

Is the Nineveh Lent an unbroken living tradition?

David Dag

There are today many amongst the Arameans (Syriacs), who call themselves Assyrians, who claim "we fast the Nineveh Lent (also known as the Rogation of the Ninevites) and this proves that we are Assyrians.'

How long back have they claimed this? The answer is to be found written in book by the East-Syriac Aramean ("Nestorian") Harvard University scholar John Joseph's book known as: "*The Modern Assyrians of the Middle East – encounters with western Christians missions archeologists & colonial powers*". (Brill 2000)

He wrote the following on page 26 about this:

Emhardt and Lamsa in the 1920s, and the Assyrian nationalists after them, have misinterpreted the Rogation of the Ninevites (Ba'ūta d'Ninwāye) as a unique fast among the Nestorians, observed as a thanksgiving "for the salvation of their forefathers," entirely missing the theological and historical significance of the Biblical story of Jonah in both Jewish and Christian tradition.⁹¹

⁹¹ William C. Emhardt and George M. Lamsa, *The Oldest Christian People* (New York, 1926; reprinted by AMS Press in 1970), p. 22. According to the authors, "Abraham was Assyrian," and Aramaic "is not only the language which Christ spoke, but the language also, we are told, which God spoke to Adam."

So the abovementioned claim by the assyrianists (i.e Assyrian nationalists) today about this Lenten fast goes back at least to the 1920s to the pro-Assyrian George M Lamsa.



George M Lamsa

Lamsa – in contrast to the majority of the East-Syriac Aramean Nestorians who are ”pro-Assyrian” and the individuals among the Syriac orthodox community who today are pro-Assyrian – knew to begin with that the language he read and wrote in was Aramaic (he calls it Aramaic according to a radio interview that available with him online at the link below)

http://www.noohra.com/Index.pl?mm/Lamsa_intro_10mins

To begin with, Emhart & Lamsa wrote a book with the title - *The Oldest Christian People*, in 1926 – which in turn was republished in 1970 (as I showed above in John Joseph’s footnote). In this book the authors go against the established biblical tradition about “*Abraham the wandering Aramean*” and erroneously claim the “*Abraham was an Assyrian*” (and this is of course wrong without any foundation to support such claim)

When was this Lenten fast instituted and why?

Some of these pro-assyrian individuals go as far, as to claim that the ancient Assyrians would have celebrated (or held) this Lenten fast uninterruptedly since the days of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible aka *Tanakh*) Hebrew prophet Jonah until modern times. But such a claim is neither supported by them nor any scholar (be they exegetes, historians or assyriologists) for they haven’t been able to prove it with any facts.

Historical data about Jonah

To begin with we must go back in time to the claimed period in history when Jonah is claimed to have lived. Jonah is said according to the Bible to be “the son of Amittai “ (Book of 2 Kings) who in turn was a contemporary of king Jeroboam II (833-793 B.C.E), the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, and its capital Samaria. He ruled for approximately 40 years around 800 B.C.E and was contemporary of the Jewish prophet Amos. According to the Old Testament, in the Book of Amos 1:1, king Jeroboam II is said to have been a contemporary with king Uzziah in the southern kingdom of Judah (*Yehuda*).with Jerusalem’s as its capital.

During king Jeroboam II’s time was also except the time period of the prophets Jonah and Amos; the time of the prophets Hoseah and Joel. All these prophets condemned materialism and the selfishness amongst Israel’s royal elite during those days. Jeroboam was doing – as the Bible calls it – “*that which was evil at the sight of the Lord*”. He oppressed the poor and continued to support cultic centers in the cities of Dan and Bethel as an opposition to the Temple of Jerusalem.

There is unfortunately a division amongst scholars about the exact correct date for his rule. William Foxwell Albright dated his rule to 786-746 BCE while Edwin R. Thiele wrote that he was a co-ruler with Yoash 793-782 BCE and later ruled alone from 782-753 BCE.

Unfortunately the Book of Jonah does not mention the Assyrian king by name. The text only says “*the king of Nineveh*”

The camp of scholars who have tried to prove that this book is telling about a real event in history tried to figure out which Assyrian king was a contemporary to king Jeroboam II. They reached the conclusion that it was either Shamshi Adad V (824-811 BCE) or Adad Nirari III (811-783 BCE) because they both fit in the timeframe of 833-793 BCE (the ruling period of Jeroboam II).

At the same time other scholars have done a text critical analysis and claimed that the term “*melek*” (king) in Aramaic “should rather be interpreted as a sort of governor rather than king. And that in the Assyrian cuneiform texts *Ninua* (Nineveh) could mean both “*the city of Nineveh*” as well as “*the province of Nineveh*” (for more info on this topic read the sources at the end of this article).

The genre of the Book of Jonah is debated and there are different propositions about it: historical rendering, novel, allegorical, a teaching story etc. The book is unique because to a large extent it is a story about a prophet rather than prophetic statements. The author seems to get inspiration from Old Testament wisdom literature and also uses exaggerations. Examples of exaggerations can be found at the beginning of the book:

The Lord sends a *strong* wind. The fear of the sailors is *big*. The fish is *huge*. Jonah’s disaffection is *big*. Nineveh is a *large* city. One can also add the fact the choice of the city where the prophet escapes

to - *Tarsis/Tarshish*. This city is the known as worlds southern most outpost and Nineveh in turn was in the East. This is viewed as a style which the author used.

Another trace that points to the direction that the story is a sort of beauty literature is how the animals are given a special place. Jonah is swallowed by huge fish (in Edessan Aramaic i.e classical Syriac called “Qitos” which in turn is a Greek loanword). The fast is according to the text also held by the *animals* (Jonah 3:7) and to the big crowd in Nineveh it says that *there also were many animals* (Jonah 4:11)

If the story of Jonah was a real historical event one would at least expect the assyriologists to have at least discovered a clay tablet which has a few similarities with the biblical story or at least mention Jonah or a similar character’s visit to Nineveh (after all the ancient Assyrians kept records of everything in daily life in their chronicles, documents or letters even astronomical events are mentioend.) But unfortunately there is no such story outside the canon of the Bible.

Anyhow whether the events are historical or not, it doesn’t prove that the ancient Assyrians continued practicing this Lenten fast once a year at the same date. – *which is the case in modern times.*- i.e that it became a sort of continuous folklore tradition from ancient pagan times until modern times. *If it was true at all, that such is the case than at least the assyriologists would have mentioned such source or sources.*

And the earliest sources within the literature of the Syriac churches doesn’t even mention a “*Lent of Nineveh*” or “*Rogation of Ninevites*” to have been held until later in the church history.

The lent itself didn’t exist for example in the days of St Ephrem the Syrian (306-373 AD). St Ephrem only wrote a commentary on the book of Jonah in his exegesis and some *madroshe*.

This material was published in English first in 1853 and dedicated to Prince Albert of England and to Austen Henry Layard - the archeologist and his team who claimed that our people in northern Iraq were the last remnants of ancient Assyria as the rude heaps and ruined palaces were.

This book goes under the title “*The Repentance of Nineveh – a metrical homily on the mission of Jonah by Ephraem Syrus*”

<http://fr.scribd.com/doc/98048919/Ephraem-The-Repentance-of-Niniveh>

THE
REPENTANCE OF NINEVEH,

A METRICAL HOMILY ON THE MISSION OF JONAH,

BY

EPHRAEM SYRUS.

ALSO,

AN EXHORTATION TO REPENTANCE, AND SOME SMALLER
PIECES.

Translated from the original Syriac,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY

THE REV. HENRY BURGESS, PH.D.,

OF GÖTTINGEN, CURATE OF ST. MARY'S, BLACKBURN, AND TRANSLATOR OF
"SELECT METRICAL HYMNS AND HOMILIES OF EPHRAEM SYRUS."

ܐܢܘܢܐ ܢܝܢܘܘܗ ܠܡܢ ܠܡܢ ܠܡܢ

"Nineveh hath been spoiled: Who will grieve for thee?"

Nahum iii. 7.

London:

ROBERT B. BLACKADER, 13 PATERNOSTER ROW;

SAMPSON LOW, SON AND CO.,

AGENTS FOR THE UNITED STATES;

BERLIN: ASHER AND CO.

1853.

On the website of the *Youth Association of the Syriac Orthodox Church in Sweden (SOKU)* it says the following – (I translated it from Swedish into English here).

”The Lent became official under the Maphirian Mor Marutha of Taghrit [modern Tikrit in northern Iraq], he departed in year 649 and somewhere before that [while he was still alive] it became official. Maphirian [Mapheryono] Marutha wanted to introduce this Lenten fast because he realized that people were sinning allot and he thought that maybe through this Lenten fast he could bring them back from the sin. Bar Hebraeus (d.1268) wrote that both the Armenian and the Coptic Church has taken after us regarding this Lenten fast. We don’t know exactly when the Armenian Church took it upon themselves, as for the Coptic Church we know that they took it upon themselves during Anba Abraham [bar Zar’o] who was the 62nd patriarch of Alexandria [Egypt] Although he was the patriarch of Alexandria he was of Syriac orthodox origin and hence the reason for introducing this Lenten fast in the Church. (PS the Copts had 4 patriatriarchs with a Syriac Orthodox origin).”

There was an article in the *Journal of Syriac Studies (Hugoye)* that also sheds some light over this topic. The title is *”Syriac and Coptic relations beyond dogmatic rhethoric”*, written by Louis Farag <http://syrcom.cua.edu/Hugoye/Vol11No1/HV11N1Farag.html>

On Anba Abraam wrote Louis Farag:

“The most famous of the three Syriac popes is Pope Abraam, 62nd Pope of Alexandria (d. 970).⁴⁴ He was commonly known as Ibn-Zar’a Al-Suriany, or Abraam bar Zar’a among the Syrians.....”
”Pope Abraam added more than the three days of fast in commemoration of the Miracle of moving the Muqataam Mountain; he also added the fast of Jonah. The Copts observed the fast of the Week of Hercules, but not the Syrians.⁴⁵ When Pope Abraam was elected, he observed this fast on the condition that the Copts would participate in the Syrian fast of Jonah. The Copts agreed because they admired his piety.⁴⁶ It was agreed that the Copts would observe this three-day fast fifteen days prior to the Great Lent following the strict dietary rules of the Great Lent.⁴⁷ These additional ascetic observances that the Copts follow are credited to Pope Abraam’s piety. It is a piety beyond dogmatic rhetoric.⁴⁸”

On footnote 47 it says: *“The Copts observe the strictest fast during the Great Lent and Fridays and Wednesdays and the Fast of Jonah. No animal products are eaten during that time, not even fish”*

The difference between the case of the Syriac Orthodox church and the Coptic Orthodox Church - regarding the Nineveh Lenten fast – is that we the Syriac Orthodox abstain from eating any food in three days, while the Copts abstain from eating anything from animals even animals on water such as fish. As to regular Syriac Orthodox fasting – *almost every Wednesday and Friday* – one is abstained

from eating or digesting meat as well as dairy products. But one is though allowed to eat fish and shellfish that live under water.

On footnote 48 it says:

*“Six centuries later, in AD 1587, Pope Gabriel VIII, Pope 97 of Alexandria, was ordained to the See of St. Mark. **He ordered that the Copts were not to fast the Fast of Jonah, but after his death, this decree was reverted, and the fast is still practiced to this day.**[...]. See O.H.E. Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church Known as the History of the Holy Church*, by Sawirus Ibn Al-Mukaffa Bishop of Al- Ashmunin, (AD 849-880), Vol. III Part III, (Le Caire: Publications de la Société d’ Archéologie Copte, 1970), 159”*

John Joseph continues further and wrote:

“While the Assyrians are associated in the Old Testament with war and violence, they are also remembered there as a special people. One of the books of the Old Testament, albeit a brief one, is wholly devoted to the Assyrians: the story of Jonah, one of the great favorites of the Bible. God bids Jonah to journey on a special mission to the capital of the Assyrians, Nineveh. Through the mouth of Jonah, God warned the Assyrians that should they not give up their wicked ways, “in forty days Nineveh will be overthrown.” The Ninevites “took to heart this warning from God; they declared a public fast, and high and low alike put on sackcloth.” God then “relented and did not inflict on them the punishment he had threatened.”[15]

*The book of Jonah seems to have captured the imagination of Christian readers, artists, and poets throughout the ages. During the Christian period, over 700 years after the fall of Nineveh and of the Assyrian empire, the story of Jonah became one of the favorites of the church fathers, its theme being the divine pardon for repentant sinners. God’s universal love and mercy extend to all men, even to the [ancient] Assyrians. **Jesus, a Jew well familiar with the Hebrew Bible, referred to the ancient story; he used the Assyrians of Nineveh as a model for the Jews of his day, whom he reproached for their unwillingness to repent. “The men of Nineveh,” Jesus told his listeners, “will appear in court when this generation [of Jews] is on trial, and ensure its condemnation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and what is here is greater than Jonah.”***

Unfortunately some pro-Assyrian individuals misuse both the book of Jonah and the Nineveh Lent as well as the “Sign of Jonah” mentioned in the New Testament for their own advantage and benefit.

The Sign of Jonah

³⁸ Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”³⁹ He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.”⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.⁴¹ **The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.**⁴² *The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here”* (Gospel of Matthew 12:38-42)

The thing that these pro-Assyrian persons do, is that they take the sentence out of its context instead of reading it in its original context and continue further in the text itself. Jesus refers here to Himself when he uses the term “*Son of Man*” (in Aramaic *Bar Noshol/Bar Nasha*, this term means both a human being *per se* as well as ***Son of Man*** i.e Jesus in his Human *hypostasis* In other words he is prophesying about Himself and the Resurrection after His own Crucifixion before it even took place at that particular time).

At the same time He wanted to prove that the difference between Himself and king Salomon was, that king Salomon casts out demons with the help of *Beelsebub* (a sort of father of the demons) in contrast to Himself who casts out demons with His own divine power.

There was once when Jesus cured a demon-possessed man in the town of Gennesaret and got accused of casting out demons through the help of *Beelsebub*.

After Jonah Jesus mentioned Salomon; “*The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here”*

Once again Jesus refers to Himself here but at the same time he said “*something greater than Solomon is here”*

Why did Jesus say king Salomon? Why not king David?

Before this event took place, there was a story that was circulating amongst the Jews, that Solomon was wise and that he could expel demons with a ring through the help of *Beelsebub*. That was the reason why Jesus mentioned Solomon here in the Gospel of Matthew.

There is this book that says that Salomon expel demons out of demon possessed persons.

This book is known as *The Testament of Solomon* and is a text which is neither in the Christian nor in Jewish tradition today. It describes Solomon as a wise man who could expel evil spirits and demons.

For more info about it watch this documentary “*Banned from the Bible II*”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zqi0bMJKkdU>

Back to the Gospel of Matthew

“⁴¹ The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.” (Gospel of Matthew 12:41)

The assyrianists want to use this specific verse to prove that the ancient Assyrians repented from their sins already during the time of Jonah and that they have held on to the Nineveh Lenten fast uninterruptedly – laughable enough – from those days until modern times.

At the end of the verse it says “**.and now something greater than Jonah is here.**” Of course Jesus was referring to Himself here.

John Joseph continues:

“To Christians everywhere, the Assyrians of Nineveh became a model during the Lenten penance. The Roman Catholics read the third chapter of Jonah on Wednesday of the first week of Lent. In the Greek Orthodox liturgy, the entire book of Jonah is read during Lent, while Anglicans and Lutherans read portions of it. During the afternoon service on Yom Kippur, the Jews read the book of Jonah because of its emphasis on God’s forgiveness after genuine repentance.[17]

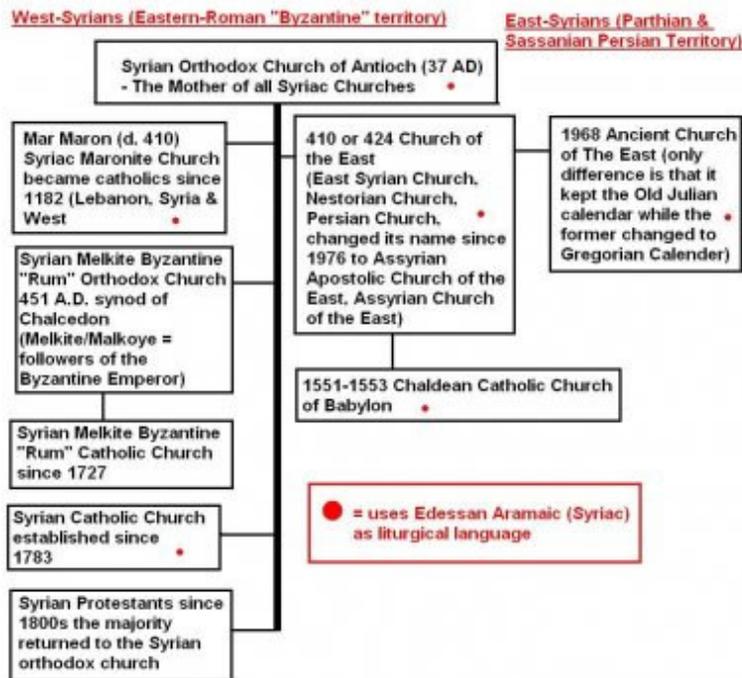
The Eastern Christians, whether Armenians, Copts, Ethiopians, Jacobites [i.e Syriac Orthodox], or Nestorians, observe a pre-Lenten fast remembering the message of Jonah and what Jesus said of the Ninevites. Locally, both Christians and Jews commemorated the event: Christians built a church where Jonah “had preached.” The Jews of Mosul had the synagogue of Obadiah which, according to tradition, “Jonah built.”[18]”

In other words it’s not only our own people that fast this Lent, but other peoples as well. Such as Armenians, Copts and Ethiopians.

The question is: “are these peoples Assyrians as well just because they fast the Nineveh Lent”? Of course not.

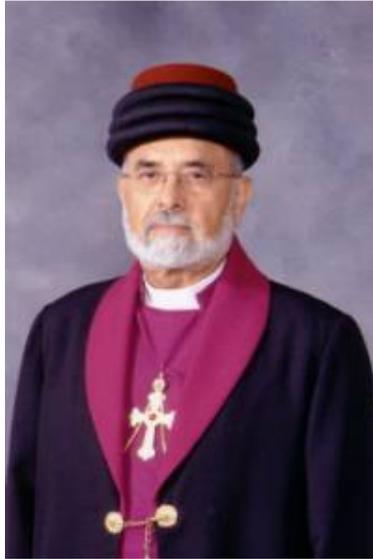
One holds such a fasting Lent because of its message in the story narrative about forgiveness of sins after repentance and not as Lamsa and the Assyrian nationalists after his time claim and want to assert.

If now hypothetically thinking, let's for arguments sake assume that, the story of Jonah would have taken place in Alexandria or in Cairo instead of Nineveh, could one therefore assume, that we are Egyptians and hail from the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt? Then it would be known as “*the Alexandria Lent*” or “*the Cairo Lent*” or “*Rogation of the Alexandrians*” etc. Of course we wouldn't be Egyptians for that.



What John Joseph left out here is that even the Syriac Catholics and Chaldean Catholics fast the Lent. Some have also claimed that the Syriac Maronites, also have fasted it. But I haven't found any evidence for it yet.

The Chaldean Catholic Church is an offshoot from “The Church of the East” (as it was known as during the 16th century) and of course it is therefore natural for them to still hold on to it just as it is for the Syriac Catholics who are an offshoot from the Syriac Orthodox Church (at that time known as the Syrian Church of Antioch).



Assyrian Church of the East
Mar Khananya IV Dinkha



Ancient Church of the East
Mar Addai II

The "Nestorians" are divided into two separate distinct ecclesiastical organizations since 1968. These are "The Church of the East" (the Assyrian name was not included in the church title until 1976) and the "Ancient Church of the East."

The patriarch of the "Assyrian Church of the East" is Mar Khananya IV Dinkha (in Chicago) while the patriarch of the "Ancient Church of the East" is Mar Addai II (in Baghdad), both fast the "Rogation of Ninevites" today.

The East-Syriacs (nestorians) have like the Syriac Orthodox Church not always held this Lent since "apostolic times" or even before the birth of Christendom.

When was it established amongst the East-Syriacs?

The answer to when it was introduced amongst the East-Syriacs is to be found in the *History Chronicle* of the Syriac Orthodox patriarch Michael the Syrian (also known as "The Great", *Mor Mikhoel Rabo*, 1126-1199 A.D.) on the pages 847-848 (PS these are the page numbers of the *Gabriel Yalgin 2006 editon*) where he wrote a list of the names of the "Nestorian Catholicoses" Among these one can find a Mar Isho'yab who introduced/established it into the church calendar. The following is to be read: about him in Aramaic (Syriac):

He wrote the following on page 86 and 87:

*”After the disaster inflicted by the Persian king, Shapur II, the Church of the East grew stronger in Assyria. Some metropolitans and patriarchs called themselves Assyrians, and the bishop’s seat in Nineveh as the Nineveh Episcopacy and Metropolitan of Assyria. One of them was bishop **Mar Sabrisho**, (later became patriarch **Catholicos in the year 596**) who instituted the fasting and the ritual of the Ninevites Rogation.”*

It is true that the term *Atur/othur* and *aturaye/othuroye* appears in the Edessan Aramaic (Syriac) literature. But this was purely geographical and had no ethnic connotation when it was used in the context of that time of course. It was used in titles for Episcopal and Metropolitan See’s as well as for patriarchs that hailed from Mosul known as *Atur/Othur*.

One example of such an East-Syriac ”nestorian” patriarch was Mar Mari Aturaya (patriarch between 967 – 1000 and Mar Odisho II (Bar Ars) Aturaya 1072 - 1090

These hailed from Mosul hence the title”*Aturaya*”.

The terms Mosul and *Atur/Othur* were synonyms according to the Aramaic literary tradition, which can be read amongst others in the Syriac Orthodox Church of Mor Eliyo in the village of Beth Qustan (Boqusyone) in Tur Abdin were an inscription mentioned the 19th century patriarch Peter IV ”*Mawseloyo awkith othuroyo*” (Mosulite i.e *othuroyo*) and other sources as well. This proves that those who lived there did not regard themselves as Assyrians in the ethnic sense of the nomenclature..

Yoel continues further:

”Afterwards, Monk Yaqqira compiled the hymns of rogation from the writings of Mar Narsai and Mar Aprim. In these passages that are read yearly in the Assyrian, Chaldean and Jacobite churches, especially those relating to Mar Aprim, the reader will see a new imprint that is seldom seen in the writings of this man. In the hymns of rogation there is great praise and exaltation for the Assyrians and their kings, their clergy and their judges and obvious downgrading of the prophets, clergy, kings and the elders of Israel. Thus one can say that Mar Sabhrisho, and monk Yaqqira and patriarch Ishoyabh were Assyrians filled with national pride. These men added more than two hundred pages in the “Book of Khudra” [Kthawa d-Khudra/Book of Union] to preserve that ancient Assyrian event as a rite never to be forgotten in all churches. “

Yoel is exaggerating a lot here, because of his personal “Assyrian pride”, regarding Mar Sabrisho, the monk Yaqqira and the Nestorian patriarch Isho’ yahb and that these would have “*been proud of their Assyrian nationality*” as he put it.

Yoel simply misinterpreted their texts. The question remains how much of the material that is written by the authors themselves and how much of it is written under pseudonyms?

After all none of the Syriac orthodox clergy reads any of these texts, as Yoel claimed, during the Lent period. One has also to have in mind, that a certain amount of additions have been done into the liturgy of “*The Church of the East*” in order to propagate certain Assyrian nationalistic feelings amongst the “believers” (*Mhaymne*)

Plus, one of the two patriarchs (of the two Nestorian patriarchal lines) is the one who is responsible for the changing the church-title into the “*Assyrian Church of the East*” in 1976 namely Mar Khananya IV Dinkha who resides in Chicago in the U.S.

The most part of their liturgy is in Edessan Aramaic (classical Syriac, which they call *Lishana atiqā* and *Sepraya*) – while those additions which were done are in the spoken neo-aramaic *Sureth swadaya* (which has a literal tradition going back to at least only the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th century until modern times. For more info about this see the book of “*The Hidden Pearl Vol. III*” on pages 132-136)

Yoel wrote further:

“*One of these hymns that the Assyrians have sung yearly from those times to the present is the patriotic hymn that we see in the second article of Tuesday on the language of the Assyrian king as he addresses his forces: [38]*

*“Even the mighty tremble from the great fame of Assyria:
We that conquered the greats, a Hebrew [Jonah] conquer us:
Our voice made the kings shudder, and his voice agitate us:
Many cities we destroyed, and he in our city conquer us:
Nineveh the mother of heroes, from a coward will be afraid:
Lionhearted in birth, from a Hebrew is scarred:
Assyria roared on the earth, and Jonah will roar at it:
Such feebleness has humbled the offspring of Nimrod the Great”*

The author of the rogation hymns also says:

*He saw children [of Nineveh] shouting, and calves and lambs bellowing:
He saw old people [of Nineveh] weeping, and the old people of his
nation (Hebrews) fornicating:
He saw Nineveh in sorrow and Zion attired with debauchery:
He saw Assyria and rejected prideful Jerusalem
He saw the impudent in Nineveh, capitulate and learned the truth
In Zion he saw liar prophets, full of evil.”*

Yoel's source has the Latin title: *Breviarium, IUXSTA, Ritum Syrorum Orientalium ID Est Chaldaeorum, A Pentecoste AD Dedicacionem. Apud S. Congregationem “Pro Ecclesia Orientali, Romae, 1938.*

How does one know whether or not it was written during the claimed period and not under the a pseudonym by some assyrianist(s) who lived in modern times and that these texts were written in the spoken neo-aramaic vernacular *Sureth* as some sort of propaganda in order to awaken Assyrian nationalistic feelings amongst the believers ?

Yoel does not provide his readers with any information about when it was written, nor in which church literature or book. Nor does he mention whether it was in Edessan Aramaic (classical Syriac). Nor does he mention if it was in northeastern neo-aramaic *Sureth*.

If it is from “*The book of Union*” (*Ktawa d-Khudra/Khtobo d-Hudro*) and is written in the spoken vernacular *Sureth* instead of in Edessan Aramaic (*kthobonoyo*), well then it is not an authentic text from the 6th century – (which Yoel wants his reader to believe but rather a modern addition or revision. Once again *Sureth* was not written first until the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century A.D.)

Conclusion

I have written in this article on whether or not the Nineveh Lent is a continuous Lent from Assyrian imperial time’s - *i.e from the days of Jonah until our modern times* - or if it was introduced at a later date by church fathers.

The fact is that that it was not a continuous tradition from pagan times until modern times – *which the assyrianists wants us to believe today* – but rather introduced into the Syriac Orthodox church by Mor Marutha of Taghrit (Tikrit, Iraq, d. 649 A.D.) and the East-Syriac “Nestorian” Mar Isho’ yahb during the 6th century A.D..

It was introduced into the churches because of the massacres that was believed to be “Gods rage” that fell upon us for our sins. The massacres were committed during the period of the Sassanian Zoroastrain king Khosrau II Parvez who persecuted the Christians of his realm.

I have also proven that even Copts, Armenians, Ethiopians celebrate it as well. So in short terms; one could say that the Nineveh Lent could not be used as an apologetic argument for assyrianism in the “name conflict” in order to prove that the Aramean (Syriac) people are Assyrians.

Sure the lent is associated with the Assyrian capital Nineveh. But according to the author of the *Book of Jonah* the city was used as a metaphor for place for harlots and sinners.

The question is once again, if the narrative would have taken place for example in an Egyptian city like Cairo or Alexandria instead of Nineveh, could one therefore assume that we are all Egyptians based only on the fact that the Lent itself is associated with the names of Egyptian cities? Of course one could not. Or if it was associated with the Ethiopian (Abyssinian) city of Aksum or the Armenian capital Yerevan that one could claim that we are all Ethiopians or Armenians? Of course not one couldn't.

We simply have this tradition because of its theological message and not because we would be or hail from the ancient Assyrians.

Here is more research article about Jonah

- *Paul Ferguson - Who was the "king of Nineveh" in Jonah 3:6*
http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1996_47_2_05_Ferguson_KingOfNinevehJonah3.pdf
- *Paul J.N. Lawrence - Assyrian nobles and the book of Jonah*
http://www.tyndalehouse.com/tynbul/library/TynBull_1986_37_06_Lawrence_AssyrianNobles_Jonah.pdf
- *Ashley L Camp - Jonah 3:1-4:11*
<http://members.cox.net/theoutlet/Jonah%203.1%20-%204.11.pdf>
- Old Testament Survey Jonah

http://theopenword.org/ots/32_jonah.pdf
- *Jonah*
http://wrs.edu/Materials_for_Web_Site/Courses/OT_Prophetic_Literature/Lensch--Ch_1_Jonah.pdf
Al Maxey - The Minor Prophets
<http://www.zianet.com/maxey/Proph8.htm>
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