christians.

Qatana, a town 20 miles southwest of Damascus, is home to a Christian community of several hundred families. Protests here against the Assad regime have prompted military incursions and clashes between renegade soldiers and the regular army. Christians firmly believe that the Alawite regime will keep them safe.

With the town's two churches located in Sunni Muslim neighborhoods, for months many families were too fearful to attend service, Christians here said. But a teacher at a Christian school said life is better now than before.

"The crisis is almost over," she said, asking her name be withheld because she feared retribution. "Our church was full on Easter Sunday; last year, it was practically empty. We were allowed to parade around the town, when last year we could only go in the street outside the church."

Yet Christian communities elsewhere have seen trouble. One church, Um al-Zunnar, was badly damaged in Homs during the military's month-long shelling in February. Christians in Homs said the church was attacked by "foreign-backed armed gangs." Syrian state TV aired interviews with civilians who said the rockets were fired from the mountains dividing Syria from Lebanon, where

rebels have arms-smuggling routes. The uprising has also hurt Christians' standard of living. Almost the entire Christian population--nearly 60,000--of the city of Homs, the nation's third largest, have fled as fighting between the government and anti-government, largely Islamist, forces continues. Reportedly only 1,000 Christians remain. Opposition forces are attacking churches and other Christian centers; "Muslim neighbors are turning on the Christians. Christians have also suffered kidnappings and gruesome murders. Some Christian families, unable to pay a ransom for their relatives' release and fearing that they may be tortured, have been driven to ask the kidnappers to kill their loved ones at once."

The number of Christians left in the city has reportedly fallen to below 1,000 after the strife between the troops of President Bashar Assad and anti-government forces reached its peak there last month. Christians have fled to surrounding villages, other major Syrian cities, and even Lebanon. Those who remain have spoken of a growing "atmosphere of fear".

During the worst of the conflict, the opposition forces attacked churches and also occupied an evangelical school and home for the elderly, which were then shelled by the army. Church leaders have reported that Muslim neighbors are turning on the Christians, and that Muslim extremists from other countries have been coming to Homs to join the fighting. Christians have also suffered kidnappings and gruesome murders. Some Christian families, unable to pay a ransom for their relatives' release and fearing that they may be tortured, have been driven to ask the kidnappers to kill their loved ones at once.

The displaced Christians face an uncertain future and are concerned that they may be unable to return home, while the plight of those who remain is truly desperate. Prices have rocketed, supplies have run low, and it has often been too dangerous to go out. Bombs have already exploded in the Christian quarters of Damascus and Aleppo. Church leaders hesitate to travel at night, believing that, as symbols of the Christian presence, they may be special targets for assassination. The authorities have warned the churches not to gather in large numbers over the Easter period in case their meetings are bombed.

Foreign visitors are nowhere to be seen in the Christian neighborhood of Bab Touma in central Damascus, a once-popular tourist attraction characterized by winding alleyways, traditional Arab-style hotels and ancient churches.

# Acts of sabotage against Assyrians in northern Iraq

Courtesy of AINA

In 2010, tourists from the Persian Gulf, Europe and North America added \$8 billion to the Syrian economy. Since the revolt began, Syria's tourism sector has dropped off by 60%, according to the Tourism Ministry, and Christian businesses are among those suffering.

These days, many conversations in the close-knit communities turn to "the crisis," as it is called. Families watch Arab television broadcasts by the extremist Salafist sheik Adnan Arour, who from exile in Saudi Arabia calls for jihad against the Assad regime and death to those who actively support it. Pro-regime commentators on state-run Syrian TV pounce on figures such as Arour and say Assad is all that stands between extreme Islam and stability. Christians here talk of letters sent to churches saying they are the next to go after Assad, and a mortar that struck a monastery in the Christian town of Saidnaya, north of Damascus, was blamed on rebels.

Armed jihadist seized control of Qastal al-Burg village on Thursday, May 10, and ordered its 10 Christian families to leave, according to a report published by UPI on its Arabic language website.

A resident of the village, who did not wish to be identified, said "armed jihadist (expiatory) group came to the village and ordered us to leave our homes empty handed." The armed group, he further stated, "have exercised their control over all the houses, and occupied the church and made it as their command control center."

Qastal al-Burg village is in the province of Hama and is 48 kilometers northwest of Hama.

There is little evidence that the rebels are responsible for such acts, and Christians here say Arour does not appear to have a lot of support. But recent suicide bombings in Syria have the look of al-Qaeda, which seeks Islamic law over all. Many Christians simply do not want to upset their way of living in a country where their fate will always be decided by Muslims, according to Syria experts. Christian doctors, lawyers and dentists have established successful and stable careers. Others occupy leading positions in the Syrian army, though a new constitution mandates the head of state must be Muslim.

"They do support (Assad) and are feeling quite anxious," said Joshua Landis, director of the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of Oklahoma and a Syria expert. "Even so, there are plenty of Christians (in Syria) who believe that democracy in the long run is the best protection for Christians."

At least 25 people were wounded in northern Iraq in alleged "acts of sabotage" carried out by men who had been "instigated" by Muslim clerics, a Kurdish leader and local security officers said.

The incident occurred Friday afternoon in Zakho, which is in Iraq's Kurdistan region near the Turkish border and about 540 kilometers (335 miles) north of Baghdad.

Security officers in the Dohuk Governate, which includes Zahko, said that "dozens of young men" attacked at least 15 liquor stores, two massage parlors and two hotels after Friday noon prayers. The attackers targeted a number of tourist facilities, especially facilities owned by Christians and Yezidis.

The officers claimed that clerics "instigated" the action. So, too, did Massoud Barzani -- the president of the Iraq's Kurdistan autonomous region -- who blamed "men who were instigated by some clerics to carry out acts of sabotage." Authorities "made a major effort" to prevent the "acts of sabotage, but they could not," the Kurdish leader said. Several police were among those wounded, according to security officers.

Iraqi minorities, like Assyrians (also known as Syriacs and Chaldeans), Sabean-Mandaeans and Yezidis are being persecuted and systematically driven out of their ancestral country. They are subjected to a pattern of official discrimination, marginalization and neglect. They neither receive sufficient protection by the Iraqi and Kurdish government nor do they enjoy fundamental rights that guarantee their existence in Iraq. The riots in Zakho that spread across North Iraq late 2011 and the way Kurdish authorities were dealing with the conflict are just one example of unequal treatment of ethnic and non-Islamic minorities within the KRG region. At least 20 businesses in Zakho and a dozen of other properties and businesses in other places in North Iraq owned by Assyrian Christians were burnt, and more than 30 people were injured. Until now, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has not made efforts to investigate and punish the perpetrators, or compensate the victims of the attacks. The Assyria Council of Europe (ACE) latest Human Rights Report demonstrates that a huge exodus has taken place since 2003 which marks the biggest threat to the survival of minorities in Iraq. More than half of the Assyrian community has left Iraq since 2003.

# My Mata Bakhtmy in Iraq

By Romena Jonas



*Assyrian Flag Embedded on the Hills at the Entrance to Matta Bakhtmy by the Village Youth.*

So Bakhtmy, a village that had to be rebuilt from after its utter destruction in 1987 by Saddam Houssein, is looking again at its revival.

The question for Bakhtamy is how to attain a robust economy that provides jobs and employment that can sustain growth, which will create a better life for our Assyrian brothers and sisters, thus allowing them to remain in our mother land to preserve our Assyrian history and culture. Without them and many other Assyrians living in Iraq and Kurdistan, our nation will lose our roots and will vanish and be forgotten forever.



It is our duty to support our Assyrian villages such as Bakhtmy and many others to share similar life styles as those of us living in the United States, Australia, and Europe. They represent the frontier and seeds of our future growth and continuing existence. Without them, we lose our heritage and we may be relegated to the status of the "land of the forgotten."

My dear Mattat Bakhtmy has become a second home to me. Although I was born in Iran, and have been living in the United States for most of my adult life, I have decided to adopt and cherish Bakhtmy as my homeland.











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***\*\* this is a correction from Second Quarter, Volume 35, Number 2 issue of Nineveh - donation was made but not published.***

***\*\*\* this is a correction from Third Quarter, Volume 35, Number 3 issue of Nineveh - donation was made but not published.***

***Please note that we have made every effort to ensure that our lists of supports are up-to-date. It is possible that a name may have been misspelled or omitted. If so, please accept our sincere apology and kindly notify us at [editor@assyrianfoundation.org](mailto:editor@assyrianfoundation.org), so that we may make the appropriate change to our records. Also please note, any donations received after May 1, 2012 will be published in the next issue of Nineveh. Thank you.***



# Pyramus and Thisbe

*Pyramus and Thisbe (1617) by Dunstan Gale*

By Thomas Bulfinch

There lived in Babylon during the reign of Queen Shamiram, two young people whose houses on one side of the wall with his parents, was seventeen years old, tall, strong and athletic. Tesbin, who lived on the other side of the wall with her parents, was three years younger, gentle and very beautiful. Not surprisingly, growing up close to one another, the two of them fell in love. The only trouble was that the two sets of parents could not stand one another.

The reason has never been set on record and in truth it doesn't really matter, for it often happens that neighbors will dislike each other simply because they are neighbors. Perhaps the parents of Tesbin thought their neighbors surly and snobbish. Perhaps the parents of Barram thought their neighbors vulgar and churlish. At any rate, they never spoke. If they met in the street they would stride off in opposite directions (even if it meant going out of their way). They never mentioned one another in conversation unless it was to complain. And of course they forbade Barram to have anything to do with Tesbin and Tesbin to have anything to do with Barram.

Both Barram and Tesbin tried to reason with them but, parents being what they are, this proved impossible. In fact they might never have been able to talk to one another had they not discovered a crack in the wall, down at the bottom of the garden. It was not a large crack. If Tesbin squeezed her hand into it, she could just brush the fingertips of Barram on the other side, when Barram knelt down and looked through it, he could just make out Tesbin's eye gazing back at him on the other side. But at least they could talk through it and every evening they would slip away from the dinner table to swap messages in the cool air. But there came a time when Barram could bear this separation no longer. Kneeling in the moist grass either his face pressed against the cold stone wall, he sighed so loudly that Tesbin heard him on the other side.

"What is it, my love?" she exclaimed. "You sound so sad."

"This is ridiculous," Barram replied. "Why should we be forced to endure this simply because our parents are so \*\*\*\*\*?"

"At least we can talk to each other," Tesbin said.

"Yes, but it isn't enough, I am seventeen years old - no longer a child. I want to hold you in my arms, close to me. I want to."

"My parents wouldn't allow it!" Tesbin interrupted. "They call you 'that awful boy next door'; I'm not even allowed to mention your name. They have nothing pleasant to say about you."

"I know that, but ." Even as Barram spoke, the idea came to him. "Why shouldn't we meet? Not here, but outside the city. Surely we can slip out for one night together?"

"Where?" Tesbin asked, her voice trembling.

"The tomb of Ninos, you must know it. There is a temple there, near a stream - just outside the cities boundaries."

"I know it," Tesbin whispered. "But a tomb!"

"This is no time to be superstitious," Barram cried. "We'll meet there tomorrow night, after supper. There is a mulberry tree near the stream. You can't miss it, we'll meet beneath the tree, Oh Tesbin, my love! For just one night we will be able to hold each other and speak without fear of being overheard."

"I'll be there! Tesbin exclaimed. "Wait for me there, Barram, I will come to you."

And sure enough, the following night, Tesbin wrapped a shawl around her shoulders and slipped away from her parent's house, making her way through the city to the tomb of Ninos. She went with not a little trepidation, for she would have preferred to meet anywhere other than at a tomb. It was a quite and secluded spot, well suited to their secret affair, but somehow it seemed like a bad omen. She was going to a place of death. Would death be awaiting her when she got there?

She crossed an ancient copes on the outskirts of the city, her feet making no sound on the thick carpet of moss the moon was full that night, its ivory beams breaking through the branches and casting a thousand leafy shadows on the ground below. Now she could hear the gurgle of a stream and hurrying forward she saw two marble columns rising smooth and graceful out of the grass on the edge of a clearing. It was the tomb of Ninos, and there was the mulberry tree, its fruit as white as snow in the moonlight. But there was no sign of Barram. She stopped in front of the entrance to the tomb, a great iron ring hanging just above her head on the wooded door. Still nobody came, a cloud shaped like a pointed finger slid in front of the moon. A gust of wind tussled her hair.

Then she heard a sound, a soft, menacing growl. It came from the wood. Stepping back, she crouched in the shadow of the tomb as a great animal padded silently out from amongst the tress. It was a lioness and it had recently killed for the blood was still fresh on its muzzle.

"Oh Barram, Barram!" Tesbin moaned to herself. She could hardly move, paralyzed with fear.

The lioness heard her. Its head twisted towards her. Tesbin's hand reached out and tugged at the iron ring set in the door of the tomb. The door creaked open. Then, her eyes never leaving the lioness, she stepped backwards into the blackness of the tomb, slamming the door shut a moment later.

The animal had no intention of harming Tesbin, although she was not to know that. It had eaten already but, hearing the noise, it stalked across the clearing to investigate. Tesbin was out of its sight but as she had reached for the iron ring her shawl had slipped off her shoulders and this the lioness found. As much out of curiosity as anger, it raked at the shawl with its claws, tearing it. A few drops of blood dripped off its mouth, staining it. Then, forgetting all about Tesbin, it re-crossed the clearing and went to the stream to drink.

Meanwhile, Barram had been delayed at the supper table by his parents. Although he had asked to be excused several times, they both had a bad day and were taking it out on him. Complaining about his appearance, his lack of ambition, his poor results at school - Just about anything they could think of. At last they dismissed him and he was able to steal from a house, make his way through the city and race out to the tomb of Ninos. He didn't stop running until he saw the mulberry tree. At the same moment, he saw the lioness.

The animal, having eaten and drunk, was fast asleep. Lying in the moonlight, you could almost have mistaken it for a statue but for the rise and fall of its stomach and the gleam of blood around its mouth. Barram saw the blood. A second later he saw Tesbin's shawl, torn and blood-stained on the grass. He looked back at the lioness. Obviously it had recently feasted. There was no sign of Tesbin. Barram raised his head to the sky and wailed.

His parents had denied him love's joy. Now they were unable to spare him love's pain. He felt as if an ice-cold dagger had been plunged into his heart. The life drained out of him - or if not the life then the need to live. It was as if he were suddenly seeing the world in black and white and knew that he would never again understand or experience color. He had loved Tesbin as much as any man can love any woman and her death made no sense of his life. Worse still, he was to blame. If he had arrived sooner, if he had

gotten there first, then armed with his sword he would have been able to .

His sword. He took it from his waist and holding it in both hands, thrust it into his side. He fell back on the grass beneath the mulberry tree. There was no pain but his blood burst out in a fountain, spraying the mulberry fruit. At the same time, a pool of blood formed around him, sinking into the earth and soaking the roots of the tree.

It was then that Tesbin came out of the tomb. She had waited there as long as she could but at last the inky blackness and the damp smell of the grave had driven her out. Slowly she stepped back into the moonlight, searching for the lioness. She frowned, the mulberry tree was still there, but know the fruit was not white but red. What had happen? Barram groaned. Tesbin cried out and forgetting the lioness ran to him.

Barram was dying, but still was not quite dead. As Tesbin threw herself down beside him in tears streaming down her cheeks, his eyes widened in surprise and he turned to speak. But the words faded on his lips.

"Barram!" Tesbin wept, "What happen? Tell me! How can this have happened?"

With a trembling hand, Barram pointed to the torn shawl. He raised his hand and stroked her cheek. Even now he smiled, feeling her soft flesh without the wall between them. Then his eyes closed and at that moment he died.

Tesbin understood what had happened.

"You killed yourself!" she whispered, the tears falling faster.

"You thought me dead and died rather than live without me. But death will separate us."

She reached out and grasped the sword, turning it towards her breast. Then she looked up for the last time. Overhead, the stars were sparkling in the night sky.

"I ask the gods only this!" she cried, "The mulberry tree is stained with my love's blood. May it stay that color to remind the world of what happened here."

She threw herself onto the sword. When their parents discovered the two bodies, they had them cremated and then collected the ashes and mixed them together in a single urn. The gods, too, were moved to pity, for to this day the fruit of the mulberry tree is not white but dark purple, and so it will always be.

# The Phoenix Rises, but Embers Still Glow

## Village of Bakhtmy, Northern Iraq

By Robert Leutheuser



Robert Leutheuser is an independent cultural photographer who lives in New Mexico, USA. He has traveled to the greater Middle East annually

since 2001, and exhibited photographs in the USA, Syria, and the UAE. He has given lectures on his work in Turkey, Iraqi Kurdistan, Syria, and in the USA. He is currently working on a book of Kurdish proverbs.

His photography can be seen at [www.beyondbordersphotography.com](http://www.beyondbordersphotography.com), and he can be contacted at [robleutheuser@gmail.com](mailto:robleutheuser@gmail.com).

*For 3 years in the late-1980's, Saddam Houssein honed his despotic talents by executing his al Anfal campaign in northern Iraq. Although the Kurds numerically bore the brunt of al Anfal, all minorities, including the Assyrians, Yezidi Kurds, Shabaks, Jews, and others, felt the wrath of another tyrant gone mad. Through his infamous cousin, unfortunately dubbed in comic book fashion "Chemical Ali", Saddam created a devil's stew of horror which still leaves a toxic aftertaste: Chemical attacks on civilian populations; brutal military operations against the Kurdish peshmergha; the destruction of at least 4,000 villages with forced resettlement of populations to collectives; the relabeling of ethnicities; the involuntary wholesale relocations of other ethnic groups into unfamiliar terrains; and, mass disappearances and executions.*

April 14, 2012, Younan stood by a pile of concrete-and-rebar rubble, the remains of the Assyrian village of Bakhtmy's once largest church, St. George (*Aita Mar Guargis*).

"On May first, 1987, the Iraqi army destroyed our village of Bakhtmy. I was 25 years old. I will never forget it. They came to the village in the morning and gave us 3 hours to gather what we could and leave. They blew up the church with TNT." "Did you watch?" "Yes, the entire village watched from over there," Younan said pointing to a knoll a short distance away. "And they also blew-up the smaller church, St. Maria right over there. And over here is where our family home was. Like all of the other homes, they destroyed ours with a bulldozer. Bakhtmy was gone in one day."

With the help of Younan and his brother I was able to imagine that what they still saw so vividly then. Without them it would have been difficult, for Bakhtmy was rebuilt by the Kurdish Regional Government in 2007. Many many other villages wait in the queue.

It was Holy Saturday, the day before Orthodox Easter, which was to be celebrated that night at the new St. George church. Younan, visiting from Germany where he now lives, had returned to northern Iraq as he does every year. He invited me to spend the afternoon in the village with him and his brother, Yusef.

Ten minutes outside of the city of Dohuk, just past a heavily armed check-point, a prematurely

weathered sign announcing the village, written in Arabic, Kurdish, and Assyrian, pointed west. We turned onto a narrow asphalt road casually draped over the rolling countryside and passed an area punctuated by





mounds of rubble patiently being reclaimed by spring-green grass. “This was a Kurdish village,” said Younan. Ahead lay the new Bakhtmy. A new St. George church stood at the entryway to the village, and a white Assyrian flag with its red and blue lines rippling from its center lazied against a brushed blue sky.

Younan continued as two of his young nephews scampered nearby among the piles. Although he too experienced it all, Yusef was content to listen. “We took only what we could carry and began to walk to the north towards the town of Semel, where we lived in tents for 2 months before we could start building new homes. It was very hard.”

Eventually Bakhtmy and 9 other Assyrian villages became the collective village of Monsoria on the outskirts of Semel. The history of Semel itself is like holding up a small vanity mirror to the history of the upper Mesopotamian region over the past two millennia: Christian, competing Christian, Yezidi, Arab, Kurdish – each era wheeling about the other, each having its own intrigue, tragedy, violence, and death, and sometimes, resurrection.



from the village - the site the St. Daniel chapel, also destroyed 25 years ago. Atop a tidy pile of rock rested a rectangular stone with a cross with “Aita Mar Daniel” in Assyrian script chiseled into it. While lighting a devotional candle retrieved from a can secreted away in the rubble, Younan explained, “When we came back to St. Daniel’s, everything was destroyed except for this stone that stood over the doorway. We believe it was a miracle.”

Nearby was the grave of their grandfather who was the caretaker of the chapel. Yusef and Younan shared a wordless moment.

On December 2, 2011, Yusef’s liquor store in Semel was looted and burned. He lost everything and is still awaiting financial restitution from the government.

On that day a flash of religious tensions dimmed the skies in Iraqi Kurdistan. In several cities, including Semel, mobs of young Muslim Kurds targeted Christian and Yezidi establishments – primarily liquor stores, but homes and social clubs as well – burning and looting them, ostensibly for being in violation of Qoranic law. Other explanations are offered, but the result is the same: The embers of religious and ethnic strife continue to glow.



Upon our arrival to the 150-home village, we drove slowly through brightly colored houses on orderly unpaved streets. Passing through the lavender gate, Yusef’s wife and manicured garden welcomed us. Soon we were sitting at the kitchen table having lunch as Yusef’s wife continued to work in the kitchen, chatting with us all the while. This all had a sense of the mythical Phoenix rising from the ashes.

(Having just returned from spending time with the Yezidis in the isolated Sinjar region several days prior, I could not help but think that their Phoenix remained buried in the cold ashes.)

We finished our leisurely tour on a low hill a kilometer

# CONGRATULATIONS !

An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest

**On May 12, 2012 the 149<sup>th</sup> commencement at UC Berkeley-Department of Engineering took place and the Odah family celebration began!**



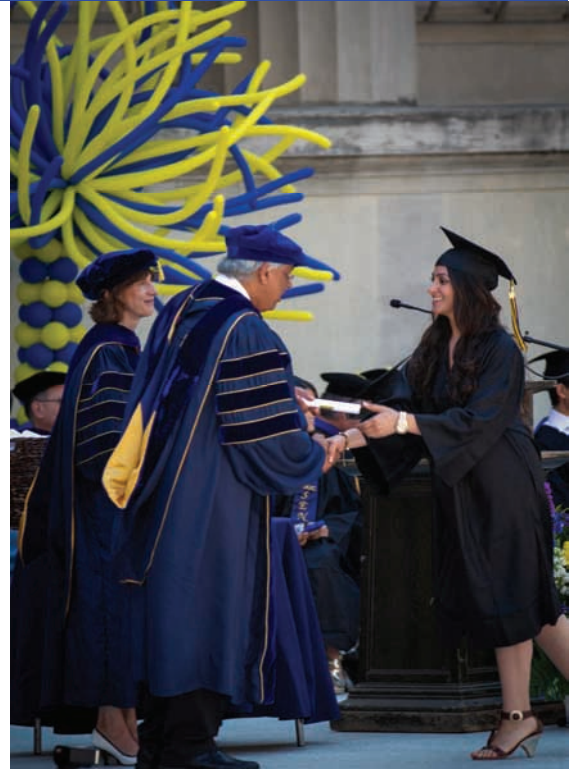
**Sabrina Odah** participated in this ceremony, marking her graduation from UC Berkeley, Department of Engineering, it signified the formal ending of one important period of her life and the beginning of another. The Dean congratulated Sabrina on her accomplishment. She was also addressed “Our Beautiful Sabrina” as she approached the podium receiving her Diploma, with a

genuine smile and a humble personality.

Sabrina’s graduation was witnessed by many family members, friends & relatives, saluting her success and sharing her joy. Sabrina has also served as the president of Steel Bridge at her campus. She has worked with a great team of students winning the regional and national

competitions, and the latest was May 26, 2012 bringing home “First Place” award. Sabrina’s next chapter is to start her internship, working with a great project management company in San Francisco.

Sabrina will be attending Grad school for her MS at US Berkeley in August 2012.



Sabrina, you are an inspiration to many, May the Lord bless you and guide you to a bright future. We are all so proud of your accomplishment and your journey is yet to continue with many more chapters, blossom life and a successful career. May your highest aspiration be achieved.

Inanna was baptized at Mar Narsai Parish in San Francisco by his Grace Mar Awa Rowel, Rev. Ninos Michael, Rabban Youhanna Salamah, on January 7th, 2012.

## **Inanna Kinora Tamraz**

*Nineveh* and the Assyrian Foundation of America join the Tamraz and Maraha family in congratulating the happy and proud parents Ninwe and Fredy Tamraz for the Baptism of their daughter Inanna Kinora born September 15, 2011.

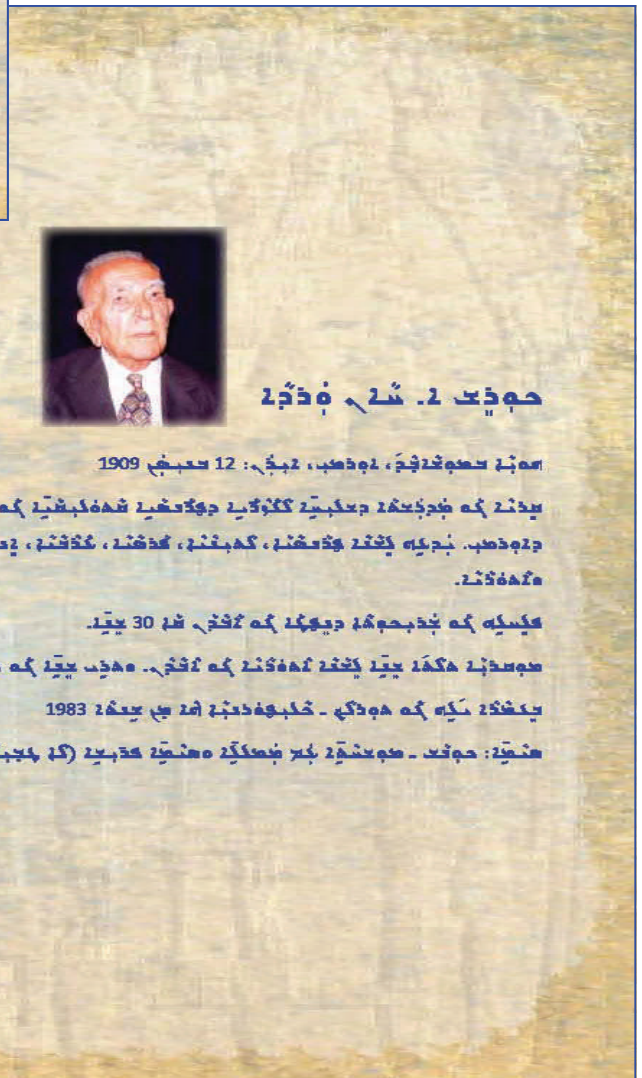




# New Book



**Dedicated to my  
beloved  
grandfather  
Kurosh  
Khan Warda  
Wishing you a  
Happy Birthday  
With love,  
Arbella Babaei**



It is also with great honor for me to formally thank **Dr. Shamasha Peter Kuryakos** for the countless hours he has put to bring this book to a completion. As this had been a long time dream for my grandfather and it gives us all a great pleasure to be able to extend this happiness to him. I thank you on behalf of myself and the entire family.

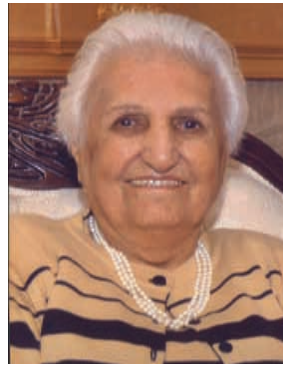
Last but not the least, we would like to thank **Mr. George Zaia** for his kind donation towards the printing of this book.



# In Memoriam

## Maryam Atanous Babilla

By Furat Babilla



Maryam Babilla was the 6th of seven children born to Atanous and Manni Mirza on July 1, 1926 in Urmia, Iran. She passed away on Friday April 1, 2011 at age of 85. She had 2 sisters and 4 borthers. Sister Nanajan, brothers: Youel, Luther, Awitar and Rev. Yonathan (are all deceased). Her only surviving sister Maria is currently in Burbank, CA with her beloved family. At age 7, her father Atanous decided to send her to Iraq, along with her older brother Yonathan. She settled in Habbaniya, Iraq. In 1946. Maryam married her life's partner Charles Babilla. In 1947 they left to Kirkuk and settled there for many years, as God blessed with a son Dijla and a daughter Nahrain. In 1957, Charles was relocated to IPC in Ayn Zala, Nineveh, Iraq; he moved his family to Mosul, Iraq. In Mosul, God blessed them with their third child Furat. Maryam's love for the lord had a great effect in shaping of her 3 children. In 1979, Charles and family immigrated to USA and settled in South San Francisco, CA. Maryam attained the American dream by learning the English language and worked part time as a Teacher's Aid in a child care center. After losing her life's partner and husband Charles in 1991, she continued her path with the Lord and fought the good fight and finished the race by being an active member at Grace Covenant Church, So SF; The Assyrian Church of the East, SF and the Evangelical Arabic Church in Burlingame. Maryam was a woman of principle, a devout Christian, constantly read and mediated on the Lord's Holy promises and his salvation through Jesus Christ, and quoted Bible verses throughout her conversations and dealings with all circumstances. On Dec 27, 2010 she had a bad fall in the house backyard, causing severe injury to her right thigh. She recovered from her injury successfully. Unfortunately, after the rehab, she was infected and developed intestinal bacteria and was admitted to hospital on March 10, 2011. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011 Maryam went to be with the Lord, as she always longed for. She is survived by sons Dijla and Furat, daughter Nahrain, and beloved granddaughter Maryam.

Her loving memories will remain in the hearts of those whom she met and touched. Maryam will be sorley missed. You had left a Hugh void in our lives and the lives of all those who came to know you. May God rest your soul in peace.

We miss you mother. You were surely one of the best...!

## Rabi Youab I. Yonan

By Maggie Yonan



Rabee Youab Yonan was born on December 23, 1925 in Camp Al Gailany, Baghdad, Iraq, to Anna and Israel Yonan. He was educated at the Assyrian Primary school of Rabee Elisha, the Assyrian High School of Qasha Khanndo, and the British Business School in Baghdad. In his youth he was an outstanding athlete and an active participant in Assyrian Drama, translating numerous Shakespearean as well as Russian plays for Assyrian audiences. In 1940 he established the first Assyrian Theater Ensemble, with 19 other Assyrian actors and produced, directed and acted in 9 plays.

His first professional post was with the British Overseas Airways Company (BOAC) in Baghdad, Iraq. In 1948 he married Jean Benjamin and together they had two daughters, Mary and Ann-Margret (Maggie Yonan) and two sons, Edward and William. In 1952, he was offered a high position with the Iraqi Oil Company in Masfa Al Wand, Khanaqin-Diyala province in northern Iraq where he worked as a Purchasing Agent for twenty years. In 1966 Rabee Youab Yonan migrates to the United States with his wife Jean and four children, mostly due to the political instability in Iraq. He joins his mother Anna Yonan and his sister Aglanteen Warda in Morton Grove, Illinois. He gained employment as a drafting engineer in Chicago, Illinois until he received his Bachelor's degree from Northeastern Illinois University in Mechanical Engineering. While working as a Mechanical Engineer, he founded the First Assyrian School at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago. With the assistance of Dr. Robert Paulissian, Rabee William Daniel, Rabee Maria Badrio, Rabee Maria Okaro, and Rabee Bailus Shimun, the school successfully taught hundreds of Assyrian students to read and speak the Assyrian language, and instilled Assyrian nationalism in the hearts and minds of many young Assyrians. Some of the students went on to become leaders of the Assyrian community.

Rabee Youab Yonan was an elder of the Assyrian Evangelical Church in Chicago for twenty-seven years. He faithfully contributed to the success of every Assyrian organization in Chicago, and was a leading speaker and commentator on the Assyrian Voice, a weekly radio program dedicated to the Assyrians of the Diaspora. In 1986

the Assyrian Heritage Foundation awarded Rabee Youab Yonan the prestigious Hammurabi Award for his work and endless love and dedication to his Assyrian nation.

In 1993, Rabee Youab Yonan retired and moved with his wife Jean to Turlock, California, where he worked to help other Assyrian organizations, mainly Bet-Nahrain Organization of Ceres, where he directed “Khoorza Sapraya” a quarterly Assyrian Scholarly program, and AssyriaSat Television network, where he presented an educational television program for five years. He was responsible for the establishment of the annual telethon for AssyriaSat . He also worked tirelessly to help the Assyrian Civic Club of Turlock, the Assyrian Peace-Maker organization, and the Assyrian Welfare organization of Stanislaus County. He was an elder at the Assyrian Evangelical church in Turlock for 17 years. In 2006 Rabee Youab Yonan received his Masters of Engineering Management from Southern California University at Irvine.

Rabee Youab Yonan is most known for his contributions to the development of Assyrian textbooks, his poetry, and the transliteration of two books. In 2002 he published his first book, “Bahra Taptipana d’ Asia” a literal translation of Joel Warda’s book, the Flickering Light Of Asia. In 2011, he published his second book, the Age of Hardship, a literal translation of Awdisho Barzana’s book, “Shineh D’ Asqoota.” Rabee Youab Yonan passed away on Labor Day, September 5, 2011, as a symbol of his hard work for his family, relatives, friends, his church, and the Assyrian nation. He is survived by his loving wife of 65 years, Jean Yonan, his daughter Mary and her family, his daughter Ann-Margret “Maggie” Yonan and her family, his two sons, Edward and William Yonan and their families. He leaves behind ten loving grandchildren, Peter, Sammy, Joshua, Jennifer, Nineveh-Holly, Nina, Terah, Jasmine, Joseph, and Jonah, and his two great-grandchildren, Emma and Cameron Yonan, his sister, Aglanteen Warda, and her two children, Michael and Christina Warda.

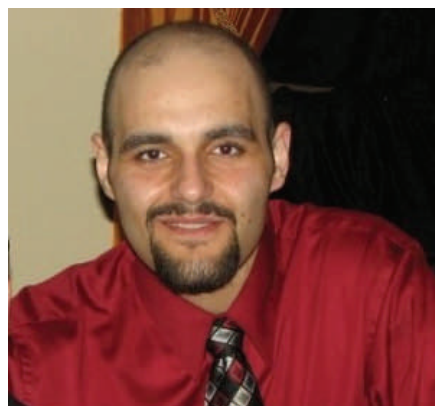
Rabee Youab Yonan was an exceptional Assyrian, dedicating his entire life to the growth and development of the Assyrian culture and cause. Despite his personal battles, responsibilities and commitments, he chose to translate two very important books for the Assyrian nation: His first translation is from English to Assyrian so that the older Assyrian generation who could not read English would be able to read Joel Warda’s the “Flickering Light of Asia” in Assyrian and understand what caused our first genocide. His second translation is from Assyrian to English so that the present and future Assyrian generations who might not be able to read Assyrian would read Awdisho Barzana’s book “Shinneh D’ Asqoota,” which is a first-hand, eyewitness account of the Simile Massacre, and would understand what caused our second genocide. This is Rabee Youab Yonan’s legacy for the Assyrian

nation as we move forward into the future.

Among the wealth of material he left behind, his family is working on publishing his short story, Alooia Eeqa, (the Narrow Lane) and a book containing many of his unpublished Assyrian poems, of which we have included one down below as a gift to Nineveh Magazine.

Rabee Youab Yonan was a gentle, loving, humble, charitable soul. He lived a modest life, contributing to as many charities as he could during the course of his life. He was a scholar and a gentleman who loved every single Assyrian without exception. He will be remembered for all his hard work and dedication to his Assyrian nation, and for his famous expression: “If you are capable of hating another Assyrian, you are not an Assyrian.” It is his endless love and dedication to his Assyrian nation that we honor and carry forward in our hearts and minds, so that we can build a new Assyria.

Rabee Youab Yonan’s books can be obtained from <http://www.speakassyria.org>



## Delmon Aho

1982-2012

By Zalgai Aho

Delmon was born on December 17, 1982 in Chicago, IL to Ninos and Ogareet Aho. The family moved to Aleppo, Syria in 1991, then to San Pedro, CA in 2002. He received his high school diploma from Tantasqua Regional Senior High School in Fiskdale, MA and went on to obtain a Culinary Arts degree from The Art Institute of California - Los Angeles.

Cooking and creating delicious new dishes for everyone to enjoy was one of Delmon’s greatest passions. A proud Assyrian, he enjoyed spending time with his family, especially his two nephews, walking and listening to his iPod, and bodysurfing. Delmon passed away on April 18, 2012 in San Pedro, CA.

Delmon is survived by his parents Ninos & Ogareet Aho, Sister & Brother-in-Law Romrama & Aphram Khalbourji and their children Albert Romiel & Marc Antony Robby, his sister Zalgai Aho and his brother Enleil Aho.























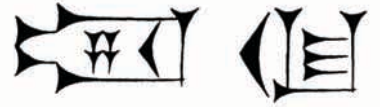








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