

ARARAT-URARTU THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

BEDROS M. TOMASSIAN



TRANSLATED BY
MARY- HRACHOOHI BOGHOSIAN

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA
INSTITUTE OF HISTORY

ARARAT – URARTU THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

Historical Struggle of Urartu and Assyria:
Influence on Israel and Judah

BEDROS M. TOMASSIAN

TRANSLATED BY
Mary-Hrachiohi Boghosian

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ARARAT-URARTU THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

It references the Long-Term Historical Struggle of Urartu and Assyria and their influence on the histories of Israel and Judah. (2021) 191p.

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In Memory of a Dear Friend and a Mentor

Professor Artak Y. Movsisyan, Dr. of Science in History,
(1970–2020)

Chair, Department of Armenian History,
Yerevan State University (YSU),
Republic of Armenia

I dedicate this work to his valuable and unprecedented work in Armenian history and for being the scientific editor of the Armenian version of this monograph.

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A New Word about the Issue of "Ararat-Urartu"

Until the mid-19th century, in international historiography, most of the authors' dedicated works on Urartu's history, one of the oldest and most powerful States in the Middle East, as a rule, have been that of Armenia. And, relying mainly on the Holy Scripture, they have viewed the **Country of Ararat** or the **Kingdom of Ararat** within the context of Armenian history. However, over time, and primarily due to political reasons, a general distortion of this issue has begun, especially by Turkish-Azerbaijani historiography.

During the second half of the last century, the Turkish historiography, with its fake and artificial terminology, pushed forward the false version of the origin of the Turkic tribes in Eastern Anatolia, within the Armenian Highland. Accordingly, it began the assimilation of the historical and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the region, especially the Armenians, including the glorious period of the (9–6) centuries BC of the Armenian history and the "alienation" of the Ararat kingdom (Urartu) from the Armenian people.

In the final years of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, thanks to numerous Armenian and foreign scholarly publications, we managed to revert the situation and return the traditional historiography of Ararat-Urartu, restoring the historical truth about the Armenian imperial times. Nevertheless, even today, Armenia's old and modern history is getting falsified; therefore, the scientific and ideological struggles are gaining recognition and political significance. Thus, the Armenian scholars and political community should publish new and excellent works in foreign languages. In that respect, the well-known Armenian diasporan researcher and a national figure, Mr. Bedros Tomassian's publications and whose work of Ararat-Urartu are becoming invaluable. It is gratifying to see this monograph, entrusted by the Armenian scholarly community, is now being submitted to the English scholars and the broader researchers and readers; of course, it will be necessary for the general battle against the distortion of Armenian history.

Ashot Melkonyan, Dr. Professor of History
Chair of the Institute of History,
Armenia National Academy of Science, (RA)

About Bedros M. Tomassian's Book "Ararat-Urartu throughout the Bible"

Every book has its mission and destiny. Like humans, books are born and brought to light out of necessity when their mission is matured.

Many volumes have been written about Armenia's preserved testimonies, notably the Kingdom of Van or Ararat-Urartu in the Bible. Thinking this topic was exhausted, and nothing to add, years ago, during our conversation, I was surprised and pleased when Bedros Tomassian brought up his idea of monographing *Ararat-Urartu throughout the Bible*; and addressing the history of Israel, Judah, and the neighboring countries, through the conflicts of regional superpowers, Ararat-Urartu, and Assyria.

This excellent idea inspired me, so I urged Bedros Tomassian not to delay its implementation. Later, I gladly accepted the author's request to edit the Armenian version of his work, which I did the best possible.

I was pleased to receive the Armenian version of his book and was particularly delighted to see what we have spoken about all accomplished. I hope this monograph will hold its firm place in Armenology and Ancient East history.

It is desirable to see the book translated to English and published very soon since the presented material is beyond the scope of just Armenology and its importance to the history of the Ancient East and the Biblical study.

Good luck to Bedros Tomassian for his remarkable research work. Also, for the author, I wish new, exciting and important research studies.

Artak Movsisyan, Dr. of Science (History)
Late, Chair of the Armenian History Department,
Yerevan State University, (RA)

Opinion on Ararat-Urartu throughout the Bible

Ararat is the permanent name of Armenia in the Bible, mentioned in three events; the story of the Great Flood and the salvation of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat, and two other places related to the events of VII-VI century BC when the Kingdom of Ararat was a prominent state in the Ancient East.

It is also well known that in the Assyrian and the Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions, the Kingdom of Ararat is named Urartu. Its role and significance in Ancient World history have been discussed dramatically among the circle of scholars of both Armenology and the Ancient East. Bedros M. Tomassian's remarkable monograph entitled "Ararat-Urartu throughout the Bible" comes to complete the series of numerous studies in this field. It is worth mentioning that the author offered his unique approach without confining himself to citing previous researchers' existing opinions.

In the book, the author discusses the Ararat-Urartu relations and Assyria, which played a central role in the fate of Central Asia. Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean basin also followed the influence of these relationships. Therefore, the author viewed these relations and the Ararat-Urartu history from one of the most important sources of the Ancient World, the Bible.

We believe that the author succeeded in creating remarkable research that makes a valuable contribution to both Armenology and Ancient East studies.

Petros Hovhannisian, Dr. Professor
The former Chair of the Department of the Armenian History,
Yerevan State University, (RA)

A Letter to Mr. Bedros M. Tomassian about his Book “Ararat– Urartu throughout the Bible”

Dear Mr. Bedros Tomassian,

With this letter, we express our gratitude to you for the book “Ararat–Urartu Throughout the Bible,” which you donated to us on your visit to the National Prelacy.

The volume is truly a powerful piece of work. As mentioned in the Preface, the Armenian presence in the Bible is a rarely explored field. And, here you go, through your study, you bring the historical truths onto the surface. We consider this monograph a historical study and a valuable contribution to our national issues. It is factual evidence of our people’s presence throughout many centuries in our historic homeland. This reality is being despised and marginalized by those “historians” who have adopted the denial path and seek to harm the Armenians and Armenia. We consider your work valuable and exemplary.

May God bless your writing and its outcomes, expanding the ways and opportunities of doing similar work.

With warm greetings,
With prayers of Archbishop Moushegh Martirosian
Prelate of the Western Diocese of the USA
Los Angeles, CA, (USA)

SUMMARY

This book is a study of historical Armenia’s presence in the Armenian Highland and its people’s role in shaping regional history. The Bible’s Old Testament attests to the Armenians’ existence on their historical homeland under various names; **Ararat** in the story of the Great Flood and the salvation of Noah’s Ark on Mount Ararat, **Land of Ararat** in the book of Isaiah, **The Kingdom of Ararat** in the book of Jeremiah, and **House of Togarmah** in the book of Ezekiel.

The fierce historical struggle between Urartu—also known as The Kingdom of Van, The Kingdom of Ararat, and Assyria during (IX to the VII) BC left significant imprints on the survival of the two Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This struggle led to the notion that it prolonged their existence and survival in the region.

This study also refers to the unmentioned presence of Urartu in the Biblical accounts and its role in shaping regional history. Whether intentionally eliminated or unintentionally, historians have not carefully elucidated this fact, thus leaving a void in the knowledge of understanding the influence of Armenia and the Armenian Highland people on the regional history, including those of Israel and Judah

This book is also essential for those who follow Biblical studies, learning about the historical realities through the Bible.

Armenian Alphabet Transliteration System

Ա ա	Ա ա	Մ մ	Մ մ
Բ բ	Բ բ	Ե ե	Ե ե
Գ գ	Գ գ	Ն ն	Ն ն
Դ ղ	Դ ղ	Շ շ	Շ շ
Ե ե	Ե ե	Ո ո	Ո ո
Զ զ	Զ զ	Չ չ	Չ չ
Է է	Է է	Պ պ	Պ պ
Ը լ	Ը լ	Ջ յ	Ջ յ
Թ թ	Թ թ	Ռ ռ	Ռ ռ
Ժ ժ	Ժ ժ	Ս ս	Ս ս
Ի ի	Ի ի	Վ վ	Վ վ
Լ լ	Լ լ	Տ տ	Տ տ
Խ խ	Խ խ	Ր ռ	Ր ռ
Օ օ	Օ օ	Ց զ	Ց զ
Վ վ	Վ վ	Ի ի	Ի ի
Հ հ	Հ հ	Փ փ	Փ փ
Ձ ձ	Ձ ձ	Ք լ	Ք լ
Ղ ղ	Ղ ղ	Օ օ	Օ օ
Ճ ճ	Ճ ճ	Ֆ ֆ	Ֆ ֆ
		Ո ո	Ո ո

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I want to thank my GOD for His blessings and all the opportunities and goodness bestowed upon me.

I am grateful to Late Prof. Artak Movsisyan, Chair of the Armenian History Department, Yerevan State University (YSU), (RA), for his encouragement and support throughout my research, and reading the manuscript and valuable comments.

Thanks to Dr. Prof. Ashot Melkonyan, Chair of the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences, R.A., for encouragement and support on issues related to the publication of this book.

I am also grateful to my dear wife and life companion, Hrachoohi Tomassian (Dr. Mary-Hrachoohi Boghosian), for encouragement, careful reading, and translation of this work. This work could not have been completed without her detailed translation of this entire monograph from Armenian to English.

Thanks to the historian Mr. Gevorg Nazaryan for his initial vocational translation from Armenian to English. Also, to Mr. Gevorg Gregoryan for proofreading the manuscripts at later stages.

Finally, the author offers his gratitude and utmost appreciation to Dr. Nubar P. Boghos Boghossian, M.D. M.B.Ch.B., Los Angeles, CA (USA), for financing the early translation and publishing of this work. Dr. Boghossian's financial support was for his appreciation for the value of this topic to the history of the world.

With gratitude
Bedros Moses Tomassian

PREFACE

This book introduces the reader to the historical rivalry of Urartu and Assyria between IX to VII centuries BC; its impact on the history of the regional nations, particularly the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Furthermore, it reveals the Armenian Highland's people's role in the region when Urartu—The Kingdom of Van—has governed the Armenian Highland as mentioned in Prophets Joshua, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel's books, the biblical Old Testament.

Urartu is a name of a land. Its first mention in history is older than the establishment of the Kingdom of Urartu itself, the beginning of the IX century BC. The name Urartu goes back to the times of the Hurrians, Urartu's original people, who also lived in Judea and Palestine during the time of Patriarch Abraham and have founded the city of Jerusalem.

In this monograph, **Urartu**, **Kingdom of Ararat**, and **The Kingdom of Van** are used interchangeably, referring to the same kingdom and the same people.

It is necessary to study Armenian history in its broadest scope to understand its role, contribution, and influence on the local, regional, and global civilization throughout the centuries. Such a global view helps to understand the close cultural bonds we, the Armenians, developed with other nations throughout the centuries, including the ancient Middle Eastern people, such as Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, the Jewish people, and the nations who lived in Iran.

This book will address some of the critical events between Urartu and Assyria during the IX to VII centuries BC in four chapters. The chapters consist of many sections, focusing on a specific historical episode or event without chronological order. The overall purpose is to

focus on the influence and relationships of the Armenian Highland's people to the neighboring or regional nations.

Using our engineering ingenuity, we have used maps, tables, and charts throughout this book to clarify and summarize the history of many centuries. The color variations (Urtu- red, Assyrian- blue, Israel- brown, and Judah- green) in the charts and tables are for clarification only.

The use of the term **The Bible** in this book means the **Old Testament**. The name **West** or **western** means the territories to the west of the Armenian Highland and Mesopotamia, referring to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Israel. Also, the term **Highland** means the **Armenian Highland**.

The ancient and medieval history has many peculiar chronologically unaddressed issues, including the kings' coronation years.

In this book, for the coronations of Israeli and Judah's kings, the scholarly literature of the 9th to 6th centuries BC refers to different years. For the chronology of the Assyrian kings' coronation dates, it is according to the most widely accepted chronicles of Assyrian history.¹

There are two basic chronology approaches for the coronation dates of the Kingdom of Van, Biainili,² Urtu, or Ararat: The followers of the first approach use chronological correspondence (synchronized

tables) of Urtu's and Assyria's kings using the exact known dates.³ Whereas the followers of the second approach completely restore the kings' chronology by rounding the dates with approximate accuracy and filling in the dates of the unknown periods.

Both approaches will not affect our presentation of this profound topic since the period of Urtu's kings' chronology-Argishti I and Sardar II-royal dominance years⁴ is well covered by the scholars. In this monograph, we adopted the second approach by following the restored and whole dates of the Kings of Van.

Although the period of the 9th to 6th centuries BC is well studied, as stated above, however, there are few peculiar and unnoticed details about the importance of Urtu and the Armenian Highland's nations' role in the region that many historians have overlooked or eliminated them from their history books. In this monograph, we tried to unveil those details in their proper historical information based on the available sources (Armenian and non-Armenian) to clarify and identify Urtu's role in the history of the region and the history of the Armenian nations, who lived in the Armenian Highland on the history of the area.

¹ See, for example, "The Assyrian King List-Livius." www.Livius.org (we must note that even here, many scholars have different opinions on the exact years of reign; however, this is unessential to our study.)

² The people of Urtu referred to themselves as Biaina or Bianili since the cuneiform inscriptions used in Urtu did not have the "v" sound, and instead, a cuneiform symbol representing the sound "b" was recorded.

³ Salvini M., *History, and Culture of the Urtians*. Darmstadt, 1995, p. 207; Zimansky P. E., *Ecology, and Empire: The Structure of the Urtian State*, Chicago, 1985, p. 99.

⁴ *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyun*, Vol. 1. p. 920-921; *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyan Krestomatia*, Vol. 1. p. 513.

CHAPTER 1

Urartu's Role in History

During the first half of the 9th century BC, a kingdom was formed in the Armenian Highland. In Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, it was called **Urartu**, and in the Bible, it was referred to as **Ararat**.⁵

The Biblical Old Testament references **Urartu** and the **Armenian Highland** in seven places using different names: In Genesis (8:4) in the Great Flood as **mountains of Ararat**, in Kings II (19:37) as **Land of Ararat**, in Tobit⁶ (1:24) as **mountains of Ararat**, in Isaiah (37:36–38) as **Land of Ararat**, where the two patricide brothers of the Assyrian king Sennacherib fled, in Jeremiah (51:27) as **Ararat**, where the **Kingdom of Ararat** was amongst those kingdoms called upon to fight Babylon in 590 BC, and in the Book of Ezekiel in two places (27:14) and (38:6), where the **Kingdom of**

⁵. In the old translations and interpretations of the Bible, the name Ararat was referred to as Armenia or Hayk-the Armenian name of Armenia (Ref. Ingilizian Vahan, *Hayastan Surb Grkin Mech*, p 5–21).

⁶. The Book of Tobit is a Book of scriptures that are part of the Catholic and Orthodox biblical canon.

Ararat referred to as the **House of Togarmah**.

In historical references, Ararat-Urartu was called in two other names: **Biainili**, this is how the kings of Urartu named their homeland in local (Uartian or Biennialian) cuneiform inscriptions, and **Nairi**, this is how the kings of Urartu referenced their land in cuneiform inscriptions written in the Assyrian language.

Urtians called their country **Biaina** or **Bianili** and not **Viaina** or **Vianili** because the Urtian cuneiform inscriptions did not have the letter sound **V**; therefore, they used the letter sound **B** instead. Let us quote from Nicholas Adontz on this topic:

*"It is indisputable that the Urtians, to describe their country in their inscriptions, did not use any other name, except the name Biaini. The Assyrians used the names Urartu and Nairi."*⁷

Jack Finegan has also talked about the different naming of Urartu, referencing the cuneiform inscriptions of Ishpuini (825–810 BC), the fourth king of Urartu. The following is an excerpt from Jack Finegan's book:

*"In Assyrian, Ishpuini calls himself the King of the country of Nairi, but in Urtian, the King of the country of Biaini; the latter was the Urtian name of the country. In biblical references, the name Urartu is indicated as Ararat (Gen.8:4; 2 Kings 19:37; Isa. 37:38; Jer. 51:27)."*⁸

From the 9th to the first half of the 4th century BC, in Assyrian

and Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions, **Armenia** is called **Urartu**.⁹

The last time **Armenians** were named **Urtians** was in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Persian–Achaemenid King Artaxerxes II (404–359 BC), written in the Babylonian language.

In the scholarly literature, historians refer to the **Kingdom of Van** or **Urartu** as the **Kingdom of Ararat**, or the **Vanic Kingdom**, and **Khaldian (Khaldini) Kingdom**.

The area around **Lake Van**¹⁰ homed **Urartu's** mainland, also known as **The Kingdom of Van** or the **Vanic Kingdom**, with its earlier capital being **Arzashkun**. During the reign of King Arame, Assyria's King Shalmaneser III attacked Arzashkun in 857 BC. Around 832 BC, King Sarduri I of Urartu moved the capital city from **Arzashkun** to **Tushpa-Van**. Tushpa-Van was erected on the eastern shores of Lake Van, which became the heart of Urartu's kingdom and its central city. The chosen location of Urartu's new capital city, Tushpa-Van¹¹, was to repel Assyria's attacks. The Vanic kingdom was named after its capital city Van, just like the **Kingdom of Babylon** was named after its capital city **Babylon**.

Urartu also encompassed the area around Mount **Ararat**, the region's highest mountain. Mount Ararat is the tallest twin peak

⁹ Kent R. G., *Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, Parts I–III, p. 121–124, p. 171; Nalbandyan G., *Dareh Vshnaspi Behistunyan ardzanagrutyun*, p. 8, p. 14–15; Dandamaev M. A., *Klinopisnie dannie ob armyanax*, p. 102–106; Movsisyan A., *Srbazan Lernashkharhe*, p. 55–65.

¹⁰ Lake Van is the deepest amongst the three lakes of the Armenian Highland; Lake Sevan and Lake Urmia. Lake Urmia was also known as the Inner Sea of Nairi; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

¹¹ Tushpa (Tosp), which later became known as Van or Biaina in the cuneiform inscriptions of Urartu, is located east of Lake Van in the Van Province of present-day Turkey.

⁷ Adontz Nicholas, *Hayastani Patmutyun*, p. 269.

⁸ Finegan Jack, *Archaeological History of the Ancient Middle East*, p. 382.

mountain of the Armenian Highland. Armenians named the two peaks of this mountain **Greater Masis** or **Masis** (5,165 meters above sea level) and **Lesser Masis** or **Sis** (3,925 meters above sea level). In the Bible, **Ararat** is the mountain where Noah's Ark has rested.

Before forming the State of Urartu, **Lake Van** was known as **Lake Nairi** or **Sea of Nairi**, and the Urartian people were called **Nairian** people.

Urartu was also called the **Khaldian Kingdom** after its chief God **Khaldi**¹². It was a custom in ancient times to name countries and nations by their leading worshiped deity names. For example, Assyria and the Assyrians were called after their God **Assur**¹³, the chief deity of Assyria.

As for the early period of Urartu's history, before its formation as a potent State in the 9th century BC, the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions have recorded Urartu under the names of **Uratr** (**U-ra-tri**) and **Uruatri** (**U-ru-a-tri**). In the 13th century BC, a local of eight tribes named **Uruatri** existed in the Armenian Highland, stretching between **Lake Van** basins toward East to **Lake Urmia**. The Assyrian King Shalmaneser I (1273–1244 BC) launched a military campaign against them and recorded the following in his cuneiform inscription:

"In my year of enthronement, the Uruatrians rebelled against me. I prayed to Assur and the great gods, my lords. I

¹². Khaldi or Haldi was the chief god of Ararat (Urartu). Of all gods of the Ararat pantheon most inscriptions are dedicated to him (Khaldi). He is portrayed as a man standing on a lion. Khaldi was a warrior god whom the kings of Urartu would pray to for victories in battle.

¹³. Assur was considered the highest god in the Assyrian pantheon and the protector of the Assyrian state. In Mesopotamian mythology, Assur was the equivalent of Babylonian Marduk.

*organized the assembly of my army and marched up to their resilient mountains. Himme, Uatgun, Mashgun, Salua, Halilia, Luha, Nilipahrui, and Zingun, their eight countries and their mighty powers, I prevailed I destroyed their 51 cities, burned their trophies, their properties I confiscated. In three days, I restrained all Uruatrians at the feet of my Lord Assur. I captured their talented offspring to serve me and to work for me. I imposed heavy mountainous taxes on them forever."*¹⁴

As mentioned above, Urartu or its old name Uruatri was not the people's national name in that region. Assyria gave these two names to that part of the Armenian Highland.

Assyria's King Shalmaneser I invasions on the Uruatrian Union caused heavy damages and dissolved the Union, leading to a stronger Union known as **Nairi**. Michael Roaf refers to **Uruatri** as the **Kingdom of Uruatri**. We insert the following excerpt:

*"To the north, Shalmaneser I (1273–1244) defeated the kingdom of Uruadri, mentioned in inscriptions for the first time. Uruadri, later known as Urartu, which has survived in a corrupted form in the name of Mount Ararat, proved to be a constant thorn in the side of Assyria."*¹⁵

Thus, the continuous invasions of Assyria on Uruatri's successor **Nairi** in the Armenian Highland raised the urgency for the unification of the Nairian Armenian tribes and the establishment of the **State of Urartu**. The Assyrians were fearful of

¹⁴. Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyan *Krestomatia*, Vol. 1, p. 14.

¹⁵. Roaf, Michael, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near-East*, p. 149.

Nairi's becoming a powerful state threatening Assyria's existence in the region; therefore, they increased military incursions on Nairi to destroy Nairi's rising power. However, history showed that Assyrians were utterly mistaken; Nairi did survive and later transformed into the powerful **State of Urartu**.

In the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions of 859 BC, Urartu's king is named **Arame** or **Aramu**. Arame unified the separate principalities of the Armenian Highland around his kingdom. The territory governed by King Arame was the entire basins of Lake Van and the area extending to the north, encompassing the fertile land of the upper Euphrates River. He became the powerful king in the Armenian Highland who withstood against the invasions of the mighty Assyrians, repelling the armies and protecting the inhabitants of his kingdom from the destructive attacks of Assyria.

Urartu became a powerful state closely neighboring Assyria and continued its existence for about three centuries, from around 870 BC to the 7th century BC. Throughout Urartu's history, its thirteen Kings became contemporaneous to twenty Kings of Assyria; see Table 8 at the end of the book. In three centuries, Assyria and Urartu had many prolonged military expeditions. One should underline here that Assyria was the initiator of the hostilities, most of the time, while Urartu was the responder; however, there were also times where Urartu was the attacker on Assyria.

After the death of Urartu's King Ishpuini, his son Menua ruled Urartu. Scholars refer to the name Menua as originating from the Armenian word **Min** or **Miaynag**. Rafael Ishkhanyan described this meaning as:

"The name Menua is etymologically explained in Armenian

*from the native root words Men or Min meaning The One, or Unique."*¹⁶

Urartu has become a powerful Empire during its King Menua (810–786 BC). Its power continued for nearly 80 years during his successors Argishti I, Sarduri II, and Rusa I. For the borders of this Empire, see the maps presented at the end of the book. Map 2 is about Argishti I's victorious military campaigns, and Map 4 is about the borders of the Kingdom of Van during the reign of Sarduri II. Map 5 is about the domain of the Kingdom of Van during the reign of Rusa I. Accordingly, Assyria, from the death of Shalmaneser III in 824 BC until the reign of King Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 BC, for nearly 80 years, remained under the influence of the rising power of Urartu—the Kingdom of Van.

In its three centuries of existence in the heart of the Armenian Highland, Urartu played a significant role in shaping the history of the people living in that entire region. Its power had opposed Assyria's invasions and expansion toward the West, weakening Assyria's influence on Syria, Palestine, and Judea. This study will also discuss the events leading to the appeal of the two Biblical Prophets, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, to the Armenian Highland people to help fight Assyria and Babylonia. The subsequent chapters of this book will discuss these events and their outcomes.

The historical power struggle between Urartu and Assyria in the region had also enabled the Indo-European people to continue their migration from Europe to Asia without external subjugation from Assyria.¹⁷ In doing so, Urartu prevented the Semites of Assyria and Babylonia from further penetration to the north toward Asia

¹⁶ Ishkhanyan Rafael, *Patkerazard patmutyun hayots*, Book 1, p. 61.

¹⁷ Karapetyan Gurgun, *Hayots Patmutyan Urvagtses*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 7.

Minor. Nicholas Adontz depicted all in the excerpt below:

“Urartu had accomplished such a mission that it should be valued accordingly. It closed the path of Semitic expansion toward Armenian Highland and Asia Minor. Whatever the Assyrian civilization values are, one should not hide that Assyria does not have human consciousness, which is essential to civilization. The cruelty of Assyrian Kings was fictional.

They even did not hold themselves accountable to those gruesome proclamations with the utmost boastfulness and without regard, which they made throughout their inscriptions. Their inscriptions often included passages like “frenzied dog and like a wild bull” when invading the neighboring countries. With utmost pathetic disgust, they describe their horrific acts during their invasions over the subjugated countries; from destruction, burning of towns and crop fields, massacring inhabitants, burning the young men and women alive, chopping off hands, fingers, ears, butchering and peeling the skin of their victims’ flesh and hanging them on the town-walls, erecting pyramidal towers from decapitated heads and surrounding them with impaled victims. In villages, ending the cheerful songs and replacing them with wild donkeys and other wild animals, etc.”¹⁸

Note, the Urartu–Assyria struggle led to the Indo-Europeans’ and the Semites’ fight, which ended in the 7th and 6th centuries BC with the Semites’ defeat during the fall of Assyria and Babylon in 605 BC and 539 BC.

¹⁸. Adontz N., *Hayastani Patmutyun* p. 365.

The three centuries-long animosities and aggressions of Assyria and Urartu led to the consumption of Assyria’s military potential and its inability to resist the subsequent incursions of other nations in the region. Among such nations were the Medes,¹⁹ the Scythians,²⁰ the Cimmerians,²¹ and the Persians,²² who emerged as new nations.

In the end, during the three centuries, Urartu waged a fierce struggle against Assyria until its final destruction, in 612 BC.

In distress to the Universal Historiography, to this date, no wide-scale excavations are allowed in the central parts of the region around Lake Van. Neither will there be in the foreseeable future. Therefore, information about Urartu—the Kingdom of Van’s ancient history will remain unknown for as long as non-Armenian settlers occupy the territory.

¹⁹. The Medes were an ancient Iranian people who lived in an area known as Media and spoke a northwestern Iranian language referred to as the Median language. Their arrival to the region is associated with the first wave of Iranian tribes in the late 2nd millennium BC.

²⁰. The Scythians were ancient Indo-European people of horse-riding nomadic pastoralists who dominated the Pontic-Caspian steppe, known as Scythia.

²¹. The Cimmerians were ancient equestrian nomads of Indo-European origin living north of the Caucasus and Sea of Azov as early as 1300 BC until they were driven southward by the Scythians; see Map 2 at the end of the Book.

²². The Persian people’s origin is traced to the ancient Iranian people of the Indo-Iranian branch of the broader Indo-European people. The term “Persian” translates to “from Persis,” a region north of the Persian Gulf, located in Pars, Iran.

CHAPTER 2

The Biblical Kingdoms of Israel and Judah

The Bible or the Holy Book of Life contains the principles of Judaism and Christianity, and it is of two main parts: The Old Testament (39 books) and the New Testament (27 books). The Old Testament is about God's creation and the origin of humankind, and it is an excellent resource on the ancient history and the political developments of the Jewish people. The Bible also provides information on the Unified Jewish Kingdom—known as the Jewish United Monarchy; their kings were: Saul, David, King Solomon, and the Jewish United Monarchy's successors—the two Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The New Testament includes the works of the *Four Gospels* about the teachings and life of Jesus Christ; the narratives of the Apostles' ministries in the early church, known as the *Acts of the Apostles*, twenty-one letters called the Epistles and the *Book of Revelation*.

The Biblical Old Testament is an essential source of information on the Middle East people's history, including the Armenians and Jews, who coexisted in the region through a shared history of survival. It also covers the historical period of the 9th–6th century BC, the subject of our current study. This period is known for conflicts between Assyria and Urartu and Assyria's influence on the nations' histories living in the region, including the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the nations of the Armenian Highland. As we shall see, due to these conflicts, in the end, Israel became the victim of Assyria, while Judah, at a much later time, became the victim of Babylon.

As mentioned in the Preface of this book, for the IX–VI centuries, historians' common practice has been to record different coronation dates for the kings of Israel and Judah. Table 9, at the end of the book, represents the coronation dates of these kings and the coronation dates of kings of Assyria.

During (10th–8th BC), two Jewish kingdoms coexisted; the Kingdom of Israel, whose first capital city was Shechem, later became Samaria.²³ The other was the Kingdom of Judah, with its capital city being Jerusalem. Map 3 at the end of this book shows the borders of these two kingdoms, where we see that the Kingdom of Israel is larger than the Kingdom of Judah.

During the reign of King Solomon the Wise (961–922 or 965–

²³. Shechem was a Canaanite city mentioned in the Amarna letters and is mentioned in the Bible as an Israelite city of the tribe of Manasseh and the first capital of the Kingdom of Israel. Samaria is now identified with the site of Tell Balata in the West Bank; see Map 3. King Omri established Samaria (885 or 880–874 BC) on the top of the hill, surrounded by mountains. Due to its naturally fortified position, Samaria became an inaccessible mountainous fortress able to push back many Assyrian assaults.

931 BC),²⁴ the United Jewish Kingdom, also known as the Jewish United Monarchy, was at its First Golden Age. King Solomon the Wise erected the temple of Jerusalem and turned his kingdom into a small Empire with its borders incorporating parts of present-day Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. However, after his death, strifes and divisions between the Jewish people separated the United Monarchy into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah.

Although the United Monarchy was a rich and sufficiently powerful kingdom; however, its people were dissatisfied with the imposed heavy taxes, becoming the prime cause for the United Monarchy to split in two. After King Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam (931–913 BC) sat on the throne. People turned to Rehoboam, asking to relieve them from taxes, but he refused. This event became the main reason for the ten Jewish tribes in the north to rebel, separating themselves from the south and establishing a kingdom known as the Kingdom of Israel, also known as the Northern Kingdom, or the Kingdom of Samaria. Jeroboam I (926–909 BC) became Israel's first king, ruling from the capital Shechem, located in Samaria's southeast, where the royal coronation occurred.²⁵ In the South, King Rehoboam continued ruling from the capital Jerusalem. The Jewish tribes of Judea and Benjamin formed the southern kingdom known as the Kingdom of Judah. The Kings of Judah were the descendants of King David, and therefore, the Bible has referred to them as God's Chosen Nation.

Geographically, these two Jewish Kingdoms (Israel and Judah) were neighbors to each other. The distance between their capitals, Jerusalem and Samaria, was approximately 30 miles (48

²⁴ Wiseman J. D., *Illustrations from Biblical Archaeology*, p. 53.

²⁵ Kenyon Kathleen, *Royal Cities of the Old Testament*, p. 72.

kilometers). The two kingdoms coexisted for two centuries, and most of the time, they were hostile toward each other. The Bible references many passages about the wars that occurred between the two kingdoms. The following is an excerpt from the book titled *The Bible as History* by Werner Keller:

*"There was no harmony between Judah and Israel. They shed each other's blood in feud after feud. Time and again, fighting broke out on the question of frontiers."*²⁶

We should elucidate here that historically, whenever two Kingdoms of the same nation coexisted side-by-side in the same geographic region, it meant a major political weakness and division. Israel and Judah had a similar situation. Therefore, taking advantage, Assyria imposed its power and controlled both Israel and Judah to eliminate their existence from the region; however, prolonged wars between Urartu and Assyria prevented that from happening. The conflicts between Urartu and Assyria and their influences on Israel and Judah are also the subject of our study, which we will discuss in this book's subsequent pages.

The Southern Kingdom's capital, Jerusalem, had existed since 1800 BC as a Jebusite fortress.²⁷ Historically, the Jebusites were part of the Hurrian tribes. The Holman Dictionary stated:

*"The name Jebusite appears to be more Hurrian than Semitic."*²⁸

In ancient times, the city of Jerusalem was called Saghem or Salem (*Bible*, Genesis 14:18, and Josiah 15:63). When the Benjamin tribe, one of the 12 Jewish tribes, conquered Jerusalem, the Hurrian

Jebusites did not leave the city. The Bible references this historical fact as:

*"21 But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day."*²⁹

Thus, Jerusalem was a Jebusite fortress; established by the **Hurrians** (in history also known as **Khurians**), who were among the ancient people of the Armenian Highland and one of the prominent people of the Kingdom of Urartu. The central Hurrian homeland spanned from the Taurus Mountains, from Carchemish (currently in Turkey near Syria's borders) to Lake Van's shores. The Hurrians existed in the territories of present-day Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Israel.

According to the scholars, the Urartian language was the closest to the Hurrian language. Therefore, some scholars have referred to the Urartian language as the **new Hurrian** language. Arnold Toynbee called the Urartians as the **grandchildren of Hurrians**, noting:

*"Urartians or Khaldians, who arose in the first millennium BC, were Hurrians' grandchildren, those who remained in their original homeland. In the 9th century BC, the small Hurro-Urartian states became united and formed a kingdom that chose their capital city Tushpa located on the eastern shores of Lake Van."*³⁰

Following Arnold Toynbee's works, we notice that he refers to the Khaldians, Hurrians, and Urartians as the same nation. Urartu

²⁶. Keller Werner, *The Bible as History*, p. 228.

²⁷. *Astvatsashnchi Hanragitaran*, p. 261.

²⁸. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 874.

²⁹. *Bible*, Book of Judges 1:21.

³⁰. Toynbee Arnold, *Tarikh Al-Basharyet* Vol. 1, p. 127.

was also named the Khaldian Kingdom after Urartu's chief deity—Khaldi—as noted in Chapter 1.

As for the construction of the city of Jerusalem, the following is an excerpt from Nerses Virabian's work:

"Thus, more than 5,000 years ago, through the migration of our ancestors toward the south, erected the cities of Ur³¹ and Uruk,³² and let me add, that the Hurrian built the city of Jerusalem whose name has been brought forward from the name Uru Salem."³³

Therefore, the Hurrian Jebusites of the Armenian ancestors have erected Jerusalem one millennium before the establishment of the Kingdom of Urartu.

Here, it is vital to quote from the Arab historians who confirms that the Hurrian Jebusites are the ones who erected Jerusalem. Here is an excerpt of what they wrote:

"David chose Jerusalem to become the capital of the area inhabited by the Hebrews. The Jebusites ruled the city, which was the Hurrian tribe. David captured Jerusalem by a trick; his Commander Joab invaded the city through a water canal that supplied the city. After the capture, he called it

³¹. Ur was an important Sumerian city-state in ancient Mesopotamia located at the site of modern Tell al-Muqayyar. Ur was situated about 225 km southeast of Babylon, now situated south of the Euphrates River on its right bank, 16 km from Nasiriyah; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

³². Uruk was an ancient Sumerian city in Mesopotamia, on the Euphrates River and north-west of Ur. It is the modern Tell al Warka in southern Iraq; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

³³. Virabian Nerses, *Huy Zhoghovurdi Tsakumen*, p. 145.

*David's City and fortified it."*³⁴

The Bible also records the capture of Jerusalem by King David.³⁵

John Ahmaranian, in his book,³⁶ concluded that Patriarch Abraham was Hurrian, and the city of Ur is the city of Urfa, and not the city in southern Mesopotamia, which is also known as Ur. The city of Urfa is on a field eighty kilometers east of the Euphrates River in present-day Turkey. Urfa in Armenian is known as Urha,³⁷ in Arabic Al-Ruha, in Greek Edessa, and in Kurdish is Riha.

Holman Dictionary refers to the biblical Ur as Urfa or Urartu. Here is an excerpt:

*"Other sites have been proposed for the biblical Ur, such as Urartu (Turkey) or Urfa (northwest of Haran³⁸)."*³⁹

The author of the above excerpt referred to Urartu as Turkey (only) instead of saying the Republic of Armenia and Turkey. As we know, at least three of the main cities of Urartu, Erebuni⁴⁰—the

³⁴. AL-Ahmad Sami Saeed and Jamal Rashid Ahmad, *Tarikh Al-Sharq Al-Adhna Al-Qadim*, p. 306.

³⁵. Bible, 2 Kings, 5:6-7.

³⁶. Ahmaranian John, *The Hurro-Armenian Origins of Abraham*, 2004.

³⁷. Urha or Ur-huy- Ur-hay (Urfa) is considered a holy place for the Armenians since the Armenian letters were invented there.

³⁸. Haran is an Assyrian name of the Hurrian major ancient city in Upper Mesopotamia whose ruins lie within present-day Turkey, about 40 km southeast of Urfa. Haran was a place where Patriarch Abraham temporarily settled with his father Terah; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

³⁹. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 1640.

⁴⁰. Erebuni Fortress, also known as Arin Berd; meaning (in Armenian) the "Fortress of Blood," is a fortified city from the ancient Kingdom of Urartu located in what is present-day Yerevan, the capital of the Republic of Armenia.

ancient name of the current capital Yerevan of the Republic of Armenia, the Teishebaini,⁴¹ and Argishtikhinili,⁴² are in the present-day Republic of Armenia. Only Tushpa-Van and Arzashkun, the two capital cities of Urartu, are in present-day Turkey. Therefore, it would be more accurate for historians when referring to Urartu's location, not to mention only in Turkey, but to indicate "the present-day Republic of Armenia and Turkey."

Chart 1 shows a comparative period of history (X–VI BC) of Urartu, Assyria, Israel, and Judah in a horizontal bar chart at the end of the book. In this chart, it is possible to see that Assyria existed way before Urartu and the Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The beginning of Urartu's existence was 870 BC. The Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah began in 922 BC, after the death of Solomon the Wise, when the United Monarchy split into two kingdoms. Here in this chart, we also note that Assyria's history ended in 605 BC, Urartu's and Judah's history ended around the same time, the end of the 6th century BC. In comparison to Israel's fall, this happened at a much earlier time (721 BC).

It was one of several fortresses built along the northern Urartian border and was an important political, economic and cultural center of the vast kingdom; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

⁴¹. Teishebaini, was the central city of Urartu's Transcaucasia provinces. It is presently located near the modern city of Yerevan in the Republic of Armenia. Rusa II built Teishebaini in the first half of the 7th century BC to protect the eastern borders of Urartu. The city was named after Urartu's god of war, Teisheba; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

⁴². Argishtikhinili was a town in the ancient Kingdom of Urartu, established during the expansion of Urartu in the Transcaucasia under king Argishti I and named in his honor. The ruins of the Argishtikhinili fortifications are found 15 km to the southwest of the present-day town of Armavir, in the Republic of Armenia; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

CHAPTER 3

The Conflict's Impact on Israel and Judah

This chapter focuses on the impact of the Urartu–Assyria conflict on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah and how this conflict helped shape the existence and survival of these two Jewish Kingdoms.

During the reign of Assyria's king Adad-Nirari II (912–891 BC), Assyria entered its history's third and final stage. This stage spanned almost three centuries (IX–VII), which ended with the destruction of its renowned capital Nineveh,⁴³ in 612 BC, by the Babylonians, the Medes, and the Armenians. To learn more about the Armenian participation in Nineveh's destruction, refer to my earlier book.⁴⁴

In this period, Assyria became a powerful country, and it peaked in its growth. Its kings left a remarkable seal on the Middle East's ancient history. Assyria's existence and rise occurred parallel to that of Urartu, the Kingdom of Van, making Urartu

⁴³. Nineveh was the most populous city of the ancient Assyrian Empire, located on the east bank of the River Tigris. Its ruins are near the modern-day major city of Mosul in the Ninawa Governorate of nowadays Iraq.

⁴⁴. Tomassian Bedros, *Haykakan Lernashkharhe yev Mijagetk*, p. 107–108.

contemporaneous to Assyria; see Chart 2, at the end of the book. Urartu and Assyria's coexistence in the region was the cause for their fierce battles against each other, whose reflections are recorded in the Biblical Old Testament.

Both Assyria and Urartu were geographically neighboring and competitive, thus the fierce struggle between them. Usually, Assyria was the initiator of most hostility and invasions, while Urartu was the defender and the responder. However, there were also times when Urartu was the invader. The excerpt below is from Nicholas Adontz highlighting the situation:

"Urartu starts a new era in the Armenian Highland. To expand its borders, it stands head to head with Assyrian imperialism. A fierce struggle begins without stop, until the last days of the two rival's existence, with the battle line running from the Euphrates to the Lesser Zab,⁴⁵ forming a long, intermediate barrier that each side wanted to overcome. The competition between the two archenemies forms a historical spectrum spanning over three centuries, on which the fate of their military fortune lies."⁴⁶

It is worth emphasizing that all the events presented and referenced in this chapter have Biblical recordings in the Old Testament. However, we found no mention of Urartu or the Kingdom of Ararat in the Bible, although Urartu, in this period, played a significant role in shaping the history of the region. In this chapter, we will explain Urartu's role in the area.

⁴⁵. Lesser Zab is a tributary to the Tigris River, also known as Little Zab or Lower Zab, originates in Iran and joins the Tigris River in Iraq. It is approximately 402 km long.

⁴⁶. Adontz N., *Hayastani Patmutyun* p. 68.

I.

Assyria Under the Glory of Urartu

During his long reign years, the renowned Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (859–824 BC) launched 32 military expeditions, five of which were against the neighboring Armenian Highland and the new Kingdom of Van–Urartu—as the Assyrians called it. King Shalmaneser III considered Urartu's prosperity in the region intolerable and a considerable threat to Assyria's expansion. Thus, he targeted his efforts toward destructing and eliminating Urartu. However, Shalmaneser III's efforts remained unsuccessful.

Assyria's aggression toward its neighboring Urartu reduced the frequency of its invasions toward other directions. In the West, Shalmaneser III organized raids, in two of which he faced resistance from several local Kings, among them the King of Israel. Shalmaneser III, after protecting his country from the neighboring Urartu, in 853 BC, raided the West and faced resistance from combined forces of twelve local Kings, one of the kings was King Ahab (874–853 BC) of Israel; see Table 9, at the end of the book. Shalmaneser III's second invasion on the West was in 841 BC, laying siege on Damascus and forcing King Jehu of Israel (852–841 BC) to pay tribute.

Whenever Assyria had the power to conquer Syria, it affected Israel and Judah as well. Whenever Assyria was engaged in heavy battles with Urartu or its allies, it could not defeat the West; thus, relieving Israel and Judah from destruction. Table 1 below summarizes the war dates relevant to this study, between Urartu and Assyria, and the dates of Assyria's raids on the West during

(860–710 BC). From Table 1, it is clear, that in general, Assyria's military invasions on the West occurred during the years when Assyria was not engaged in wars with Ararat–Urartu.

Table 1

Wars dates of Urartu and Assyria, and Assyria's raids on the West

WARS BETWEEN URARTU AND ASSYRIA (BC)	ASSYRIAN MILITARY INVASIONS ON THE WEST (BC)
859-857	
	853
	849-848
	845
844	
	841
	838
833-832	
830-828	
823	
	806
781-774	
753	
743-742	
	743-738
735	
	734-732
	725-721
714	

West was the region from the Euphrates River shores to the Mediterranean Sea shores, covering today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Israel, and part of Egypt. West was also the major trade route, and the strategic path for all trades from China and India, passing through Iran, would end. The rivalry between Assyria and the Kingdom of Van–Urartu–was to capture the West to control the rich Mediterranean ports and trade routes from India and China.

Assyria was getting feeble because of its fights on multiple

fronts simultaneously; therefore, for thirty-two years (837–806 BC), it was unable to launch military invasions on the West. An excerpt from Emil Kraeling notes the following on this issue:

*“In 838 B.C., Shalmaneser again campaigned in Syria and took four of Hazael's fortress cities. For the remaining fourteen years of his reign, he did not venture into Syria, and his son Shamshi Adad V (823–810 B.C.) did not do so either. Under the four-year regency of Queen Semiramis (810–806 B.C.), there was likewise inaction in the Assyrian quarter. Hazael of Damascus was able to rebuild his power, and now turned once again against Israel.”*⁴⁷

During King Shalmaneser III's reign, many significant historical events occurred, including the appearance of new nations in the region. For the first time in the history of the Middle East, Assyria was fighting against two of these new nations, the Persians from the area along the Zagros Mountains,⁴⁸ within the territory of Parsua⁴⁹ (844 BC), and the Medes, who lived in the part of present-day Hamadan region⁵⁰ in Iran (836 BC). These two nations' presence in the area was the reason that kept Assyria away from the West for a short time.

Simultaneously, in this period, the struggle between Assyria and Urartu intensified during Urartu's King Sarduri I (835–825 BC),

⁴⁷. Kraeling G., Emile, *Bible Atlas*, p. 288.

⁴⁸. Zagros Mountains are the most extensive mountain range in Iran and Iraq. With a total length of 1500 km and more than 242 km wide.

⁴⁹. Parsua was an ancient country in the northwestern part of Iran, located near Lake Urmia in central Zagros: see Map 4.

⁵⁰. Hamadan province is one of the provinces of Iran, with its center Hamadan city.

one of Urartu's first King, Arame's successor. The battles between Sarduri I and Shalmaneser III continued, where each side attempted to capture many important trade routes of the West. Harry Saggs, in this excerpt, presents Urartu as a competitor empire to Assyria. Therefore, he writes:

*"Each of these empires competed to control the main trade routes; the first is the route from Syria to Asia Minor, and the second, the route from India and China through Iran. Subsequently, the rest of Shalmansar invasions involved indecisive clashes with Urartu troops."*⁵¹

Therefore, Shalmaneser III's battles with Urartu prevented him from launching new and massive invasions toward the West, including Syria, Israel, and Judah.

Sarduri I opened a new front in northern Syria, encouraging the Hittites⁵² to rise against Assyria. It is worth stating that the Hittites considered themselves kindred of Urartu and a neighbor to the Armenian Highland people. Therefore, the Hittites' cooperation with Ararat-Urartu developed always aiming toward suppressing the imperialistic policies of Assyria. During this period, the territories of Syria, between Aleppo and Damascus, were called Hatti, or Neo-Hittite or Syrio-Hittite, which meant that the Hittites

⁵¹. Saggs Harry, *Azamat Babal*, p. 116.

⁵². The Hittites established a kingdom centered at Hattusa on the central Anatolian Plateau in the 18th century BC. The Hittite Empire reached its height around 1285 BC, encompassing a large part of Anatolia, northwest Syria, and eastward into upper Mesopotamia. After 1200 BC, the empire disintegrated into several independent "Neo-Hittite" city-states, some surviving until the 8th century BC. The Hittites are believed to be the children of Heth mentioned in the Bible.

influenced and ruled those regions.

Shalmaneser III forcefully suppressed the Hittite uprising. Afterward, in 830 BC, he moved with his army toward Urartu. The conflicts between the two powers continued until 828 BC, without a decisive victory of either side; see Table 1 above. The excerpt below is from the Assyrian General Dayan-Assur, describing his view of the outcome of this battle:

*"I reached up to the fortresses of the people of Urartu. I destroyed their cities and burned them."*⁵³

The description in this excerpt cannot be accurate since Assyria could not suffocate Urartu, the emerging new State in the Armenian Highland. In the years to come, Urartu—the Kingdom of Van—proved to have sufficient power to maintain its existence in the region against the wishes of Assyria. Furthermore, in the following century, it took Assyria under its glory, providing a peaceful period to Israel and Judah and other small western kingdoms in the region and protecting them from Assyria's invasions.

When referencing Shalmaneser III's military expeditions, the excerpt below is from Mark Chahin, who notes:

*"In spite of approximately 50 years of continuous warfare. The limits of the Assyrian Empire on the death of Shalmaneser III in 824 did not extend beyond Carchemish"*⁵⁴

⁵³. Kasuni Yeghia, *Nakhahaykakan Hayastan*, p. 263.

⁵⁴. Carchemish was an ancient city-state located in what is now southern Turkey, along the border with Syria. Carchemish laid on the west bank of the Euphrates River near the modern town of Jarabulus, northern Syria, and southeast of Gaziantep, Turkey. It commanded a strategic crossing of the

on the Euphrates in the west and the Zagros mountains in the east. The 'conquests' in the north, of which Shalmaneser frequently boasts, were all short-lived, and not one of the Urartian territories which were overrun became part of his Empire in any real sense. Although he was more successful in Naharin⁵⁵ (northern Syria), his ruinous wars in Palestine, Phoenicia, Cilicia, and Babylonia, and the economic hardships suffered by the Assyrian people, in consequence, brought about disastrous riots in the cities."⁵⁶

During Shalmaneser III's reign, Assyria's military invasions deteriorated the country from within, which led to inner uproar and rivalry. He did not have a decisive victory against Urartu; his army was feeble and unable to record a noticeable triumph in the West; as we recall, he failed to defeat the Aramaic king Hazal of Damascus.

It is possible to say that Assyria did not enjoy long peaceful years with Urartu. Soon, a palace coup erupted against Shalmaneser III by his eldest son Assur-Danin-Pal. The uprising's main motive was his younger son Shamshi-Adad's appointment to the throne as his successor.

The palace revolt led to civil unrest, which continued until 822 BC, and ended with the victory of Shamshi-Adad. Shamshi-Adad succeeded his father, Shalmaneser III, who passed away

during the years of Assyria's civil unrest. While Assyria was occupied with its internal affairs, King Sarduri I of Urartu took the opportunity to strengthen the newly established kingdom in the Armenian Highland. (Note: this is the kingdom, which was also known *Kingdom of Van or Biaina* as in the local inscriptions, *Ararat* as it was recorded in the Bible, and *Urartu* as Assyria called it).

In this period, Urartu became the renowned State of the Armenian Highland, and its King Sarduri I (835–825 BC) moved the capital from Arzashkun to Tushpa-Van.

After the death of King Shamshi-Adad V (822–811 BC), his teenage son Adad-Nirari III occupied the throne of Assyria. Adad-Nirari was a minor, unable to govern the State; thus, as a guardian, his Babylonian step-mother Shammuramat or Semiramis reigned the country until 806 BC. Contrary to the mythical story of Shammuramat and the Armenian King *Ara the Beautiful*, one must say that Shammuramat or Semiramis reigned Assyria for only five years when Assyria was at its weakest. The Assyrian inscriptions of Qalaat Sharqat (Assur)⁵⁷ bore the name of Shammuramat. It stated:

*"Stele of Sammuramat, queen (Lit. Palace woman) of Shamshi-Adad, king of the universe, king of Assyria, mother of Adad-Nirari, king of the universe, king of Assyria, daughter-in-law of Shalmaneser, king of the four regions (of the world)."*⁵⁸

Euphrates River for caravans engaged in the region; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

⁵⁵. Naharin was one of the names of the Kingdom of Mitanni, which was also recorded in the inscription of the New Kingdom of Egypt during the 18th Dynasty.

⁵⁶. Chahin Mark, *The Kingdom of Armenia*, p. 70.

⁵⁷. Qalat Sharqat or Assur is the archaeological site of ancient Assyria on the Tigris River 97 km south of Mosul. It was settled in the fourth millennium BC and was the earliest capital of Assyria until replaced by Calah in the ninth century BC.

⁵⁸. Luckenbill, D. Daniel, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Vol. 1, "Historical Records of Assyria from the earliest times to Sargon," p. 260.

Such records of praises were common and typical among the Assyrian kings. They did not always correspond or represent the actual historical facts.

With the death of Shalmaneser III (824 BC), Assyria gradually declined and entered into one of its weakest stages of history, during which it fell under the influence of Urartu. The excerpt below is from the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, which notes:

*“With the death of Shalmaneser, Assyria entered another period of decline during which it was occupied with the nearby kingdom of Urartu. For the next century, only one Assyrian king seriously affected affairs in Palestine. Adad-Nirari III (810–783 B.C.) entered Damascus, taking extensive tribute from Ben-hadad III. He is probably the “savior” of 2 Kings 13:5, who allowed Israel to escape domination by Aram-Damascus. Nevertheless, Adad-Nirari also collected tribute from Jehoash of Israel.”*⁵⁹

Thus, from Shalmaneser III's death (824 BC), until Tiglath-Pileser III's reign (744 BC), Assyria was under the dominance of the rising power of the Kingdom of Van–Urartu. In this period, the balance of power has shifted toward Urartu. Talking about this era, the excerpt below is from Nikolas Adontz, as noted:

“From the reign of Shalmaneser III until the time of Tiglath-Pileser III, for almost one century, we have only insufficient proofs. Military documents are unkept, and that it's not just a matter of luck, but due to lack of military operations. At the same time, Urartian documents, on the contrary, are

*relatively abundant, as we shall see later. That is a clear sign for the balance of power between the two countries has changed towards Urartu. Indeed, during Shalmaneser III's reign, Assyria's power significantly weakens, while Urartu's grew. That allows us to be cautious about Salmansar III's alleged Urartu's defeat.”*⁶⁰

During King Menua's reign years (810–786 BC), Urartu turned into a mighty Empire that lasted nearly 70 years, extending to the reign years of his successors Kings, Argishti I, Sarduri II, and Rusa I; see Chart 2, at the end of the book. Chart 2 represents a hypothetical depiction of Urartu's power ascend and descend lines compared to Assyria's power lines from 810 to 680 BC. It also depicts the rise and fall of both Israel and Judah relative to Urartu and Assyria. The ascend/descend constructed power lines were based on the border changes shown in the maps at the end of the book and on the military, political, and economic strengths and weaknesses of these kingdoms (810 to 680 BC). As noted, the ascend and descend power lines of Israel and Judah followed that of Urartu.

Urartu's King Argishti I (786–764 BC) succeeded his father, Menua. Both King Argishti and the Assyrian King Adad-Nirari III (806–781 BC) became occupied with their domestic affairs. Argishti I, after the death of his father, King Menua, focused on suppressing the rebellious movements of various provinces of his kingdom; whereas, Assyria's King Adad-Nirari became engaged with suppressing the uprising of the Babylonian separatism.

As for the continuous rivalry between Assyria and Babylon, it is possible to summarize it as follows; Assyria and Babylon were two Semitic Kingdoms in Mesopotamia but permanent rivals.

⁵⁹. Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, p. 135.

⁶⁰. Adontz N., *Hayastani Patmutyun* p. 92.

Assyria, with its powerful army, was trying to subdue and rule Babylon militarily and politically. On the other hand, with its rich culture and civilization, Babylon aimed at extending its influence on Assyria. This rivalry caused these two Semitic Kingdoms to collapse in the 7th and 6th century BC when the Indo-European nations invaded the region and occupied it.

In the cuneiform inscriptions of Adad-Nirari III, there are references to his military campaigns toward Syria and Palestine but no references to his military campaigns toward Urartu. Adad-Nirari notes that in the fifth year of his reign, he marched with his army toward Palestine:

*"In (my) fifth year of reign, when I took my seat on the royal throne, in might, I mobilized (the forces of my) land, (to) the wide-spreading armies of Assyria I gave the order to advance against Palashtu (Palestine). The Euphrates I crossed at its flood. The [widespreading, hostile] kings. Who in the time of Shamshi-Adad, my father. Had rebelled, and [withheld their tribute], at the command of Assur, Sin,⁶¹ Shamash,⁶² Adad,⁶³ Ishtar,⁶⁴ the gods, my allies, [terror] overwhelmed them, and they laid hold of my feet. Tribute and [tax, more than that of former days], they brought to Assyria. I [received it]."*⁶⁵

⁶¹. Sin the god of the moon in the Mesopotamian mythology of Akkad, Assyria, and Babylon.

⁶². Shamash, a native Mesopotamian deity and the sun god in the Akkadian, Assyrian, and Babylonian pantheon. Shamash was also the god of justice in Babylon and Assyria.

⁶³. Adad the storm-wind god in the Babylonian-Assyrian pantheon.

⁶⁴. Ishtar, the Assyrian-Babylonian goddess of fertility, love, war, and sex.

⁶⁵. Luckenbill D. Daniel, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, Vol. 1, p. 261.

The temporary peace period between Urartu and Assyria was critical for both rivals to resolve their internal and external affairs and regain energy, preparing themselves for the next round of their historic struggle. This peaceful period lasted only five years (786–781 BC).

II.

Urartu and Assyria's Conflict; Israel and Judah at the Center

In the fourth year of King Argishti I reign (783 BC), he invaded the southwest, conquering Sophene—the Arabkir, Balu, and Byurakan region in Turkey. Later, he moved toward the city of Melitene,⁶⁶ the Hittite's small kingdom, advancing further toward the West to conquer various countries to the north of Syria.

Argishti I, with these conquests, expanded Urartu's influence toward the wealthy trade ports of the Mediterranean Sea by distancing Assyria's power from the region. Gurgen Karapetyan wrote about Argishti's important victories as follows:

*"These conquests separated Assyria from Asia Minor and Syria, and it seemed as if the long-term planning of the military operations of the Kingdom of Van was getting accomplished through neutralizing Assyria from the east and the west."*⁶⁷

Urartu's conquest and influence over the countries from East and West have suspended Assyria's supremacy in the region; therefore, the roads leading to the natural resources of Asia Minor were blocked against Assyria. This blockade was a setback to Assyria's power. Here, it is worth quoting from Elizabeth Redgate, where she describes the power of the Kingdom of Van during those years, compared to the Armenian Empire of Tigranes the Great:

*"Indeed, in this early period, when Urartu was a world power, it should be considered one of the peaks of Armenian history, rivaled only with the first century B.C. when the Armenian King Tigranes the Great forged a great, but short-lived, empire stretching down to Syria and the Holy Land."*⁶⁸

The invasion of Argishti I's army to the West opened up a new battlefield between Urartu and Assyria. The purpose of these invasions was to control the lucrative Eastern Mediterranean coastline. Some of the consequences of this expansion were to;

a) Force the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to become the center of the conflict between Urartu and Assyria, making the situation a new political reality.

b) Unfold a new battlefield between Urartu and Assyria, which directly shaped the course of the histories of both Israel and Judah. And

c) Both Israel and Judah felt more secure since, historically, Urartu's powerful presence in the region prevented Assyria's invasions on both Israel and Judah.

As the newly rising power, Urartu's expansions toward the West were growing; however, its policies toward the people in the region were still unclear compared to the well-established oppressive policies of Assyria. An excerpt from Arnold Toynbee on this topic is presented below:

"The Urartians gathered in a strong and competitive state under the leadership of their king Argishti I. They succeeded in competition with the Assyrians to control northern Syria and eastern Cilicia. These strategically significant regions

⁶⁶. Melitene is the current city of Malatya in present-day Turkey.

⁶⁷. Karapetyan Gurgen, *Hayots Patmutyan Urvagts'er*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 224.

⁶⁸. Redgate E. A., *The Armenians*, p. 5.

*were under the influence of Urartu and not that of Assyria.”*⁶⁹

With the rise of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser IV to the throne in 781 BC, the old struggle to control Hubushkia has begun, putting an end to the temporary peace between Assyria and Urartu. Hubushkia was a mountainous and strategically important region between Urartu and Assyria. It encompassed the present-day Zibari and the mountainous area of Rowanduz in Northern Iraq; see Map 1, at the end of the book. It seemed Assyria's uncommon resilient diplomacy had made Hubushkia a close ally to prevent Urartu's advancement toward the West. For Argishti I, this alliance paved the way to launch a military incursion against Hubushkia in 781 BC. A bloody battle occurred between Urartu and Assyria in the Upper-Zab river basin that led to King Argishti I's victory, which allowed him to continue his conquest on the much-contested Hubushki.

Urartu's victory forced Assyria to act quickly and ally itself with its old foes, the countries of Manna,⁷⁰ and Parsua against Urartu. Manna and Parsua were located near Lake Urmia,⁷¹ in present-day Iran; see Map 2, at the end of the book, about Argishti I's victorious military campaigns. A new war broke between Urartu and Assyria and its allies Manna and Parsua. This new war lasted seven years (781–774 BC). The excerpt below is from Yeghia Kasuni and describes how Urartu significantly advanced over Assyria

⁶⁹. Toynbee Arnold, *Tarykh Al-Basharya*, Vol. 1, p. 128.

⁷⁰. Manna was an ancient country in the northwestern part of Iran, located to the south of Lake Urmia.

⁷¹. Lake Urmia is a salt lake in northwestern Iran near Iran's border with Turkey. It is the largest lake in the Middle East and the third-largest saltwater lake on earth; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

during these seven years. He writes:

*“From the Assyrian inscriptions, we learn that this war lasted nearly seven years, and although these inscriptions did not provide much detail, however, they reported that the victory was always with Urartians. As we read, the war started from the north, the country of Manna, in 781 BC. Still, the final battles occurred at the foot of the Zagros Mountains, in the area of Zimri or Namri countries (currently Sulaymaniyah province in northern Iraq), in 774 BC, which implies how much the Assyrians and allies have retracted toward the south to allow Urartians move forward.”*⁷²

The warfares between Urartu and Assyria had a profound impact on the economies of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah since the trade transportation from the region went as far as the Mediterranean ports of Syria and Palestine; thus, capturing Manna in such warfare had a significant impact on the trade activities of the region. An excerpt from Mark Chahin states:

“The military power that dominated the kingdom of Mannai, to the south of Lake Urmia, also dictated the direction in which the caravans were to travel, and the economic welfare of the country controlling that trade would be assured. When Assyria controlled Mannai, traffic traveled through Rowanduz⁷³ to Nineveh and so to the Mediterranean ports of Syria and Palestine. When Urartu occupied Mannai, or when

⁷². Kasuni Yeghia, *Nakhahaykakan Hayastan*, p. 353.

⁷³. Rowanduz a town located in the Iraqi sub-district of Soran, in the Province of Arbil, close to the Iranian border. In the time of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Rowanduz laid on the trading route to Nineveh; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

she could exercise military or diplomatic pressure upon her, the caravans traveled northwards, west of Lake Urmia, to Lake Van and Tushpa, Melaskert, Erzerum and so to the Milesian colonies of Trapezus (Trebizond), Sinope and other southern ports of the Black Sea, whence ships sailed to the Hellespont and the Mediterranean. Thus, customs dues, tolls and other forms of revenue directly or indirectly fell into the treasury of the country through which thousands of merchants, their servants and their goods passed.”⁷⁴

The new political status of the small Kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as the Center of Conflict between the two regional superpowers, Urartu and Assyria, lasted one century. This period is part of the topics covered in this book.

⁷⁴. Chahin Mark, *The Kingdom of Armenia*, p. 120.

III.

Argishti I Military Expedition on Nineveh; Prophet Jonah's Mission

The seven-year battles (781–774 BC) between the two superpowers ended with Urartu's substantial victories. The victorious army of King Argishti I of Urartu moved over Assyria to conquer Kalhu—the capital city of Assyria. The Assyrian army, gathering all its forces under General Shamashilu, decided to wage a final battle to save the capital. The decisive battle occurred in 774 BC, 25 miles north of Nineveh, near the present-day city of Duhok in nowadays Iraq. Finally, the Assyrians stopped Argishti's advancement toward their capital city Kalhu; thus, saving Assyria from imminent danger.

The story of Prophet Jonah in the Biblical Old Testament is about his disobedience to God. He dismissed God's command to travel to Nineveh to preach and warn its defunct inhabitants from the Divine judgment. According to the Bible, Prophet Jonah went to Tarshish⁷⁵ to escape from God. On the way, he jumped into the sea, and a whale swallowed him. He remained inside the whale for three days and three nights. He was saved only by God's grace. After this event, Jonah went to Nineveh, where he preached, saying:

“Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”⁷⁶

⁷⁵, Tarshish is a place, probably a city or a country, far from Israel with an uncertain location, which scholars have placed in different parts of the world.

⁷⁶. *Bible*, Jonah, 3:4.

The renowned historian Yeghia Kasuni links this turbulent era of Assyria's history (774 BC, and the invasion of King Argishti I) to the prophecy of Prophet Jonah by writing:

*"In this critical period, I want to bring forward the mission of Prophet Jonah in Nineveh. It is not surprising that the people of Nineveh believed in God, preached about fasting, and from old to young wore sackcloth. It is not surprising when the word reached the king; he too descended from his throne, removed his royal garb, put on a sack, and sat on a pile of ash. It is not surprising that by the king's and his lords' decree, a herald was called for people and their flock to begin fasting, repenting, and asking for God's forgiveness."*⁷⁷

Furthermore, according to the Bible, Lord forgave the inhabitants of Nineveh:

*"10 When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it."*⁷⁸

According to the Bible, God forgave the Assyrian city Nineveh and its inhabitants; the defeated army of Urartu withdrew, and Nineveh was saved from destruction.

Argishti I invaded the Assyrian capital Kalhu, which was later named Nimrud.⁷⁹ During the above invasion, Kalhu was the capital of Assyria, from King Ashurnasirpal II's reign (884–859 BC),

⁷⁷. Kasuni Yeghia, *Nakhahaykakan Hayastan*, p. 353.

⁷⁸. *Bible*, Jonah, 3:10.

⁷⁹. Nimrud was located south of Nineveh, on the Tigris river banks, about 19 miles (31 km) southeast of Iraq's present-day Mosul city.

and remained as Assyria's capital until the days of the reign of King Sargon II (722–705 BC). Moreover, Nineveh was declared the capital during his successor Sennacherib's (705–681 BC) reign and remained the capital until the city's final fall in 612 BC. The Bible mentions the invasion of Nineveh because it was a larger city, highly populated, more famous, and not far from the capital Kalhu.

In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus Christ mentions Prophet Jonah's story and his mission to Nineveh through Apostles Matthew and Luke's recordings.

*"38 Then many scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you" 39 But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation ask for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. 41 The people of Nineveh will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah and see, something greater than Jonah is here! 42 The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the Wisdom of Solomon and see, something greater than Solomon is here!"*⁸⁰

The Book of Apostle Luke describes a similar passage.⁸¹

According to the Encyclopedia of the Bible, Prophet Jonah was an Israelite, and the era of his prophecy was the 8th century

⁸⁰. *Bible*, Matthew, 12:38-42.

⁸¹. *Bible*, Luke, 11:29-32.

BC.⁸² Another reference⁸³ identifies the forty years of Jonah's prophecy as (786–746 BC). The Bible references Prophet Jonah as contemporary to the Israelite King Jeroboam II (782–753 BC).⁸⁴

The story of Prophet Jonah was a gained lesson on God's presence and mercy in the lives of the entire humankind and not just the Israelite and Judea. Prophet Jonah disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh for not to preach the Word of God. He declined to witness the repentance and salvation of Israelites enemies, especially Nineveh, who caused a great deal of hardship and destruction to the people of Israel and Judah. However, God's WILL always prevail. Furthermore, it is possible to say, as the Lord used Prophet Jonah to show HIS dominion over the people of Nineveh, HE also used the army of King Argishti I of Urartu to move over Assyria to make the Assyrians fear HIM and repent.

The rapid withdrawal of Argishti I from Assyria was not only due to his military failure, but it was for an immediate and compelling reason related to the rise and revolt of the princes of the Araxes⁸⁵ river basin against him. These princes sought the opportunity to revolt against the preoccupied King Argishti I. He withdrew from the battle, marched toward the rebellious princes, and suppressed their dangerous movement.

It is possible to say that due to Urartu and Assyria's struggle, Israel and Judah remained temporarily out of Assyria's threats and invasions, thus ushering their Second Golden Age.

⁸². *Astvatsashnchi Hanragitaran*, p. 206.

⁸³. *The Time chart of Biblical History*, p. 21.

⁸⁴. *Bible*, 2 Kings, 14:25.

⁸⁵. Araxes, also known as Araks, Araz, or Yeraskh, is a river located in, and along the present-day Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran.

IV.

Urartu and the 2nd Golden Age

Naturally, during the years of Assyria's defeat, due to the military success of Urartu, the two kingdoms of Judea experienced a period of peace. This era included the reigns of the Israelite King Jeroboam II (782–753 BC), and King of Judah Amaziah (Uzziah) (796–767 BC), and his successor King Azariah (767–740 BC). According to the Bible, no Assyrian invasion of Judea took place at this historical juncture.

The First Golden Age of the Jewish people was during the reign of King David, where he established an empire, lasted for eighty years, and spanned from the Syrian city of Hamath⁸⁶ to the borders of Egypt. This Jewish Empire collapsed after the death of King Solomon the Wise, bringing the First Golden Age to an end and dividing the United Jewish Monarchy into two kingdoms; Israel and Judah. Nearly a century and a half later, the Jewish people acquired their Second Golden Age; see Chart 2, at the end of the book, about the relative rise and fall of Urartu, Assyrian, Israel, and Judah. An excerpt from Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon stated:

“Although this empire disintegrated about eighty years after its foundation and was revived only for some thirty years in

⁸⁶. Hamath was located on the banks of River Orontes; it still exists as the city of Hama in modern western Syria, to the north of the Syrian capital Damascus. It very quickly became heavily influenced by the Hittite culture. It was settled by Arameans, who founded a state. The first two rulers were allied to King David; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

*the days of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam II of Israel (785–750 B.C.).*⁸⁷

The Second Golden Age of the Jewish people was between the years of (785–750 BC) and corresponded to the years of the reigns of the two powerful Kings of Urartu, Argishti I and Sarduri II. This Golden Age was not just a coincidence. Let us elaborate: In this period, as discussed earlier, Assyria—the most powerful Kingdom in the Middle East—was feeble, whereas Urartu grew into an empire whose mighty army has driven Assyria out of the West.

The general political situation provided the best opportunity to the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, which hurried to seize the opportunity to recapture the former Jewish Empire's territories under the former's leadership (Israel). The excerpt below is by Herzog and Chaim, who noted:

*“The combined reigns of Jeroboam and Uzziah of Judah are to be considered as the second Golden Age of biblical Israel. Jeroboam occupied Damascus and reestablished his border at Lebo-Hamath on the Orontes. During the almost forty-five years of his reign, the Israelites, as well as their neighbors, grew accustomed to the idea that Israel was the foremost power in Syria.”*⁸⁸

The second Golden Age of the Jewish people was short. It did not last even half a century. It came to prove that the Jewish people had enough willpower to acquire a Second Golden Age, even a century-and-a-half later from the first one when both superpowers—Assyria and Urartu—were occupied with war and the region was free

from Assyrian's encroachments.

It is possible to note that, in the second half of the 8th century BC, if Assyria had not reached the pinnacle of its power, Israel and Judah would have taken a different historical path. Note that the shaping of the Second Golden Age proved that, of the two small Jewish kingdoms, Israel was the most dangerous for Assyria, for its ambitions to expand in the region. Therefore, when Assyria recovered its strength, with the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (745 BC) and his successors, the chosen target for Assyria's deadly attack (721 BC) was Israel, and not Judah, as we shall see in the subsequent pages.

The Jewish people's Second Golden Age ended when Urartu was weak; unable to challenge the region's Assyrian supremacy. On this topic, the excerpt below is from the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary:

*“The rise of Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 B.C.) in Assyria, followed by Sargon II (721–705 B.C.), crushed any political ambitions Urartu might have had in the region.”*⁸⁹

What happened in Assyria during Tiglath-Pileser III's reign allowed Assyria to live its history's last and final powerful years. As we shall see later, it also harmed Israel and Judah.

Therefore, it is possible to say it was beneficial for Israel and Judah to have weak Assyria and strong Urartu since it helped bring stability to the region and their countries. Urartu's policies in the area were balanced and peaceful, unlike the radical and destructive policies of Assyria, especially toward Israel and Judah.

⁸⁷. Herzog Chaim, and Gichon Mordechai, *Battles of the Bible*, p. 97.

⁸⁸. Ibid., p.193.

⁸⁹. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 96.

V.

Assyria and Israel's Alliance against Urartu and Damascus

After seven years of battle between Assyria and Urartu (781–774 BC), both have realized that neither can eliminate the other from the region entirely. It seemed that they agreed to remove the battlefield from their immediate borders to distant territories, where each side will try to weaken the enemy's military capabilities. And only then would each side be able to deliver the final lethal blow to the already exhausted enemy. Two battlefields emerged, in the East and the West. Our focus is on Urartu and Assyria's battles in the West, where Israel and Judah's kingdoms were.

The battlefield in the West became Syria and its adjacent territories. On this topic, the excerpt below is from Gorgen Karapetyan:

*"Argishti's claim that God granted Assyria to him and his successors leads to the opinion that by weakening, Assyria would pay taxes. The proof of this is seen in the fact that Assyria no longer resisted Argishti I; instead, it intensified its steps toward Syria and their southern countries."*⁹⁰

Among the *southern countries* in this excerpt are the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

Looking at Map 1, at the end of the book about the Ancient Middle East, we can see that the distance from the Israeli capital

Samaria to Damascus is shorter than the distance from Urartu's capital Tushpa to Nineveh. The latter is mountainous and unsuitable for military invasions, whereas the fields between Samaria and Damascus are less mountainous.

In this period, the conquests of Urartu in the West positively impacted Assyria-Israeli relationships. On this issue, the perfect example was the conquest of Damascus in 773 BC by the Israelite King Jeroboam II (782–753 BC). The excerpt below is from James Pritchard:

*"In the north, the kingdom of Urartu, centered near Lake Van, was developing into a major power. This reacted upon Assyria. By the early 8th century B.C., the westward expansion of Urartu had weakened Assyrian control in Syria and may have led Assyria to welcome a strong Israel as a counterpoise to its main southern opponent, Damascus: it is not unlikely that the capture of Damascus by Jeroboam II of Israel (II KINGS 14.28) had the connivance or even the active support of Assyria, which itself attacked that city in 773."*⁹¹

Assyria's King encouraged the Israeli King Jeroboam II to conquer Damascus since the latter allied with Urartu—the region's newly rising power. Also, Assyria joined with the Kingdom of Israel since the latter had a long history of conflicts with the Aramaic Kingdom of Damascus. On the other hand, Assyria needed to attract the forces of the West to move against Urartu.

Note that the alliance between Assyria and Israel was temporary. It was a tactical move and not a long-term strategy, as we shall see. Nearly half a century later, from 773 BC, Assyria

⁹⁰ Karapetyan Gorgen, *Hayots Patmutyan Urvagtses*, Vol. I, Book II, p. 227.

⁹¹ Pritchard, B. James, *Harper Collins Atlas of the Bible*, p. 108.

launched a full-scale invasion on Israel, capturing Samaria and destroying its kingdom entirely in 721 BC.

Naturally, Damascus also had several reasons to ally with Urartu because in the northern territories of Syria and to the north, the southern region of Turkey, there were small Hittite principalities, who were allies with the Kingdom of Van, who had become an empire. The Hittite principalities had a significant influence on Syria for more than five centuries.

Damascus needed strong allies to protect its existence against the Assyrian invasions. Egypt, during this period, was weak and had no political and military influence on Syria. The Kingdom of Van (Urartu) was the region's rising power controlling all the trade routes. Mark Chahin noted:

"Argishti's reign witnessed the complete humiliation of Assyria. Her military prestige was utterly destroyed. She lost control of the trade routes from northern Iran, and in the west, she forfeited the great Syrian lands as well as the valuable territories north and west of Carchemish. These areas were garrisoned and administered by her rival, Urartu; Assyria had therefore lost the rich metal trade of Asia Minor.

*The trade routes to and from Asia Minor had also come under the control of Van. These economic disasters following upon Vanic victories caused general disruption and distress in the Assyrian polity, which led to a revolution in Syria and revolt in various cities in Assyria itself. Ararat now stood as the premier power in Western Asia."*⁹²

The author of this excerpt, when referring to Urartu, uses

Urartu, Vannic, and Ararat interchangeably. He explains how the victorious Argishti I was harming Assyria economically, allowing Urartu and Assyria to seek alliance from neighboring countries.

The excerpt below is from the renowned Urartulogist Boris Piotrovsky as he noted:

"By the end of Argishti I's reign, in the middle of the 8th century B.C., Urartu was at the zenith of its power. Its authority was firmly established in the north, in Transcaucasia,⁹³ and the region around Lake Urmia. It had successfully advanced into a Hittite territory in the west. Northern Syria was dependent on Urartu, which now controlled the main trade routes of western Asia. The Urartian kingdom barred the way to the conquest of Asia Minor by the Assyrians, and Urartian culture had begun to penetrate the Mediterranean area and the interior of Asia Minor.

*The rise of Urartu and its seizure of the route to the Mediterranean vitally affected the interests of Assyria and relegated it to a secondary position, but Assyria was in a temporary economic and political retrogression and unable to resist the advance of Urartu, and one area after another fell away from its allegiance."*⁹⁴

At the end of Argishti I's reign, Urartu had made significant progress over its rival Assyria, which affected Israel and Judah.

⁹³. Transcaucasia is the region to the south of the Caucasus Mountains. It includes three independent states nowadays: Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Transcaucasia is also known as Southern Caucasia.

⁹⁴. Piotrovsky B. Boris, *The Ancient Civilization of Urartu*, p. 72.

⁹². Chahin Mark, *The Kingdom of Armenia*, p. 80.

VI.

Syria as Subordinate of Urartu: Status of Israel and Judah

Urartu's King Sarduri II (764–735 BC) succeeded his father, Argishti I, whose reign years can be divided into two parts, considering Assyria's status and its significance to our study. The first period (764–745 BC) is covered in this section; it is when Assyria is still weak. The second period (745–735 BC) is covered in Section VIII of this study, where the renowned King Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC) ascended the throne of Assyria and laid the foundation for the third and last Assyrian empire.

During the first period (764–745 BC), Assyria was still weak, unable to launch military expeditions outside its borders. Thus, the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah refrained from Assyria's invasions; see Table 1 of Section I; they remained in their Second Golden Age, as we noted in Section IV of this chapter.

Also, in this period, Urartu's King Sarduri II initiated a series of expeditions to control Syria, impacting Israel and Judah. As Assyria's King Ashur-Nirari V (754–746 BC) came to the throne, he attempted to separate Urartu from its allies. An excerpt from Artak Movsisyan states:

*“Especially in 754 BC, he imposes on the King of Arpad to seal an agreement, then starts negotiations with Manna. However, he motivates some forces of the country of Urmi to organize Anti-Urartian act by deploying troops there.”*⁹⁵

⁹⁵. Mardigyan Suren, and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 122.

From this excerpt, note that Sarduri II suppressed the Assyrian invasions due to his bravery.

The city of Arpad was the center of one of the regional kingdoms. Geographically it was located north of Syria, south-west of Carchemish, the current Tell-Arfad, and 25 miles northeast of the city of Aleppo. The Assyrian King allied with Arpad to prevent Urartu's advancement to the West. The noted excerpt below is from James Pritchard:

*“It is certain that alliances were used by Assyria to alter the balance of power, as shown by an attempt by Ashur-Nirari V (754–745) to control north of Syria by treaty with Arpad, although in this instance it proved ineffective against the Urartian advance.”*⁹⁶

Here, Assyria failed, but for another reason. In this period, the city of Arpad had become the capital of Bayt Agusi⁹⁷ of the Aramaic Kingdom⁹⁸ and the center for Hittite–Aramaic coalition, an ally of Urartu against Assyria. Hittites were one of the ancient Indo-European people related to Armenians. They considered themselves kindred of the Kingdom of Van, and their coalition-in-war with Sarduri II was expected. Therefore, Assyria's attempt to seize Arpad and take it under its control was unsuccessful.

⁹⁶. Pritchard B. James, *Harper Collins Atlas of the Bible*, p. 108.

⁹⁷. Bit Agusi was an ancient Aramaean Syro-Hittite state-kingdom established at the beginning of the 9th century BC. It had included the cities of Arpad, and later the city of Aleppo, and stretched to Hamath in the south. Arpad was the capital of the state-kingdom.

⁹⁸. Aramaic or Arameans were Semitic people who originated in what is now modern Syria (Biblical Aram). Large groups migrated to Mesopotamia, where they assimilated with the native Akkadians (Assyrian and Babylonian) population; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

During Assyria's feeble period, Sarduri II launched a military expedition on the countries south of Lake Urmia, conquering Manna's land and merging it with Urartu. He then marched south, conquered Babylon, the country of Babiloo, expanding his Empire's southern borders to the Persian Gulf. Assyria was isolated and confined within its boundaries during these military expeditions, unable to move militarily against Urartu.

Assyria was defensive; its forces were only enough to resist any expected attack. Indeed, in 753 or 752 BC, Sarduri II launched a full-scale invasion of Assyria. We don't have much detailed information on this battle; however, we know that Ashur-Nirari V (754-745 BC), with his army, stood against Sarduri II and protected Assyria from Urartu's invasion.

Table 2
Kings of Israel, Judah, and Assyria contemporaneous to Sarduri II
(764-735 BC)

KING OF ISRAEL	KING OF JUDAH	KING OF ASSYRIA	MILITARY EXPEDITION ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE
Jeroboam II (782-753 BC)	Azariah (767-740 BC)	Ashur-dan III (772-754 BC)	
Zachariah (753-752 BC)			
Shallum (752-752 BC)		Ashur-nirari V (754-745 BC)	
Menahem (752-742 BC)		Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BC)	Assyrian king Pul's march
Pekahiah (742-740 BC)			
Pekah (740-732 BC)	Jotham (740-732 BC)		Tiglath-Pileser's march

Table 2 summarizes the Kings of Israel, Judah, and Assyria, who were contemporaneous, as presented in the historical references and the Bible. During the Assyrian Kings Ashur-Dan III

and Ashur-Nirari V, Assyria did not attack the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah because of Urartu's powerful status in the region it confined Assyria within its internal borders; see also Map 4 at the end of the Book.

In the West, King Sarduri II of Urartu subdued Ruishiani, the Kingdom of Damascus, with the help of his ally, the city of Arpad-near the present-day Aleppo. In this regard, Artak Movsesyan writes:

*"The following year, Sarduri reaches a new phenomenal victory by defeating King Rashuni of Ruishiani's country and forces him to ally with him. Sarduri was the first amongst the Kings of Van, who reached the eastern basin of the Mediterranean Sea."*⁹⁹

Naturally, Syria's subordination to the Kingdom of Van was an alarming sign for Israel and Judah. On the other hand, Urartu's expansion to the Mediterranean Sea besieged Assyria from all three directions, a situation that made Assyria fearful for its existence; see Map 4, at the end of the Book. Syria was an area of great strategic importance for the two superpowers. The noted excerpt below is from Hovhannes Karagyozyan:

"In this fierce struggle, each Assyria and Urartu, through signing friendly treaties, was striving to attract the economic and military powers of the Zagros and its surrounding regions, as well as the Kingdoms and principalities of the Euphrates River basin. One such famous political group was Damascus's principality, which had completely shifted toward the side of Urartu's King Sarduri II (764-735 BC).

⁹⁹ Mardigyan Suren, and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 123.

This same situation also continued during King Rusa I's reign (735–713 BC) of Urartu.”¹⁰⁰

Indeed, Israel and Judah's Kingdoms were not free from the latest development in the region, especially Urartu's subordination of Damascus and the impact of this new reality on Israel and Judah's economy. Therefore, these military and political successes of the Kingdom of Van in the West during Sarduri II led to its political and military influence extending to Palestine and Judea. The excerpt below is from Yeghia Kasuni on this topic:

“The authority of Sarduri II in Syria was directly reaching, at least Aleppo, whereas, indirectly was recognizable to, as far as Palestine, and its influence was affecting the political course of both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.”¹⁰¹

The excerpt below is from Mark Chahin. It is about the spread of the influence of Urartu in the region. It states:

“Then there was a period of one hundred years in which Ararat not merely raided but conquered and garrisoned Assyrian vassal states, such as Gilzan¹⁰² and Hubushkia in the east, and Arpad and Hamath in the west, and Mannai, and Parsua in the south-east, and even attacked strongholds of metropolitan Assyria, notably the great city of Nineveh itself. In consequence of these extensive conquests, Urartu appropriated the trade from east to west and the commerce between Egypt-Palestine, which traveled via Syria to

¹⁰⁰. Karagoyozyan Hovhannes, *Astvatsashnchakan Hayastan*, p. 125.

¹⁰¹. Kasuni, Yeghia, *Nakhahaykakan Hayastan*, p. 419.

¹⁰². Gilzan was an Assyrian vassal state north of mount Nipur to the southwest of Lake Van.

Anatolia—the trade and the destinies of people who were geographically much more accessible to Assyria than to Urartu.”¹⁰³

As a result of the military operations of Urartu—The Kingdom of Van—during the reign of Sarduri II, the new borders of the Urartu Empire reached their most expansive state.

“During the governance of Sarduri II, the borders of the Kingdom of Van reached its maximum. It reached the Black Sea (after the conquest of the country of Kulha located in the Chorokh river basin) from the north. From north-east Kur river (after unification with Urtekhi (the country of Artsakh)), from the east to the Caspian Sea (after the conquest of the country of Puluadi), from the west to Asia Minor (by subjugating the countries of Trans-Euphratean Melitea, Mushani, and Zapsha), from the south, it included Babylon, and from the southwest to the Kingdom of Damascus (Ruishiani). It creates a powerful kingdom between the four seas.”¹⁰⁴

The Urartian empire borders, during the reign of Sarduri II, were at their most expansive state. Map 4,¹⁰⁵ at the end of the Book, represents that. From Map 4, it is evident that the Urartian Empire has surrounded Assyria from east, north, and west, leaving it in a critical condition.

¹⁰³. Chahin Mark, *The Kingdom of Armenia*, pp. 170–171.

¹⁰⁴. Movsisyan Artak, *Hayots Patmutyan Ashkharakalutyunere*, p. 40–41.

¹⁰⁵. Mardigyan Suren, and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 126.

VII.

Interesting and Important Revelations

Before discussing the second period of the reign of Urartu's King Sarduri II (745–735 BC), it is crucial to bring the readers' attention to the following:

Many foreign sources state that after King Shalmaneser III's death (859–824 BC), many weak Kings have ruled Assyria; consequently, Israel and Judah remained in peace. These references, however, undermine the influence and presence of strong Urartu. These references either minimize Urartu's impact or remove its existence from the region without mentioning it in their texts. The following excerpt is an example of such concern shown below:

*“The fact that Assyria had, after Shalmaneser III, a succession of weak kings, allowed both kingdoms, Israel and Judah, another respite, which, however, meant only a postponement. Since Assyria was occupied with unrest in its own territory, Israel and Judah were able to enjoy a spell of peace from 825 to 745 B.C.”*¹⁰⁶

This excerpt is from a popular reference. It proves my point made above. Here you can see there is no mention of the name Urartu in the period of (825–745 BC) and the role the people of the Armenian Highland played in securing peace for the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

After a careful study of the history of the nations in this region, it grabbed my attention that, in this period, the history of

the powerful Urartu was not possible to ignore. In contrast, in this period, the power of Urartu had grown to the extent that it dominated the region, taking mighty Assyria under its glory. It also made the Kings of Assyria (the successors of King Shalmaneser III) weak and incapable of moving over the small regional kingdoms, hence, providing the opportunity for these kingdoms, including the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, to remain in peace away from the threat of Assyria's invasions.

Presenting such misleading or biased, and one-sided information to the public is unacceptable. It is done either out of ignorance or purposeful. Those references, who offer such information out of ignorance, I recommend they intensify their search and investigate the region's history thoroughly. I do not doubt they will come across the powerful Urartu's history and the Armenian Highland people's role in the area. Those references, who present biased information, and purposely remove Urartu's impact and the Armenian Highland people from the region, are politically driven and misinform the public.

Most Turkish backed sources tend to follow this trend (as stated in the commentary made by Dr. Professor Ashot Melkonyan). Such references aim to minimize Urartu's impact in the region and detach its name from its original people of the Armenian Highland. It distorts the history of the actual nations who lived in the area, thus introducing confusion, bringing forward false information, and mistrust of the true regional history.

Our careful research showed that Assyria's kings remained weak because of the firm and decisive Urartu and the region's Armenian Highland nations.

Let us cite an excerpt from another popular reference. Here, Urartu's rising power to the south and the north of Assyria is

¹⁰⁶. Keller Werner, *The Bible as History*, p. 239.

detached from the decline of Assyria, as if they are unrelated events. In reality, the Kings of Assyria felt weak because of the firm and powerful presence of Urartu:

*"In the late ninth and early eighth centuries in the mountains to the north of Assyria, the rival power of Urartu had risen to prominence. As the fortune of Assyria declined after 783 BCE under weak Kings and strong provincial governors, the Urartians pushed south into Iran and west across the Euphrates into northern Syria. By 745 BC, Urartu had conquered or concluded an alliance with most of the important states in south-central Anatolia and northern Syria and had assumed hegemony over the region."*¹⁰⁷

An excerpt from a third reference shown below states that Assyria was weak during King Adad-Nirari III's three sons, giving the reader an impression that Assyria's weakness was only due to the succession of Adad-Nirari III three worthless sons. Again, we notice that there is no mention of Urartu's role and power in the decline of Adad-Nirari III sons of Assyria:

*"Three sons of Adad-Nirari III provided the next three kings of Assyria. But relatively little is known of them, and Assyria was evidently in a period of decline. The first of the three was Shalmaneser IV. The second was Ashura III. The third was Ashur-Nirari V."*¹⁰⁸

The rise and fall of the states and empires have their external and internal causes. It is crucial to remain just and unbiased when studying history without twists of words or elimination of historical

facts. In this regard, I also found many historians who are impartial and supportive of Urartu's omnipotent power in the region, its people of Armenian Highland, and their influence on the regional history, including Israel and Judah's nations. John Douglas is one of those historians, and the excerpt below is from his work, where he describes the political influence of Urartu and Assyria over the small regional kingdoms:

*"The Assyrian power began to decline gradually; however, when the Urartians came to power around the Ninth Century B.C. in establishing their empires the two rivals had adopted different strategies. While the Assyrians colonized territories by killing or deporting the inhabitants of the conquered land, the Urartians were more political. They preferred to form federations with the conquered states, allowing each to govern itself within the administrative framework of the Urartian Empire."*¹⁰⁹

The above-mentioned Assyrian policies toward its conquered countries were the reasons for small kingdoms such as Israel and Judah to reject the Assyrian colonization, unlike Urartu's and its allies' policies, which were not the same.

Furthermore, it is possible to say that it was due to the invasions of Assyria and its successor, the superpower Babylon, on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah that blew the deadly and the final strike on Israel by Assyria and Judah by Babylon. We will discuss these in more detail in the subsequent sections and chapters of this book.

¹⁰⁷. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁸. Finegan Jack, *Archaeological History of the Ancient Middle East*, p. 110.

¹⁰⁹. Douglas M. John, *The Armenians*, p. 22.

VIII.

The First Battle of Kummukhi

Assyria's army terminated its country's weakness as it was dissatisfied with the prevailing political and military situations. In 745 BC, the army launched a military coup, ascending to the Assyrian throne a person not belonging to the royal family. The coup leader presented himself as an offspring of Adad-Nirari III and named himself *Tiglath-Pileser*, a well-resonated name among Assyrian Kings. In the past, Assyria had two other famous Kings with the same name, Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076 BC), who led Assyria to become the superpower of the Middle East, expanding its control to the West, toward the Mediterranean shores. Tiglath-Pileser II (967–935 BC), the son of Ashur-Reshishi II about whom only little is known.

It was necessary for Tiglath-Pileser III, the new leader of Assyria, to eliminate the Kingdom of Van's constant danger from the region since it represented the greatest serious threat to Assyria. Therefore, in 744 BC, he began his military operations against Urartu, marching over the country of Namri (in the vicinity of the present-day Sulaymaniyah, a province in Iraq); see Map 1, at the end of this book. In those years, the land of Namri, located in the northeast of Mesopotamia, was part of the Kingdom of Urartu. The Assyrian army seized the country of Namri since it did not directly face the Urartu army.

During Tiglath-Pileser III's reign, Assyria was liberated from Urartu's preoccupation and began to rise; see Chart 2, at the end of the Book. The following excerpt testifies that Urartu had subjugated

Assyria, an essential and impartial citation, worthy of mention:

*"Assyrian preoccupation with Urartu ended with the reign of Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BC). The true founder of the Assyrian Empire."*¹¹⁰

Tiglath-Pileser III (746–727 BC) did not dare to strike King Sarduri II of Urartu directly but decided to attack his allies in Syria. In 743 BC, he moved with a vast army to the West, intending to inflict a deadly blow to Urartu's allies; see Table 2 in section VI of this chapter.

Assyria needed to isolate Urartu's influence from the West since Syria, and its Mediterranean ports were essential sources of wealth. Naturally, the struggle between the two superpowers over Syria also impacted the neighboring small kingdoms of Israel and Judah. This excerpt is from Karen Rhea and Nemet-Nejat related to this topic:

*"For Assyria, the main problem was Urartu. Both Urartu and Assyria vied for control of Syrian routes crucial to Assyria for timber, metals, and horses."*¹¹¹

With a large army, Tiglath-Pileser III crossed the Euphrates River, entered Commagene's country¹¹² (Kummukhi or Kummakha), and besieged Arpad's city south-west of Carchemish and north of Aleppo in present-day Syria; see Map 1, at the end of the Book. Sarduri II, with his army and his allies' armies, the small

¹¹⁰. Holman *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 135.

¹¹¹. Nemet-Nejat, R. Karen, *Daily Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, p. 38.

¹¹². Commagene was a small kingdom located in modern south-central Turkey, with its capital at Samosata (modern Samsat, near the Euphrates River). It was first mentioned in Assyrian texts as Kummuhu and was annexed as a province in 708 BC under Sargon II; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

Kingdoms of Kummukhi, Melitene, and Gurgam, came to rescue Arpad. The expected battle occurred near the city of Arpad and lasted for one whole day and ended with Sarduri II and his allies' defeat.

In those days, the city of Arpad had strategic importance. The excerpt below is from Nicholas Adontz, where he explains:

*"According to a note in one of the eponymous charts, in 743 BC, Tiglath-Pileser marched against Arpad and crushed Urartu's forces. That means the country of Arpad was part of Urartu's coalition. If Arpad, which is today's Rifaat, north of Aleppo, had fallen to the enemy, Assyria had been cut off from Syria. That is why the first strike of Assyria's king was toward Arpad. The Urartu's king Sarduri II, along with his allies, hurried to help Arpad."*¹¹³

In a day-long Battle of Kummukhi, Sarduri II had enormous losses that further intensified the domestic issues he was facing, forcing him to withdraw from the West and recede to Urartu. At the same time, the city of Arpad continued the futile resistance against the invasions of Tiglath-Pileser III for a total of three more years, until 740 BC.

In reality, the Battle of Kummukhi was a strong blast for Urartu, but it did not exhaust it. Assyria, on the other hand, despite its great victory, did not dare to cross the borders of the Kingdom of Van. It is worth mentioning here that this Battle of Kummukhi, which occurred near Arpad, is known historically as the **First Battle of Kummukhi** (743 BC) since Arpad was within the territory of Kummukhi.

¹¹³. Adontz Nicholas, *Hayastani Patmutyun*, p. 96.

According to the Assyrian inscriptions, Sarduri II's army was surprised because Kummukhi had moved toward Assyria's side. The excerpt below is from Hayim Tadmor. He notes:

*"It should be noted that Kummuh is never mentioned among the enemy forces, possibly indicating that it remained a loyal vassal of Assyria. Indeed, one might suspect that Tiglath-Pileser's surprise attack on the Urartian forces while they were passing through Kummuh may have been made possible by the active involvement of Kummuh on the Assyrian side."*¹¹⁴

The excerpt above makes Urartu's colossal defeat and the immediate retreat of Sarduri II toward Urartu understandable.

The outcome of the First Battle of Kummukhi (743 BC) was unfavorable to Israel and Judah since it encouraged Assyria to fulfill its dream of conquering the entire West, including the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and wealthy Egypt. Here, note that with the defeat of Urartu in this battle, the Second Golden Age of both Israel and Judah came to an end. The power of Urartu recorded a significant fall; see Chart 2, at the end of the book. At the same time, Assyria rose and became the most powerful state in the region.

Another necessary consequence of this historic battle was Urartu's loss of its allies in the West. Moreover, Syria became the frontline center, from where Assyria's invasions moved toward South-Palestine, Judea, and then Egypt; thus, paving the road to continue its conquests over the entire region.

After this big battle, Urartu and Assyria temporarily ceased their military operations against each other. This unannounced and

¹¹⁴. Tadmor Hayim, *The Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III King of Assyria*, p. 262.

imposed ceasefire between Sarduri II and Tiglath-Pileser III lasted for seven years (742–735 BC). During this time, Urartu (the Kingdom of Van) healed its wounds and prepared itself for a new war with Assyria, hoping to regain the occupied territory of Arpad and separate Syria from Assyria.

Table 3

Tiglath-Pileser III's Military campaigns as per the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions and the Bible

ACCORDING TO	B.C.	EVENT
Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions	744	Military march against Urartu's vassal country of Namri
Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions	743	First Battle of Kummukhi against Sarduri II
Bible	After 743	King Pul's military march against King Menahem of Israel
Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions	738	Military march against Syria and levying of taxes upon Israel and Judah
Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions	735	Second Battle of Kummukhi against Sarduri II
Assyrian Cuneiform Inscriptions	734	Assistance to King Ahaz of Judah
Bible		Military march against King Pekah of Israel

After the First Battle of Kummukhi, the victorious Tiglath-Pileser III pushed Urartu's influence out and conquered the entire region. Then, he forced the kingdoms of the West, including Israel and Judah, to levy huge tributes to Assyria. This excerpt is from Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon referencing the above:

"Within a year or two, in 738 BC, Tiglath-pileser III (Pul of the Bible) was able to invade the whole of Syria and levy a

*heavy tribute even from Israel and Judah."*¹¹⁵

Table 3 clarifies that according to the Bible, the King of Assyria has invaded Israel during the reign of King Menahem of Israel (752–742 BC). The excerpt below is from the Bible, which notes:

*"19 King Pul of Assyria came against the land; Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, so that he might help him confirm his hold on the royal power. 20 Menahem exacted the money from Israel, that is, from all the wealthy, fifty shekels¹¹⁶ of silver from each one, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and did not stay there in the land."*¹¹⁷

In this excerpt, we notice that Assyria's King was named *Pul*. It is possible to assume that King Tiglath-Pileser III organized this invasion after the First Battle of Kummukhi, where *Pul* was one of the names given to Tiglath-Pileser III. Or it was the name of the Assyrian General who led the Assyrian army over Israel.

It is mentioned in the Bible also that the Assyrian King returned and did not stay in that country. Indeed, one of the reasons was the existence of the Kingdom of Van, which was still powerful in the region to stand a danger against Assyria. As Urartu existed in the area as a great danger to Assyria's expansion, Assyria did not expand toward the West or anywhere else. This topic requires further investigation.

¹¹⁵. Herzog Chaim, and Gichon Mordechai, *Battles of the Bible*, p. 194.

¹¹⁶. Siql (sigl, siqlu) was one of the names of the shekel, the Jewish currency. One shekel equaled to four Roman dinars.

¹¹⁷. *Bible*, 2 Kings, 15:19-20.

IX.

The Second Battle of Kummukhi

Urartu did not readily accept its historical rival, Assyria's advancements on Syria, and in general, toward the West. In 735 BC, once again, Sarduri II, with his army, moved toward the country of Kummukhi; see Table 3. Not much information on this battle has reached us; however, history named this battle the **Second Battle of Kummukhi**, granting the victory once again to Assyria.

After his victory, Tiglath-Pileser III did not continue his conquests toward the West. Instead, he turned to the defeated Sarduri II, attempting to strike his final and deadly attack on Urartu to remove it from the region. Despite the victory of the Second Battle of Kummukhi (735 BC), the invasion of Assyria's powerful King on Urartu emphasizes our point that Urartu's existence in the region had posed a considerable obstacle and threat to Assyria's expansionist policies.

In the wake of the ongoing war between Assyria and Urartu after the Second Battle of Kummukhi, Judah's Kingdom was temporarily relieved from paying tributes to Assyria. This excerpt is from Hall and Litt describing the situation:

"No mention is made of tribute from Judah, probably because Tiglath-pileser was now anxious to return to Assyria to complete the final settlement with Urartu, which had been begun in the previous year, but had had to be suspended in order to effect the chastisement of Azariah and his

*confederates."*¹¹⁸

Sarduri II, with his defeated army, returned to Urartu. Tiglath-Pileser III followed the defeated army and laid siege on the Vanic Kingdom's Capital city, Tushpa. For the first time in the history of Urartu and Assyria's struggle, fierce battles occurred in-and-around the capital city of Tushpa. The Urartian resistance was brutal and bloody. Tiglath-Pileser III became convinced that it was impossible to conquer the Kingdom of Van. Therefore, he rapidly withdrew out of the enemy's territories, fearing that heavy resistance can destroy his army, although the central part of the capital city Tushpa was damaged. The excerpt below is from Arnold Toynbee, referencing this historic battle:

*"Tiglath-Pileser III reached Tushpa, the capital of Urartu, in 735 BC and laid siege on it. However, he was unable to conquer the city. Likewise, he was unable to subjugate any part of Urartu perpetually. Conquering northern Syria for the second time, he imposed Assyria's supremacy on the eastern principalities of Asia Minor, located in the north of the Taurus Mountains and west of the Upper Euphrates River. This situation completely detached Urartu from Cilicia¹¹⁹ and Syria. However, Assyria undertook the effort to maintain its supremacy within these remote states, was laid very expensive."*¹²⁰

Following the Second Battle of Kummukhi and Assyria's

¹¹⁸. Hall R. H., Litt, D. M. and A. S. F., *The Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 464.

¹¹⁹. Cilicia was the south coastal region of Asia Minor. It extended along the Mediterranean coast to the Amanus Mountains, which separated it from Syria.

¹²⁰. Toynbee Arnold, *Tarykh Al-Basharya*, p. 154.

invasions on Urartu, Sarduri II did not surrender. His defeat had heavy consequences on Urartu. One can say, Urartu lost its power and its position as the omnipotent power in Western Asia, eventually yielding to Assyria; see Chart 2, at the end of the Book.

During the seven years (742–735 BC), it is essential to question why Urartu lost these two significant battles. Here is what we think;

In Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser III rose to the throne in 745 BC, and in two years into the throne, in 743 BC, in the First Battle of Kummukhi, he acquired his first major victory. Indeed, that was not due to Assyria's rising supremacy within this short period since it was illogical. Instead, Sarduri II's defeats were mainly due to using a large portion of his army to suppress the brutal Cimmerians movement. Cimmerians were nomadic Indo-European people who invaded the Caucasus and Asia Minor from the Black Sea plains, presenting a threat to the Vanic Kingdom's existence. This situation prevented Sarduri II to fully engage his army in the two significant Battles of Kummukhi. Therefore, Urartu was defeated.

Urartu's military presence in the region had prevented Assyria's advancement in the West. Therefore, Urartu's defeat in the Second Battle of Kummukhi (735 BC) ceased the threat and removed the barrier that delayed Assyria's advancement in the West. A new arrangement of power formulated in the West, where Assyria was the ruler, and Urartu's power was not a threat from the North. Assyria's army marched toward the West due to its expansion policies, affecting Israel and Judah's small kingdoms.

Tiglath-Pileser III invaded the West conquering Syria and the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Fourteen years later, in 721 BC, his successors conquered Samaria, Israel's capital city, and sealed the end of this kingdom. However, the Kingdom of Judah continued its

existence at its minimum for another century and a half.

An excerpt from Miller and Hayes highlights how Tiglath-Pileser III remained preoccupied with wars against Urartu, unable to invade Palestine. They noted:

"Between 738 BC when he received the tribute of Rezin, Menahem, and other western rulers and 734 BC when he marched down the Mediterranean coast, Tiglath-pileser III was engaged in warfare against Urartu in the north and Media¹²¹ in the east and thus far from Palestine. When he had settled matters in these regions, the Assyrian king moved into southern Syria-Palestine, intent on securing control of the eastern Mediterranean commerce and on suppressing the anti-Assyrian coalition composed of many disloyal states that had shortly before offered him tacit submission only to organize opposition when his presence was elsewhere."¹²²

In this excerpt, the authors state that because of Assyria's preoccupation with its historical rival Urartu, it remained disengaged from the invasions of the two small kingdoms of Israel and Judah. They also mention Assyria's struggle in the East against the country of Media, which in reality, in this period, was incomparable to the threat emanating from Urartu. Media became a severe threat to Assyria at much later times.

The leaders of Assyria's opposition in the West wished to overthrow the Assyrian occupation. Tiglath-Pileser III's absence was

¹²¹. Media was the region south and southwest of the Caspian Sea in the Zagros Mountains. It was north of Elam and east of Assyria. The traditional capital of the region was Ecbatana.

¹²². Miller Maxwell, J., and Hayes H. John, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, p. 330.

an opportunity for them to unify. They hoped to receive support from Urartu—the arch-foe of Assyria, which in the excerpt below is Armenia–Ararat. Let us quote about the gathering of the anti-Assyrian forces:

“The anti-Assyrian party was now at the helm. Egypt was powerless to lend more than moral support; on the other hand, the enemies of Assyria looked for substantial aid to Armenia (Ararat), which rose against Tiglat-Pileser at a time when he was busy further east with the Medes. A coalition was formed; Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Damascus were joined by two Phoenician¹²³ seaports Tyre and Sidon, as well as by several Philistine towns and an Arab queen by the name of Shamsi.”¹²⁴

Several years after Urartu’s defeat in the Second Battle of Kummukhi, the local opposition countries in the West were still hoping for Urartu to rise again and resume its warfare against Assyria since it was beneficial to remain safe from Assyria’s domination in the region. Alas, that never occurred. Alternatively, the Vanik Kingdom’s absence in the area forged these countries to form a coalition to overthrow the Assyrian rulers.

The Kings of Israel and Damascus requested from King of Judah to join their coalition against Assyria. However, King Ahaz of Judah refused their request. This event forced both Israel and

¹²³. Phoenicia was an ancient country situated on the western, coastal part of the Fertile Crescent and centered on the coastline of modern Lebanon. All major Phoenician cities were on the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

¹²⁴. Margolis L. Max, and Marx Alexander, *History of the Jewish People*, p. 95–96.

Damascus to launch a war against Judah. King Ahaz of Judah in (732–716 BC) appealed to Tiglath-Pileser III for support. The Bible records the following excerpt on this event:

“7 Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, saying, “I am your servant and your son. Come up, and rescue me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.” 8 Ahaz also took the silver and the gold found in the house of the LORD and in the treasures of the king’s house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria. 9 The king of Assyria listened to him; the king of Assyria marched up against Damascus, and took it, carrying its people captive to Kir;¹²⁵ then he killed Rezin.”¹²⁶

Assyria promised to defend the King of Judah for as long as the latter cut his ties with Assyria’s enemies and continue paying his annual tributes.

Tiglath-Pileser III could not have invaded the West to help King Ahaz without defeating Urartu first or temporarily relieving its threat. In this regard, the excerpt below is by Hall and Litt, quoting:

“Tiglath-pileser at once answered the appeal, and in 734 he appeared in Syria, immediately after the destruction of Urartu.”¹²⁷

We notice here that Damascus and Israel’s military

¹²⁵. Kir was a Mesopotamian city east of the lower Tigris River, which is now identified with the modern Badrah on the main road from Elam (Persia) to Babylon.

¹²⁶. *Bible*, 2Kings, 16:7-9.

¹²⁷. Hall R. H., Litt D. M., and A. S. F., *The Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 464.

expedition against Judah was a continuation of the regional struggle between Urartu and Assyria, considering that King Rezin of Damascus was an ally of King Rusa I of Urartu (735–714 BC). The excerpt below is from Hovhannes Karagyozyan, who highlights:

“According to the Assyrian cuneiform sources, during Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC), Rezin was the king of Damascus, who formerly pretended to be an ally of Assyria. However, the development of the political events created a situation where Rezin boldly joined Rusa I against Tiglath-Pileser III. Fortunately, important information is recorded and preserved in the Bible, as well.

For example, King Rezin of Syria (in the cuneiform inscriptions- Rasin, the Armenian version of the Bible-Rason) invades over the King of Judah.

King Ahaz of Judah (735–715 BC), annoyed by his enemies, sends an envoy to King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria seeking help together with a letter and precious gifts as well.”¹²⁸

Assyria's raid over Damascus occurred during Urartu's King Rusa I (735–714 BC) since King Ahaz had reigned over Judah after (732 BC), at the time when in Urartu, Rusa I had succeeded his father Sarudri II.

Here, it is essential to mention that the appeal of King Ahaz of Judah to Tiglath-pileser III for intervention caused significant damage to the region. On this issue, the excerpt below is from David Barret, Christopher D. Hudson, and Todd Bolen:

“Desperate, Ahaz sent for help from Assyria. The Assyrians arrived & defeated the invading armies, but they exacted a

¹²⁸, Karagyozyan Hovhannes, *Astvatsashnchakan Hayastan*, p. 125.

high cost for their help. Four long consequences resulted from Ahaz's actions:

- 1. Assyria stripped Judah of many financial resources.*
- 2. The treasured city of Elath,¹²⁹ known for its important trading port, was lost.*
- 3. Assyria grew more powerful in the region.*
- 4. By coming to rescue of Judah, Assyria decimated the northern kingdom of Israel—eventually ending its very existence a few years later.”¹³⁰*

Assyria's aid on Judah against Damascus and Israel forced its existence in the West and attempted to end its main rival Urartu's influence in the area.

¹²⁹, Elath is the port city on the northern end of the Red Sea in modern Israel.

¹³⁰, Barret David, Hudson, D. Christopher and Bolen, Todd. *Bible Atlas and Companion*, p. 102.

X.

The Absence of Urartu from the West

Tiglath-Pileser III conquered the West between (734–732 BC). The Assyrian forces were well-armed and led by Tiglath-Pileser III, who trusted his army's strength gained from many years of war between Assyria and Urartu. All these events have encouraged the Assyrian King, annexing the conquered territories and making them a permanent part of the Assyrian Empire.

Below is an excerpt from Reader's Digest, *Great People of the Bible and how they lived*:

*"When Assyria drove westward in the latter half of the 8th century B.C., it destroyed the kingdom of Israel and made Judah a vassal. By repelling frequent invasions in its northern Mesopotamian homeland, Assyria had forged its army into a superb instrument of war, enabling it to conquer most of the Near East. Isaiah saw Assyria's victories over Israel and Judah as the Lord's Purgation of his people, few of whom still remained faithful. He also predicted Assyria's downfall, carried out by Babylon in 612 B.C. "When the Lord has finished all his work... He will punish the arrogant boasting of the king of Assyria and his haughty pride" (Is. 10.12)."*¹³¹

In the excerpt above, the *Northern Mesopotamian Homeland* is Urartu—the Kingdom of Van. Unfortunately, this excerpt is an example of those references that mislead the reader and undermines Urartu's influence and role in the region by giving vague names to

¹³¹ Readers Digest, *Great People of the Bible and how they lived*, p. 122.

Urartu or the Kingdom of Van. In doing so, it disregards and minimizes the critical role of Urartu and its people of the Armenian Highland in shaping the history of the Middle East. This misinformation confuses the scholars also when studying the ancient history of the region.

The conquest of Syria and the defeat of the Arameans coincided with Urartu's removal from the West. All these have endangered the situation politically in Israel and Judah. Werner Keller notes:

*"The continuous sequence of wars did not end until the new world power Assyria had crushed the Aramaeans. But with the emergence of Assyria, Israel's days, indeed the days of both kingdoms, were numbered."*¹³²

Tiglath-Pileser III had decided to destroy the rebellious Kingdom of Israel permanently. He laid siege of the capital city of Samaria in a large-scale invasion launched in 732 BC. Samaria survived the wrath of Tiglath-Pileser III and did not get destroyed because of an unexpected political change in Samaria, when the son of Elah, Hoshea, killed King Pekah of Israel, the enemy of Assyria, and rose to the throne as the new King of Israel, reigning from (732–723 BC). The Bible records this event:

"29 In the days of King Pekah of Israel, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria came and captured Ijon, Abel-beth-Maachah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried the people captive to Assyria. 30 Then Hoshea son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah son of Remaliah, attacked him and killed him; he reigned in

¹³² Keller Werner, *The Bible as History*, p. 228.

place of him, in the twentieth year of Jotham, son of Uzziah."¹³³

During these military expeditions, Tiglath-Pileser III reached Egypt's borders. He conquered Megiddo, Hazor, and Galilee from the north of Israel, making them Assyrian provinces; see Map 3, at the end of the book. Thus, Urartu's weakening and withdrawal from this region made Assyria the only ruler and the unrestrained master of the area.

Referring to the wars of Tiglath-Pileser III approximately 734–732 BC, the excerpt below is from Miller and Hayes, which proves the point:

*"Two goals lay behind the new initiatives and policies of Tiglath-pileser III in the west. (1) He set out to reduce or eliminate Urartian influence in northern Syria and to consolidate the Assyrian authority in this area. During the reigns of his three immediate predecessors, the kingdom of Urartu, to the north and north-west of Assyria proper, had expanded its presence and influence at the Assyrian expense."*¹³⁴

The expeditions of Tiglath-Pileser III against Urartu had two objectives: one objective was to crush the influence of the Kingdom of Van in northern Syria, Palestine, and Judea. The other objective was to gain control over the Eastern Mediterranean seashores and trade routes with the West. The strong army of Tiglath-Pileser III was behind the first objective, unlike his predecessor Ashur-Nirari

¹³³. Bible, 2 Kings, 15:29-30.

¹³⁴. Miller Maxwell J., and Hayes H. John, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah*, p. 317–319.

V, who allied himself with King of Arpad, which ended in failed operation since Urartu was progressively becoming stronger at that time. We discussed these in Section VI. The excerpt below is from the same source above:

*"(2) The Assyrian king wanted not only to assure Assyrian trade with the west but also to gain control of commerce on the Eastern Mediterranean Seaboard. By dominating the trade routes leading through northern Syria and into western Asia Minor, Urartu had deprived Assyria of such needed materials as metals, timber, and horses. The resulting shortages in Assyria had produced widespread insurrections in the homeland from about 760 B.C. Assyrian control over the trade routes from the west and the north was considered a necessity in order to secure needed supplies and satisfy Assyrian demands at home. Tiglath-pileser probably moved into southern Syria-Palestine in order to establish Assyrian control over the entire interregional trade along the eastern Mediterranean Seaboard and to redirect the flow of western commerce into Assyria proper."*¹³⁵

Hence, to preserve and sustain its domestic economic prosperity, Assyria moved toward the West, invading the entire Syria, Palestine, and Judea, subjugating the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah to its military encroachment. Moreover, Tiglath-Pileser III annexed all the regional important trade territories to his empire, making them Assyrian provinces.

As mentioned in the Bible and the Assyrian inscriptions, Tiglath-Pileser III organized deportations of the captive people from

¹³⁵. Ibid., p. 317–319.

the occupied territories by eradicating them to diminish the possibility of future revolts. He organized mass deportations of people and was the first to regulate this practice as a *reasoned policy*. Most of the deported foreigners, forcibly settled in those occupied territories of the West, were from Armenia. The following reference records the percentage of the displaced people to reach half of the population, which was a high percentage. Hall and Litt point out the following:

*"Nearly half the population in each conquered state was carried into captivity, and their place was taken by foreign captives from Armenia and elsewhere, colonists from Babylonia, and others. Thus the native population in each case was weakened beyond recovery, while the introduced foreigners, being hated by the natives as much as were their Assyrian masters, naturally made common cause with the latter and upheld the Assyrian rule. Former kings of Assyria had carried away the conquered captive, but Tiglath-pileser was the first to regulate this practice as a reasoned policy."*¹³⁶

Notably, this reference refers to *Urartu* as *Armenia*, the historical and logical title of Urartu.

The deportations of Tiglath-Pileser III had more than one goal to accomplish. On the one hand, he weakened the subjugated people in the West, and on the other, he diminished the power of Urartu and Babylon. Imposing deportation policies in the occupied regions were a pretty successful way to suppress the nations' resentments. However, as noted, despite all these, Babylon and the Armenian Highland people, through an alliance with the Medes,

¹³⁶. Hall R. H, Litt, D. M, and A. S. F., *The Ancient History of the Near East*, p. 466.

played an essential role in the fall of mighty Assyria, as we shall see later.

The deportation policies of the people of the occupied countries spread everywhere extreme hostility against Assyria. Moreover, one century later, from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III, Assyria disappeared from the stage of history without much regret from its neighbors. Let us quote the following paragraph from Bassam Al-Asali on the destruction of Nineveh:

*"The Assyrian military strength collapsed because of its extremism and hatred, which was inextinguishable, and became the driving force behind the losers' unification. Terrorism requires several resources compared to what the soft defensive policy requires, and the army exhausts its entire ability by always remaining ready. The Assyrians exterminated the Toros and Zagros mountains people, paving the way for the Black Sea people, the Scythians, and the Medes. Likewise, the deportations of various people deep into Assyria encouraged the real invasion from within when their mighty leaders rebelled together with their poor farmers. Thus, the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC allied to eradicate the Assyrians on an unprecedented scale. Nineveh was completely obliterated to such an extent that when two centuries later, Xenophon with his ten thousand Greek mercenary soldiers were retreating through the site, he did not even realize that those ruins were that of Nineveh."*¹³⁷

Xenophon was a renowned Greek historian and an army general, who in 401 BC was among the army of ten thousand Greek

¹³⁷. Al-Asali Bassam, *Al-ḥarb w Al-ḥadart*, p. 138.

mercenaries left to Persia to defend the candidate for the Persian Achaemenid throne.¹³⁸ After the murder of the Persian Achaemenid candidate, the Greek mercenaries, with no other purpose for staying in Persia, withdrew from Babylon toward Assyria and then, through Armenia to Greece. Luckily, during the Greek army retreat, Xenophon recorded all that he saw on his way as an eyewitness. Later, he compiled it all in a book named *Anabasis* (or *The Retreat of Ten Thousand*), where he had no mention of Nineveh, as described in the above quote.

It is worth mentioning here that, in the Bible, the Assyrian Prophet Nahum has also testified about Assyria's cruelty toward their subjugated nations, including the Jewish people of Israel and Judah. Prophet Nahum also predicted the destruction of Nineveh as God's punishment to Assyrians for their cruelty.¹³⁹

¹³⁸. The Achaemenid Empire (550–330 BC) was an empire in Western and Central Asia, founded in the 6th century BC by Cyrus the Great. The dynasty draws its name from king Achaemenes, who ruled Persis between 705 BC and 675 BC.

¹³⁹. *Bible*, Nahum 3:1–19.

XI.

The Siege of Samaria

In Assyria, Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC) succeeded his father, Tiglath-Pileser III, in 726 BC. He inherited a vast empire and the heavy burden of protecting it from external invasions. Thus, his reign years became short.

In this period, the West formed a new alliance. For the first time, Egypt joined this alliance because Egypt's interests in Syria began to suffer from Assyrian invasions of Tiglath-Pileser III, as noted in the previous section. Naturally, Assyria's historical competitor, Urartu, was a supporter of this new regional alliance.

In 725 BC, Shalmaneser V invaded the West and laid siege on Israel's capital city, Samaria. Samaria courageously rebelled against Assyria with encouragement from Egypt and possibly Urartu. Samaria's historic blockade lasted three years (725–723 BC), during which the Assyrian army had heavy losses. The Bible records the following excerpt about the siege of Samaria by Assyria:

"1 In the twelfth year of King Ahaz of Judah, Hoshea, son of Elah, began to reign in Samaria over Isreal; he reigned nine years. 2 He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, yet unlike the kings of Israel who were before him. 3 King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against him; Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. 4 But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea; for he had sent messengers to King So of Egypt, and offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; therefore the king of Assyria confined him and imprisoned him. 5 Then the king

of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria; for three years he besieged it."¹⁴⁰

The Bible mentions that Shalmaneser V besieged Samaria for three years (725–723 BC) without conquering it, although the Assyrian army was at its peak. The prolonged resistance of a small town like Samaria to mighty Assyria's powerful military was unheard of in ancient people's history. Shalmaneser V failed because of Samaria's vigorous resistance and its geographical location, and the effect of the following internal and external factors.

During the siege of Samaria, Assyria was internally unstable. An internal resistance had erupted against Shalmaneser V for his policies on using the army to strengthen his position. The nobility and priests have opposed his policies. His decree for abolishing the Assyrian supreme god Assur temples' permits has caused an uproar and rejection. Eventually, Shalmaneser V was assassinated in 722 BC, and Sargon II was raised on Assyria's throne.

Simultaneously, Assyria's external affairs were limping; Urartu, once again, had started military operations against Assyria, taking advantage of Assyria's internal and external unstable and difficult situations. In this regard, the following excerpt is noted:

"As it seems, the political vigor of Rusa I and his distinct military victories in the South are related to the times where Assyria was weak. Topuzava Assyro-Urartian bilingual inscription describes them. According to this source, Rusa I continues to maintain his posts in the impregnable mountains covered by inaccessible forests, with a great strategic

important area of Ardini-Musasir."¹⁴¹ *Here, the King of Urartu, first, establishes various religious centers for worship then, supplies his army with auxiliary troops and chariots provided by King Urzana of Musasir, moves toward the "mountains of Assyria" where he gives great losses to the enemy.*"¹⁴²

Gurgen Karapetyan describes the siege of Samaria and the assassination of Shalmaneser V. The excerpt below is noted:

*"Taking advantage of the temporary weakening of Assyria, Rusa I merged Musasir's army to his army, invaded Assyria, on which he left an inscription. Perhaps, this was the last external expedition against Assyria, undertaken by the Kingdom of Van since in Assyria Sargon II came to the throne, whose reigning years coincide with the years in which Assyria was at its highest peak."*¹⁴³

To explain Rusa I's military operations against Assyria, one should note that Assyria's preoccupation with besieging Samaria provided the golden opportunity for The Kingdom of Van to extend its borders.

No historical evidence exists that links Rusa I military campaigns to Assyria's siege of Samaria. Urartu wanted to see Assyria occupied with wars in distant places and not to see a victorious Assyria since that would encourage Assyria's move

¹⁴¹. Ardini-Musasir was an ancient city located near the upper Great Zab River between Lake Urmia and Lake Van. In Urartian, Ardini (likely from Armenian *Artin*) was an ancient city of Urartu, attested in Assyrian sources of the 9th and 8th centuries BC; see Map 4.

¹⁴². *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyun*, Vol. 1, p. 321.

¹⁴³. Karapetyan L. Gurgen, *Hayots Patmutyan Urvagtser*, Vol. I, p. 230–231.

¹⁴⁰. *Bible*, 2 Kings, 17:1–5.

toward Egypt and the wealthy ports of the Mediterranean. If Assyria captured them, it would make Assyria rich and powerful, blocking the profitable trade routes in front of Urartu.

XII.

The Fall of Samaria

Sargon II (722–705 BC), the new king of Assyria, like his predecessor Tiglath-Pileser III, faced the same three old regional fronts: Damascus, Urartu, and the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. On this topic, an excerpt from Anton Moortgat notes the following:

“This new king’s life, which eventually died on the battlefield for the sake of his empire, was a repetition of Tiglath-Pileser’s life. Sargon II responsibilities were to keep his empire safe from the followings:

- 1. Small Aramaic states in the country of Babylon and the kingdom of Babylon.*
- 2. Urartu and the northern and the northeastern peoples.*
- 3. Syria and Palestine.”¹⁴⁴*

Sargon II’s life became a series of military campaigns to reconquer the countries that rebelled against him. He attempted to maintain the Assyrian supremacy with its vast borders; as we shall see later, it was far beyond his and Assyria’s military capabilities.

Speaking of Sargon II’s military motives, the renowned historian Taha Bagr, in the following excerpt, reflects upon the declared and undeclared coalitions against Assyria, based on the ideology of *My enemy’s enemy is my friend*. Also, he calls Urartu “*The Armenian State*,” a name rightly given to characterize the region:

“Sargon II became preoccupied with solving important issues

¹⁴⁴. Moortgat Anton, *Tarykh Al-Sharq Al-Adhna Al-Qadya*), p. 303.

*of the conquered countries, some of those were an outcome of leadership change, whereas the others, forming the majority, were the results of his predecessor Tiglath-Pileser III's distant achievements in Iran, and his suppression of the Elamite State, as well as Assyria's conquests in Syria, Phoenicia, and Palestine, which snatched from the Egyptian State its most important economic revenues and its maritime and land connections. On top of all, the Armenian State was awaiting the right moment to escape from the Assyrian influence. All these led those three States to form a coalition against Assyria."*¹⁴⁵

Sargon II gained fame in history for his well-organized intelligence network. He paid close attention to Urartu's internal and external developments. Right after his reign, the following year, Sargon II decided to continue his predecessor's invasion to terminally capture the Israeli capital city of Samaria and destroy the Israeli Kingdom.

Sargon II had received information from his intelligence networks that Urartu's King Rusa I was preoccupied with derailing the Cimmerians' advancement. Therefore, Assyria neutralized the threat posed by Urartu. However, Babylon's situation was moderately quiet since the assassination of Assyria's King Shalmaneser V had relieved the Babylonian hatred toward Assyria for a while. Thus, the time was ripe for Sargon II to take advantage of the situation to successfully capture the city of Samaria and end the failed campaign started by his predecessor Shalmaneser V.

Sargon II launched his historic military expedition over Israel against King Hoshea (732–722 BC) of Israel. Unlike his predecessors,

¹⁴⁵ Bagr Taha *Muqadme Fi Tarikh Al-Hadart Al-Qademe*, p. 511.

Sargon II acted ruthlessly, as King Hoshea joined with distant Egypt and possibly Urartu to overthrow the Assyrian influence. Urartu's leader Rusa I (735–714 BC), had also targeted his efforts toward Assyria.

King Hoshea was the last King of Israel, and his coalition with distant Egypt was described historically as a catastrophic move.¹⁴⁶ Yes, Hoshea's action was a fatal mistake and had disastrous results as Egypt in this period was unable to resist the Assyrian encroachments. At the same time, Urartu was busy fighting off the Cimmerians. In 721 BC, Sargon II invaded the lonely and helpless Israel. He conquered and looted the capital city of Samaria. A large part of the city population was taken captive. The Bible records the fall of Samaria as:

*"6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria. He placed them in Halah,¹⁴⁷ on the Habor,¹⁴⁸ the river of Gozan,¹⁴⁹ and in the cities of the Medes. 7 This occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh King of Egypt. They had worshiped other gods."*¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, p. 332.

¹⁴⁷ Halah is given various identifications, one of them, a city in Assyria on the Khabur River.

¹⁴⁸ Habor or the Khabur River is the largest perennial tributary to the Euphrates River in the Syrian territory.

¹⁴⁹ River of Gozan was a place in Assyria to which the Israelites were deported, to the west of Nisibis.

¹⁵⁰ *Bible*, 2 Kings, *Fall of Samaria*, 17:6-7.

As noted in the Bible, Sargon II's invasion of Israel led the Lord to punish the Israelites since they had drifted away from God. One of Assyria's contemporaneous Prophets, Prophet Micah, foresaw the fall of both Samaria and Jerusalem. Prophet Micah lived in the 8th century BC and was contemporary to Prophets Isaiah, Amos, and Hosea. He lived in Judah and appealed to the people of both Samaria and Jerusalem.¹⁵¹

In the above Biblical passage, Assyria's king was not named. However, the name Shalmaneser is mentioned in another part of the Bible. Here is an excerpt from the Bible:

*"9 In the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea, son of Elah of Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria came up against Samaria, besieged it, 10 and at the end of three years, took it. In the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of King Hoshea of Israel, Samaria was taken."*¹⁵²

Here, it is important to note; almost all historic references refer to Sargon II as the conqueror of Samaria who put an end to the Kingdom of Israel, not his predecessor Shalmaneser V.

Therefore, Israel—the Jewish Northern Kingdom—was destroyed and removed from history; see Chart 2, at the end of the book. This historic event was a blow to the long-term interests of Urartu since Damascus, Israel, and the regional other small kingdoms were considered Urartu's local allies against Assyria. In section XI of this chapter, we saw how Urartu attempted to expand its borders on Assyria's account while taking advantage of Assyria's occupancy with the three years siege of Samaria:

¹⁵¹. Bible, Micah, 1.

¹⁵². Bible, 2 Kings, 18:9-10.

"In these difficult conditions of both internal and external strife Rusa I sought to maintain the power of his kingdom. He pursued an adroit foreign policy, avoiding any open clash with Assyria, now restored to its former strength, and seeking to preserve the security of his frontiers by treaties with the rulers of the neighboring countries. Fortunately, the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser V, was occupied with internal troubles and could spare little thought for Urartu. In the year 722 B.C., however, there was a sudden change in the situation when Sargon, son of Tiglath-Pileser III, overthrew his brother and seized the Assyrian throne. From the very beginning of his reign, Sargon showed a close interest in the course of events in neighboring countries. In Syria and Palestine, he was concerned by the activities of the petty princedoms which were supported by Egypt; in the south, his objective was to bring Babylon into submission; and in the north, he set out to destroy his ever mighty foe, the kingdom of Urartu.

*Sargon began by dealing with Syria and Palestine, defeating the forces of the Egyptian Pharaoh Shabaka, and then turned his attention to the northern front."*¹⁵³

Rusa I (735–714 BC) reorganized his army and began the interrupted struggle of Urartu against Assyria. To push the battlefields away from the Armenian Highland's borders, he made new alliances in the West with one of the Indo-European nations, the Mushkis.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³. Piotrovsky, B, Boris, *The Ancient Civilization of Urartu*, Geneva, p. 86.

¹⁵⁴. Mushkis were an Indo-European people mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions.

Sargon II, anticipating the danger of this new alliance, moved quickly to suppress it, especially when the Hittite Kingdom of Carchemish, encouraged by Rusa I, proclaimed its separation from Assyria, hoping to end the burdensome Assyrian yoke. Sargon II, in 717 BC, with a vast army, invaded the Hittite Kingdom of Carchemish, bringing an end to the last Hittite Kingdom.

Israel's destruction in 721 BC and the fall of the Hittite Kingdom of Carchemish removed the two possible allies of the Kingdom of Van from the stage of history, making Urartu lose its partners in the West, one after the other.

In 714 BC, Sargon II launched his renowned invasion on Urartu. At the end of this battle, to achieve some results of his failed military campaign, he made an unexpected attack on the town of Musasir and robbed it. Musasir was the religious center of Urartu.

Not enough information exists about Sargon II's final years of reign. His last military campaign was against Tabal,¹⁵⁵ located in eastern Asia Minor. In this battle, Sargon II was either killed on the battlefield or possibly assassinated by a plot organized by his son, Sennacherib. We know for sure that Sargon II was killed in 705 BC and was not buried in Assyria. The prevailing opinion is that he was dead on the battlefield while fighting the Indo-European Cimmerians in Cilicia.

¹⁵⁵. Tabal was a Luwian speaking Neo-Hittite kingdom of South Central Anatolia. The Kingdom of Tabal first appeared after the collapse of the Hittite Empire; see Map 4.

CHAPTER 4

Biblical Accounts on Urartu–Armenia

The historical events presented in the previous chapter were about continuous conflicts and wars between Ararat–Urartu with Assyria, where Urartu's role was significant in shaping the region's geopolitics, especially those of the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, those events have biblical accounts without mentioning Urartu–Armenia, or the Kingdom of Van– directly.

Our purpose of this chapter and its subsequent sections is to examine those historical events that have biblical accounts, mentioning Armenia, Ararat–Urartu. We noticed that, of all books of the Old Testament Prophets, only the first three Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) have accounts related to Ararat–Urartu. We will refer to the biblical passages of those historical events in their chronological order.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Biblical references to Armenia are in five places, using different names: (a) in Genesis (8:4) as *mountains of Ararat*; (b) in Kings II (19:37) as *Land of Ararat*; (c) in Tobit (1:24) as *mountains of Ararat* (d) in Isaiah (37:36–38) as *Land of Ararat*, where the two patricidal brothers of the Assyrian King Sennacherib sought refuge in (681 BC), and (e) in Jeremiah (51:27)

as *Ararat*, where the *Kingdom of Ararat* is noted (590 BC) amongst the kingdoms called upon to fight Babylon.

Here, we will not address the prehistoric events, like the *Garden of Eden and its four Rivers*¹⁵⁶ and the story of *The Great Flood*,¹⁵⁷ and the landing of Noah's Ark on the mountains of Ararat.

¹⁵⁶. *Bible*, Genesis, 2:11-15.

¹⁵⁷. *Bible*, Genesis, 8:4.

I.

Urartu and the Murder of Sennacherib

The works of sixteen Prophets make up the Books of the Old Testament. Only the first three Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel) references Ararat-Urartu. The content of the books of the stated three Prophets makes up two-thirds of the content of the Books of the Old Testament. Table 4 shows the names of all Prophets in the Biblical order. In Table 4, those Prophets who spoke of Ararat-Urartu their names are bolded.

Table 4
The Books of Prophets as listed in the Bible

1. Isaiah	2. Jeremiah	3. Ezekiel	4. Daniel
5. Hosea	6. Joel	7. Amos	8. Obadiah
9. Jonah	10. Micah	11. Nahum	12. Habakkuk
13. Zephaniah	14. Haggai	15. Zechariah	16. Malachi

As mentioned in Chapter 1, during the first half of the 9th century BC, Urartu was a kingdom in the Armenian Highland, named according to the cuneiform inscriptions of Assyria. In the Bible, this kingdom is called *the Land of Ararat* or *the Kingdom of Ararat*.

Table 5 below summarizes the living years of the first three Prophets, the context (the reason) for their mention of *Ararat-Urartu*, the corresponding prophecy year, the names given to *Urartu*, the Biblical Book, and the Passage where they appeared. From this summary, Urartu-Armenia has five different representations; *Land of Ararat*, *Kingdom of Ararat*, and *the House*

of Togarmah.

Table 5

Biblical Books of Prophets and references of Urartu-Armenia

PROPHET AND HIS TIME PERIOD BC	REASON FOR MENTIONING	TIME PERIOD BC	MENTIONING OF ARMENIA	BIBLICAL BOOK
Isaiah 740-690	Murder of Sennacherib	681	Land of Ararat	Book of Isaiah 37:36,38
Isaiah	Murder of Sennacherib	681	Land of Ararat	2 Kings 19:36-37
Jeremiah 626-587	Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion	594-592	Kingdom of Ararat	Book of Jeremiah 51:27
Ezekiel	Gog as a tool of God	593	House of Togarmah	Book of Ezekiel 38:5,6
Ezekiel	A funeral song for Tyre	Probably 593	House of Togarmah	Book of Ezekiel 27:14

Sennacherib (705–681 BC) succeeded his father, the Assyrian renowned King Sargon II, who became a powerful king like his father. After Sargon II's death (705 BC), Babylon, Judah, and Syria rebelled against Assyria.

Sargon II was murdered in 705 BC. King Hezekiah of Judah (716–687 BC) found it convenient to liberate his country from Assyrian rule. He cooperated with the rebellious Babylonians and met Merodach-Baladan envoy—the Babylonian anti-Assyrian leader. King Hezekiah marched against Assyria's supporter King Ekron,¹⁵⁸ near Judah's borders, captured him, and took him a prisoner to Jerusalem. All the hostile actions by Judah were directed against Assyria.

It is also possible to say that King Hezekiah's moves were

¹⁵⁸, Ekron was an ancient Canaanite city located in southwestern Canaan. Ekron has been identified as modern Tel-Miqne, which lies 35 km west of Jerusalem; see Map 3.

reckless. Assyria's new King Sennacherib suppressed the Babylonian uprising then marched toward the West without fear of attacks from the North (Urartu) since Urartu from the north was not posing any serious threat to Assyria as it was engaged in battles with the Indo-European people. Sennacherib destroyed the city of Babylon in 689 BC. Rebellious Babylon was an unsolvable issue and a life or death struggle for Assyria, as we will see that the mortal blow to Assyria came from Babylon.

Before discussing the details of Assyria's invasion of Judah, it is worth summarizing Urartu's position and status at this time. Urartu—the Kingdom of Van—was occupied in suppressing the Indo-European Cimmerian invasions to the extent where Urartu's King Argishti II (714–685 BC) in 704 BC sent a peace delegation to Assyria. King Sennacherib of Assyria accepted the peace delegation and signed a peace treaty with Urartu, ending the everlasting animosity between the two Kingdoms.

Urartu and Assyria have signed peace agreements three times. Table 6 below summarizes the years where the kings of Urartu sent peace delegations to Assyria and the names of the kings of Assyria.

Table 6

Peace agreement years between Urartu and Assyria

YEAR	URARTIAN KING	ASSYRIAN KING
704 BC	Argishti II (714-685 BC)	Sennacherib (705-681 BC)
654 BC	Rusa II (685-645 BC)	Ashurbanipal (669-626 BC)
645 BC	Sarduri II (645-625 BC)	Ashurbanipal

As the peace initiator, Argishti II sent horses to King Sennacherib to show his goodwill gesture. The excerpt below is

from the well-known Armenian historian Leo, which attests to the point:

*"Argishti II sent horses as gifts to Sennacherib, which means partial subjugation, at least to show."*¹⁵⁹

In our opinion, Argishti II's motive was to show friendship with Assyria to escape war and minimize consequences. Let us elaborate on this issue.

After Sargon II's death, Sennacherib faced concerns from the rising rebellions against Assyrian sovereignty in Babylon, Syria, and Judah. Sinharib was not worried about Urartu. Harry Saggs reflects upon Sennacherib's position toward Urartu in the excerpt below:

*"Sennacherib had no concerns with Urartu over its northern border, due to his father's activity and his direct personal activity in the region, and the setback that Urartu received from the Cimmerians."*¹⁶⁰

Urartu, in this period, was engaged in resisting the invasion of the barbarous Cimmerians. Rusa II (685–645 BC), who succeeded his father, Argishti II, was compelled to keep his father's peace agreement with King Sennacherib of Assyria.

As to why Urartu was in this position, an excerpt from Mark Chahin explains how the Northern Kingdoms, including Urartu, were exhausted from the Cimmerian invasions. He writes:

"On succeeding to the throne, Sennacherib inherited the struggles of Assyria, not only with its powerful southern neighbor Babylon, but also with Syria and Palestine, and he made preparations to the invasion of Egypt. It seems.

¹⁵⁹. Leo, *Erkeri Zhoghovatsu*, Vol. 1, p. 234.

¹⁶⁰. Saggs Harry, *Azamat Babel*, p.153.

*Therefore, that after the Cimmerian ravages, the exhausted northern kingdoms had ceased to be troublesome, and the Cimmerians themselves had temporarily dispersed."*¹⁶¹

Therefore, Urartu's peace treaty with Assyria was helpful and beneficial to both Urartu and Assyria.

The forced political position of Urartu against Assyria was an encouraging signal for Sennacherib to march toward the West over the Kingdom of Judah, punishing the rebellious King Hezekiah, who had stopped paying tribute to Assyria. He besieged Jerusalem, the capital city of Judah.

This event has been recorded in the Biblical Book of Prophet Isaiah, where he describes King Hezekiah's prayers (716–687 BC)¹⁶² to God, asking for help and mercy. Prophet Isaiah prophesied and foresaw Jerusalem's liberation from Assyrians and Babylonians' conquest over Judah a century later. Prophet Isaiah encouraged King Hezekiah to rely upon the Lord and not to surrender to the Assyrians. The Prophet informed the King, saying that the Lord heard his prayers and that the Assyrian King Sennacherib will not enter Jerusalem.

Prophet Isaiah was a profound Prophet of the Assyrian era. He lived in Jerusalem and was contemporaneous to the Kings Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Judah's King Hezekiah. His prophecy spanned half a century (740–690 BC).¹⁶³ He is the author of Chapters 1–33 and 36–39 of his book in the Old Testament. The rest of his

¹⁶¹. Chahin Mark, *The Kingdom of Armenia*, p. 94.

¹⁶². According to other sources, King Hezekiah ruled Judah (724–697 BC), and Sennacherib's invasion occurred in 701 BC. See Herzog, Chaim, and Gichon, Mordechai, *Battles of the Bible*, p. 16, 210.

¹⁶³. Wright Ernest G., *The Layman's Bible Commentary, Isaiah*, p. 14.

book chapters belonged to another Prophet Isaiah (of the same name) who lived a one-and-half century later.

Prophet Isaiah passed the Lord's command to the King of Judah, which is recorded in the following verses:

*"33 Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into the city, shoot an arrow there, come before it with a shield, or cast up a siege ramp against it. 34 By the way that he came, by the same he shall return; he shall not come into this city says the LORD. 35 For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David."*¹⁶⁴

Years before this raid, to settle the issue of Assyria's throne, Sennacherib appointed one of his sons, Esarhaddon, to the throne of Assyria. Esarhaddon was also a supporter of the reconciliation policy with Babylon. This decision enraged Sennacherib's other two sons, who decided to murder their father and remove their brother Esarhaddon from the throne. The rebellious sons killed their father when Sennacherib was busy with his military campaign against Judah.

Facing heavy losses in Judea, Sennacherib's army compelled to return to Assyria defeated. In 681 BC, Sennacherib's two sons plotted their famous conspiracy. Esarhaddon's inscriptions stated this historical event, accusing his brothers of killing his father without giving their names:

"My brothers conceived a wicked plan. They forgot the gods and made a conspiracy behind my back, which was against the wills of the gods. Contrary to the wills of gods, they

¹⁶⁴. Bible, Isaiah, 37: 33–35.

*wanted to change my father's sympathy toward me, his humble servant. Nonetheless, his heart cared for me, and his eyes were fixed on my lawful right. They rebelled, and to seize the kingdom killed Sennacherib."*¹⁶⁵

The Book of Kings of the Old Testament recorded this historical event also:

*"35 That very night, the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 36 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home and lived at Nineveh. 37 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded him."*¹⁶⁶

Book of Prophet Isaiah of the Old Testament also mentions this historic event:

*"36 Then the angel of the LORD set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies. 37 Then King Sennacherib of Assyria left, went home, and lived at Nineveh. 38 As he was worshiping in the house of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped into the land of Ararat. His son Esarhaddon succeeded him."*¹⁶⁷

It is noteworthy that the same story remembered in two

¹⁶⁵. Adontz Nicholas, *Hayastani Patmutyun*, p. 130.

¹⁶⁶. Bible, 2 Kings, 19: 35–37.

¹⁶⁷. Bible, Isaiah, 37: 36–38.

different parts of the Bible refers to the same event, indicating that the patricidal brothers fled to the country of *Ararat* (*Land of Ararat*). Their escape to Armenia raises questions about whether Urartu had any role in this historic event. It is necessary to uncover the truth.

The sudden assassination of Sinharib and the rising instability in Assyria would naturally benefit the Assyrian enemies in the first place. In this regard, an excerpt from Michael Roaf stated:

*"Sennacherib himself met a violent death. He was assassinated by his son Arda-Mulissi in February 680. To the Jews, it was just retribution for his attack on Jerusalem; to the Babylonians it represented punishment for his blasphemy against Babylon. Indeed, there might have been some Babylonian involvement in the plot, but it was probably the result of a dynastic quarrel."*¹⁶⁸

It is worth asking, in this passage, why Michael Roaf did not mention *Urantians* alongside the Jews and the Babylonians, even though it was beneficial for Urartu to see a weak and internally split Assyria. Has he forgotten? It is unlikely. Perhaps, he was convinced that Urartu would not get involved in this conspiracy because it was in a peace treaty with Assyria. Here, it is essential to state that Urartu's peace agreement with Assyria happened when Urartu was engaged in suppressing the Cimmerians.

Because of the reason mentioned above, Urartu's involvement was excluded. The other two kingdoms that could have benefited from Sennacherib's murder; were Babylon and Judah. Most historians believe that Babylon was the only

¹⁶⁸. Roaf Michael, *Cultural Atlas of Mesopotamia and the Ancient Near East*, p. 188.

beneficiary and the participant in this conspiracy since, during this time, Judah was weak. Its kingdom was geographically far from Assyria; therefore, its participation was excluded.

The Biblical references state that the patricidal brothers escaped to *Armenia. The Land of Ararat*. Here, it is important to mention again that Urartu had no role in the murder of Sennacherib, since in this period, both Urartu and Assyria were in a peace agreement, as we mentioned above. Additionally, the Kingdom of Van-Urartu was under the Indo-European nations' invasions and continued its survival with heavy sacrifices in this period. **Thus, one can conclude that the patricidal brothers did not escape to Urartu;** thus, exempting Urartu's participation in the assassination of Sennacherib.

The murder of Sennacherib was not just an assassination but an organized coup against the Assyrian government's legitimacy. As stated, the coup plotters fought their last battle in Assyria, lost it, and fled to the Armenian Highland. This battle happened near **Nisibis**,¹⁶⁹ north of which is the mountainous area of **Sassoun**.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, Sassoun was the safest and the closest place for the patricidal brothers to seek refuge.

The historian Harry Saggs mentions that the two brothers

¹⁶⁹. Nisibis or Nusaybin is a city in the Mardin Province of modern Turkey very close to the neighboring Syrian town of Qamishli. The Armenian name was Mtsbin and was the capital of the Armenian Kingdom of Edessa; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

¹⁷⁰. Sassoun is a district in the Batman Province of modern Turkey. Throughout history, Sassoun has been part of historic Armenia and the origin of the Armenian epic *Sasna Tsrer* (Daredevils of Sassoun). The folklore Daredevils of Sassoun was first collected and written in 1876; now it is known as "*The epic of Sassountsi Davit*" or "*David of Sassoun*."

escaped to *Armenia (Urtu)* using the words “Armenia” and “Urtu” loosely, without clarifying the differences between the two names. The following is an insert from Harry Saggs:

“The Assyrian army prepared to fight against Esarhaddon in Nisibis. Furthermore, when Esarhaddon was emerging, a division broke out between the Assyrian army Generals; some announced that they were joining the ranks of Esarhaddon when they learned that the goddess Ishtar¹⁷¹ was doing miracles in his favor, while the patricidal sons fled to Armenia (Urtu). The entire people of Assyria greeted Esarhaddon when all the army troops seconded him.”¹⁷²

We should mention here that Babylonians, like Assyrians, worshiped the goddess Ishtar. Goddess Ishtar was equivalent to the Armenian Anahit godmother. Both were considered the Lady of War.

According to the Father of the Armenian History, Moses of Khoren (Movses Khorenatsi), Skyordi greeted the patricide brothers *Sanasar and Balthasar*, who fled to *our land*, referring to the same southern region of Sassoun. Moses of Khoren writes:

“Eighty, plus and minus years, from the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar, this Sennacherib was the king of Assyria; he who besieged Jerusalem during the rule of the Jewish leader Hezekiah. After killing him, his sons Adramelech and Sanasar fled and came to us. Our brave ancestor Skayordi settled one of them, Sanasar, near the borders of Assyria, in

¹⁷¹. The noted goddess Ishtar was the Babylonian equivalent of the Armenian goddess Anahit the goddess of fertility and healing, wisdom, and water in Armenian mythology. In the early periods, she was the goddess of war.

¹⁷². Saggs, Harry, *Azamat Babel*, p.155.

the south-western region of our country. His offspring grew and multiplied, filling the mountainous area known as Sim. From them, the distinguished and the famous, later, with their work, showing loyalty to our kings, deserved consulship¹⁷³ of those regions. Whereas, Argamozan¹⁷⁴ dwelt in the south-east side of the same region.”¹⁷⁵

The name *Argamozan* is the same as *Adramelech*, which with a twist and distortion, has become *Argamozan*.

In the Ancient East, it was a custom for the kings or the royal members to have several names or titles and be called entirely different names by neighboring nations, or the said people's language would adapt their names. Accordingly, the two patricidal brothers were given other names in various sources. In this regard, Valeri Khachatryan quoted the following:

“In the Bible, Arad-Ninlil, and Nabusharusur, the sons of the murdered Assyrian king Sennacherib, is noted as Adramelech and Sharezer, Movses Khorenatsi used Adramelech and Sanasar, whereas in the epic of “the Daredevil of Sassoun” they are named Sanasar and Balthasar.”¹⁷⁶

The renowned Armenian epic “*Daredevil of Sassoun*” or “*David of Sassoun*” consists of four episodes: *Sanasar and Balthasar*, *Mher the Great*, *David of Sassoun*, *Mher the Younger*. The epic's first episode, *Sanasar and Balthasar*, is a reaction to Sennacherib's

¹⁷³. The Kingdom of Armenia was historically divided into four consulates (bdeskhutyuns), strategically located in the four cardinal directions.

¹⁷⁴. The name Argamozan is the same as Adramelech, which with distortion turned to Argamozan.

¹⁷⁵. Khorenatsi Movses, *Patmutyun Hayots*, p.110.

¹⁷⁶. Khachatryan Valeri, *Hayots Hin Patmoutyan Hartseri Shurj*, p. 5.

assassination event and the escape of the patricidal brothers to the Sassoun province of the Land of Ararat. In the epic, Sanasar and Balthasar kill their father, Baghdad's caliph,¹⁷⁷ in Mesopotamia, present-day Iraq, and they escape to Armenia's Sassoun region. Likewise, Nineveh has been named Baghdad. The king of Assyria has been named the caliph of Baghdad, Adramelech has been named Balthasar, and Sharezar has been named Sanasar.

Therefore, we conclude that the *Land of Ararat*, noted in the Biblical Book of Isaiah, where the patricidal brothers sought refuge, was not Urartu. Instead, it was the *Sassoun* region of the Armenian Highland, where an Armenian state existed named Arme-Shubria; see Map 1 at the end of the book.

In the Assyrian cuneiform inscriptions, Sassoun was named *Shubria* (*Shupria*), a name that most probably came from Subari, one of the most senior people of the Armenian Highland. After Sennacherib's assassination, his two sons, along with other opponents of Esarhaddon and the opponents of King Rusa II of Urartu, took refuge in the country of Arme-Shubria. Here, it is worth mentioning that Sassoun or Shubria until then was part of Urartu. However, at the time of the King Sennacherib assassination, it was no longer under the influence of Urartu's king, thus, becoming a refuge place for various oppositions of Urartu and Assyria. Boris Piotrovsky notes as:

"The Assyrian King Sennacherib was killed in 681 B.C. in a palace revolution, and after the accession of Esarhaddon (681–668 B.C.), his murderers fled to the north-west, to the land of Shupria, which bordered on Urartu. The Old Testament preserves a recollection of this, recording that

¹⁷⁷. Baghdad is the capital of Iraq and was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate for half a millennium (762–1258).

*Sennacherib's sons, having killed their father, fled to Urartu (the "land of Ararat" or "land of Armenia")."*¹⁷⁸

The excerpt below is on Arme-Shubria; its connection with Urartu–The Kingdom of Van, and it's being the probable refuge place for the patricidal brothers of Assyria:

*"By the end of the 8th century BC, in the Armenian Highland, near the Kingdom of Van, in the west and south-west of Lake Van, a state of Arme-Shubria had become independent and began pursuing a completely independent policy (in the III millennium BC, this country was known as Subur and Arman), which was opposing the power of Van and the Assyrian, by giving shelter to the refugees fleeing from those countries (high-ranking soldiers, governors, and other officials who, perhaps, were political opponents) and refusing to turn them over. Yet in 681 BC, because of the assassination plot in Assyria, with the failed coup of King Sennacherib's two sons (Esarhaddon, their third brother, raised to the throne and ruled from 680–669 BC), they took refuge, probably, in the south-west of Armenia, Arme-Shubria."*¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, although Arme-Shubria was part of Urartu, it was continuously rebelling against the Kingdom of Van's central rule. After seven years of Sennacherib's assassination, in 673 BC, Esarhaddon and Rusa II, with combined forces, attacked Arme-Shubria, punishing those rebellions gathered there. Therefore, this proves that the two kings were furious at Arme-Shubria; however,

¹⁷⁸. Piotrovsky B. Boris, *The Ancient Civilization of Urartu*, p. 128.

¹⁷⁹. Mardigyan Suren and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 129–130.

their punitive attack was late since Arme-Shubria was not easy to conquer because it dared to shelter the patricidal brothers.

Rafael Ishkhanyan gives another reason for the two kings, Rusa II and Sennacherib, to feel furious about the rebellious forces gathered in Arme-Shubria. He writes;

*“Rusha and Esarhaddon were afraid of their enemies gathered in Sassoun, as they can gather forces and attack Nineveh or Van-Tosp. Their fear also emanated from the fact that the opponents gathered in Sassoun were secretly negotiating with Medes and Scythians. They wanted to overthrow the kings of Assyria and Armenia with the help of the Medes and Scythians.”*¹⁸⁰

As we shall see in the following pages, both Assyria's and Urartu's distress about the Medes and the Scythians' strengthening was just.

Thus, the most potent proof that the patricidal brothers fled to Sassoun (Arme-Shubria) and not Urartu is from the inscription of Esarhaddon in 673 BC addressed to his supreme god Assur, describing his invasion on Shubria and not on Urartu:

*“To the fugitives, who abandoned their masters and fled to Shupria, I cut ... their noses, eyes, and ears (so that no one) escape to another country, I set punishment on them. I returned each one of them to their country and their lords.”*¹⁸¹

All the information above leads us to conclude that the Biblical reference to the *Land of Ararat*, where the patricidal

¹⁸⁰. Ishkhanyan Rafael, *Hayeri Tsakume ev Hnakuyun Patmutyun*, p. 88.

¹⁸¹. Shahinyan Levon, *Urartui Areghtsvatse*, p. 52–53.

brothers sheltered, was not Urartu—the Kingdom of Van. Instead, Urartu's subordinate but rebellious country of Arme-Shubria, located in the south of Armenian Highland in the Sassoun region. Esarhaddon's inscriptions (673 BC) and the accounts mentioned by our Great historian Moses of Khoren confirm this reality.

On this issue, there is another reference worthy of mention. According to one of the Syriac¹⁸² translations of the Bible, the “*Land of Ararat*” has been translated as the “*World of Korduk*,”¹⁸³ located in the southeast of Sassoun. This excerpt is from H. G. Melkonyan:

*“By saying “Land of Ararat,” the author did not consider the Country of Ararat or the Kingdom of Ararat, but the province of Korduk. The translated Assyrian Old Testament Peshitto¹⁸⁴ supported this assumption. In Peshitto, instead of Ararat, it is written the Land of Kardu (Atra Kardu), just like in the Syriac Lives of Mar Awgin.”*¹⁸⁵

The province of Korduk was either part of Arme-Shubria or part of Urartu, which leads us to conclude that other translations unknown to us refer to the small regional countries as the *Land of Ararat*.

¹⁸². Syriac is a dialect of Middle Aramaic that was once spoken across much of the Fertile Crescent. It first appeared as a script in the 1st century AD after being spoken as an unwritten language for five centuries.

¹⁸³. Korduk or Gordyene was an ancient region located in historical Armenia, present-day south-eastern Turkey, and northern Iraq.

¹⁸⁴. Peshitto means the “simple, common, straight, vulgate,” also known as the Syriac Vulgate. It is the standard version of the Bible for churches in the Syriac tradition. Mar Awgin (died 363 AD) founded the first coenobitic monastery of Asia and still regarded as the founder of monasticism in Mesopotamia.

¹⁸⁵. Melkonyan G. H., *Hay-Asorakan Haraperutyuneri Patmutyunits*, p. 82.

II.

Urartu's Role to Control the West; the Fall of Nineveh

This section will address the development of historical events in detail that are important to understand better the topics presented in the subsequent sections.

In the second half of the 7th century BC, a powerful state was established by unifying various Medes tribes, whose capital city was Ecbatana, the present-day Hamadan in Iran. The Median State became influential during King Cyaxares (625–585 BC), whom the great Armenian historian Moses of Khoren named *Varpakes*.

After the death of the mighty King Ashurbanipal of Assyria in (626 BC), Babylon proclaimed its independence under King Nabopolassar's leadership in 626 BC. He established the last Babylonian kingdom, named the Neo-Babylonian or the Chaldian,¹⁸⁶ also known as the Second Babylonian Empire, which short-lived, and declined in 539 BC.

King Cyaxares of Media decided to deliver the final blow to Assyria by cooperating with Assyria's historic southern foe Babylon. Soon, Media's and Babylon's cooperation was endorsed and strengthened in a treaty and a political marriage of Babylonian King Nabopolassar's son Nebuchadnezzar to King Cyaxares's daughter Amytis.

Finally, in 614 BC, the Medes from the northeast and

¹⁸⁶. Chaldean or Chaldian were Semitic settlers' tribes, appeared in the region from the 10th century BC and became known as the Chaldeans or the Chaldees. They refer to the 11th dynasty of Babylon (6th century BC).

Babylonians from the south simultaneously launched an attack on Assyria. The Medes conquered Assur, one of the oldest capitals of Assyria, west of the Tigris River. The allies simultaneously marched toward the capital city of Nineveh, and for approximately three months of siege, they captured Ninveh in 612 BC. Thus, the process of ending the existence of mighty Assyria in the region had begun when Assyria's historic rival, Urartu, was in a feeble state. The excerpt from M. G. Nersisyan notes;

*"During the destruction of Assyria, Urartu was unheard of as an active force. That's understandable; it was squeezed in its former territory and was on the verge of destruction."*¹⁸⁷

After the downfall of Nineveh, a segment of the Assyrian army withdrew toward Asia Minor and settled in Carchemish. They elected a prince from the Assyrian royal family as a king to rule them, calling him Ashur-Uballit II. The new king began cooperation with the Egyptians to fight the Medes and Babylonians, hoping to regain Assyria. The final downfall of Nineveh drove the Egyptians to rescue the capture of once their lost provinces of Palestine, Judea, Phoenicia, and Syria, through cooperation with Assyrians. Thus, Egypt and Babylon entered a period of fierce battles, which also impacted Urartu.

With the development of the events, it was evident that a big battle was to erupt in northern Syria, not far from the borders of Urartu. The victorious side was to conquer the West and decide the small local kingdoms' faith, such as Judah's Kingdom.

It was essential for Babylon to keep Urartu and its separated Armenian Kingdom–Arme-Shubria–away from the regions due to

¹⁸⁷. Nersisyan G. M., *Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyun*, p. 45.

several reasons. To fulfill this mission, Babylon began annual military expeditions. Thus, in (609–608 BC), Nabopolassar organized military excursions, whose recordings are in his royal inscriptions. An excerpt from D. J. Wiseman notes;

“Assur-Uballit, supported by a large Egyptian force, recrossed the Euphrates in an attempt to recapture Harran.¹⁸⁸ The main effort seems to have been directed against the garrison left there by Nabopolassar, but this part of the text is broken and uncertain. For almost two months, until Elul, Assur-uballit maintained the siege but without success. Meanwhile, Nabopolassar marched to help his beleaguered troops. It seems that no attack was necessary, for he turned his attention immediately to the hilly district of Izalla¹⁸⁹ to the north-east of the city. This change in the objective of the Babylonian march may imply that the siege had been raised before the arrival of Nabopolassar and that the new aim was to follow up with Assur-uballit, who may have escaped toward Urartu.”¹⁹⁰

The District of Izalla was in the south of Arme-Shubria. With these new developments of events, Babylon was concerned about Urartu or Arme-Shubria's participation, especially with the possible escape of Ashur-Uballit II. Babylon was trying to adopt an old Assyrian policy of placing troops along the northern front line to

¹⁸⁸. Harran was a major ancient city in Upper Mesopotamia whose site is near the modern village of Harran, Turkey, close to the Syrian border; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

¹⁸⁹. Izalla was a district to the northeast of the ancient city of Harran, south of Arme-Shubria. Currently, it is in Turkey.

¹⁹⁰. Wiseman J. D., *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 BC)*, p. 19.

protect the ancient Assyrian territories from the north and continue the fierce battle against Egypt to take possession of the West. Babylon needed to secure its borders; as noted in chapter 3, section VI, when Urartu became powerful, it seized Syria's Mediterranean ports and isolated mighty Assyria. And, if that had repeated here, Babylon would have deprived of the wealth of the West. Therefore, it was essential for Babylon to remove Urartu from the region.

The military operations against Armenian Highland were continuing, and in the following year, Nabopolassar approached closer to the borders of Urartu. Wiseman mentions;

“In the autumn of his eighteenth year (608 B.C.) Nabopolassar continued his campaign of the previous year by marching up the Tigris to the southern Urartian border. The route taken makes it probable that Bit-Hanunia,¹⁹¹ his first objective, lay farther east than the scene of the earlier operations. The aim was clearly to contain the hill-folks who would otherwise raid the Assyrian plains, now devoid of a strong provincial administration, and deprive the Babylonians of the fruits of their recent conquests. It was, moreover, important to protect the main route by which aid to the northerly Babylonian garrisons would have to pass.”¹⁹²

Indeed, Babylon's continued military expeditions pursued one purpose; Babylon's serious concern of Urartu, Arme-Shubria, and in general, the North. The following year, in 607 BC, Nabopolassar once again raided over the same mountainous districts closer to the borders of Urartu; however, due to health problems, he

¹⁹¹. Bit-Hanunia was the region to the northwest of Nisibis; see Map 1 at the end of the Book.

¹⁹². Wiseman J. D., *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 BC)*, p. 20.

retreated to Babylon, passing all military operations to his son, the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar. It is necessary to note here that, in the Babylonian royal inscriptions, there are no accounts of a direct collision between the Babylonian armies and Urartu or the Babylonian armies and Arme-Shubria, which meant that Babylon was avoiding opening a new conflict, other than that of Egypt. Furthermore, with its military operations, Babylon aimed at warning both Urartu and Arme-Shubria not to intervene in its great war with Egypt.

Finally, the deadly war occurred, known in history as the **Battle of Carchemish**, in 605 BC. Under the leadership of its crown prince Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian army defeated the Egyptians and Assyrians, putting an end to the remains of the Assyrian State. Thus, the faith of Syria and the West was decided.

After his victories, Nebuchadnezzar received the news of his father's death. He rushed back to Babylon and was crowned that same year. Nebuchadnezzar, the heir to the throne, was crowned in Babylon and became the famous Nebuchadnezzar II. Like Assyria, Urartu's political and cultural influences were significant in Babylon, evidenced from the lavish ritual of Nebuchadnezzar's coronation. The excerpt below is from D. J. Wiseman:

*"Nonetheless, his ceremony has a number of aspects in common with earlier references to the coronation of the god Marduk,¹⁹³ of Ur-Nammu of Ur, a middle-Assyrian king, an Urartian ruler, and Samas-suma-ukim of Babylon in 689 B.C."*¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³. Marduk was the chief god of Babylon, also called Merodach or Bel, the Babylonian equivalent of Baal, meaning "lord."

¹⁹⁴. Wiseman J.D., *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, p. 19–20.

Soon, Nebuchadnezzar II returned to Syria to continue his battle against Egypt. Egypt was trying to recapture Syria and the surrounding areas, which were part of the Babylonian Empire. To achieve that goal, Egypt began instigating the local forces to rebel against Babylon.

Nebuchadnezzar II was forced to wage a prolonged war against the local small rebellious states; among them was Judah's Kingdom. Thus, in 597 BC, Nebuchadnezzar II¹⁹⁵ marched over the Kingdom of Judah, conquered Jerusalem, and took King Jehoiachin as a captive to Babylon.¹⁹⁶

To successfully continue his military operations beyond Egypt in the far West, Nebuchadnezzar II needed to secure his northern and eastern borders. In this regard, history records a good deal of undamaged inscriptions describing Nebuchadnezzar's military expeditions from Carchemish to the boundaries of Urartu. Wiseman states;

*"If the operations 'as far as Carchemish' should imply some disturbance in the north, the expedition in the following year up the bank of the Tigris may have been directed well east of Carchemish to Urartu, Elam/Zamua? As in Nabopolassar's eighteenth year. In 596/5 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, with his army, encamped by the river, a day's march from the enemy who panicked and turned back. The name of the opponent is broken, and my original suggestion that it was the 'king of Elam' is possible though doubtful."*¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵. Pritchard B., James, *Harper Collins Atlas of the Bible*, p. 20. *The Time chart of Biblical History*, p. 24.

¹⁹⁶. *Bible*, 2 Kings, 24:10-16.

¹⁹⁷. Wiseman J.D., *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon*, p. 34.

According to J. D. Wiseman, the adversary's name was King of Elam, though possible but doubtful. Elam was a kingdom in the western territories of Iran. However, geographically Elam was far from the **east of Carchemish up to Urartu**; see Map 4, at the end of the book. Therefore, in our opinion, the said invasion of Nebuchadnezzar II was either directed toward Urartu or Arme-Shubria, in the southern Sassoun region of Armenian Highland, whose power was referred to in the previous section of this chapter when discussed the assassination of Sennacherib.

The Semitic ruler of Babylon, King Nebuchadnezzar II, had to be cautious of Urartu and the Armenian Highland in general. Recent history lessons taught him whenever Urartu was the principal adversary against mighty Assyria—although currently weak—another Armenian Kingdom rose in the Armenian Highland. This Armenian Kingdom, known as Arme-Shubria, participated in the final destruction of Nineveh, and with its Armenian forces, showed great bravery on all fronts. Their threat was inevitable even from Babylon.

The farsightedness of Nebuchadnezzar II was justified. History reminds us that after his death in 562 BC, successive coups occurred in Babylon. Ultimately, an unknown General named Nabonidus put an end to the country's instability in 556 BC and ruled Babylon until its final fall in 538 BC. Arakha Haldita became the king of Babylon in 521 BC, proclaiming himself as King Nebuchadnezzar IV. He was of Armenian origin, related to Nabonidus, who was also of Armenian origin.¹⁹⁸ These are recorded in the Behistun inscription of the

¹⁹⁸. Tomassian Bedros, *Haykakan Lernashkharhe ev Mijagetke*, p. 107, p. 131–132.

Achaemenid King Darius I.¹⁹⁹

Table 7 below shows the important dates and the historical events of the fierce struggles that occurred to occupy the West, from Nineveh's fall in 612 BC to Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion of Judah and Jerusalem's capture and destruction in 586 BC. It also shows Urartu's involvement in occupying the West.

Table 7
Important dates of fierce battles to occupy the West after the fall of Nineveh

YEAR	HISTORICAL EVENT
612 BC	The Allied Conquest and Babylonian invasion of Nineveh. Nineveh's capture and the final fall after a three-month siege.
609 BC	A Babylonian invasion of Urartu. The outcome of the war is unknown because the original text was damaged.
608-605 BC	Nabopolassar's raid on Urartu's mountainous region Bit-Hanunya.
605 BC	The Babylonian army, under leadership of Nebuchadnezzar's heir, defeated the Egyptians in the Battle of Carchemish, and captured Syria.
605 BC	The death of Nabopolassar and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II king of Babylon.
597 BC	Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion of Judah. The seizure of Jerusalem and the exile of King Jehoiachin, the prophet Ezekiel and the first group of captives to Babylon.
596-595 BC	Nebuchadnezzar II campaign east of Carchemish to the areas of Urartu.
587-586 BC	Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion of Judah and the capture and destruction of Jerusalem.

Therefore, before expanding his Empire toward the West, Nebuchadnezzar II was concerned about protecting his Empire from

¹⁹⁹. Behistun inscription is a trilingual inscription, carved in 521/520 BC by the order of Darius the Great of Persia. The country referred to as Urartu in the Assyrian version is called Arminiya in Old Persian and Harminuia in Elamite. Thus, we see that Urartu and Arminiya (Armina) refer to the same country in different languages (Assyrian and Persian, respectively).

Urartu or Arme-Shubria. As we noted earlier, during this period, Hattie was the Syrian territories between Aleppo and Damascus, meaning that those districts at some point were under the influence and government of the Armenian Highland people. And, they likely tried to intervene and reach out to Hatties.

III.

Prophet Jeremiah's appeal and Urartu "The Judgment against Babylon"

In the Book of Prophet Jeremiah, we encounter the Prophet's famous appeal made during Nebuchadnezzar II's invasion of the Kingdom of Judah. In the Bible, Jeremiah appeals to several countries to invade Babylon and destroy it. His call was to destroy Babylon to save the kingdom of Judah from its threat. The passage below is from verse 51 of the Book of Prophet Jeremiah titled *The Utter Destruction of Babylon*:

"24 I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea before your very eyes for all the wrong that they have done in Zion,²⁰⁰ says the LORD.

25 I am against you, O destroying mountain, says the LORD, that destroys the whole earth; I will stretch out my hand against you, and roll you down from the crags, and make you a burned-out mountain.

26 No stone shall be taken from you for a corner and no stone for a foundation, but you shall be a perpetual waste, says the LORD.

27 Raise a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among nations; prepare the nations for war against her, summon against her the kingdoms, Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz; appoint a marshal against her, bring up horses like bristling

²⁰⁰. Zion was the fortified hill of pre-Israelite Jerusalem between the Kidron and Tyropean Valleys.

locusts."²⁰¹

This historic appeal of Prophet Jeremiah occurred in 594–592 BC.²⁰² Jeremiah was a Prophet from Judah who lived in the Babylonian Captivity period of Jewish history. His prophecies spanned over forty years (626–584 BC).²⁰³ He had promised the Jews that after 70 years of captivity, they would return to their country. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC, Jeremiah settled in Egypt to the end of his life.²⁰⁴

To raid Babylon, Prophet Jeremiah appealed to three Kingdoms; Ararat, Minni, and Ashkenaz. We will talk about these Kingdoms, starting with Ashkenaz, then Minni, leaving Ararat to the end.

Two schools of thought prevail about the origin of the Ashkenazi Kingdom. The first school considers the Ashkenazi Kingdom as the Indo-European Scythians coalition of Ashkenazi tribes. The second school of thought references the Kingdom of Ashkenaz to the Phrygian²⁰⁵ Kingdom in Asia Minor. We also encounter the name Ashkenaz in the Bible, as the brother of Togarmah, one of the Patriarch Noah's descendants. The excerpt below is from the Bible Genesis 10;

"1 These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood. 2 The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz,

²⁰¹. Bible, Jeremiah, *Judgment against Babylon* 51:24–27.

²⁰². Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyan Krestomatia, Vol. 1, p. 116.

²⁰³. Holman Illustrated Study Bible, p. 925.

²⁰⁴. Astvatsashnchi Hanragitaran p. 329. Holman Illustrated Study Bible, p. 1024.

²⁰⁵. Phrygians were the people of Phrygia, the area in Asia Minor; see Map 2.

Riphath, and Togarmah."²⁰⁶

As noted by Prophet Jeremiah, the Kingdom of Minni was a country on the south side of the Lake Urmia basin. It is possible to say that the Kingdom of Minni was part of the Kingdom of Ararat, as noted in the following quote;

*"In the Hebrew manuscript of the Bible and its Latin translations the countries' names are listed in the following manner: to the "Ararati, Minni, and Ashkenazi kingdoms," while in the Greek version "to the Araratian Kingdom and the Ashkenazian Troops" Minni (in the cuneiform inscriptions noted as Manna) was located in the southern side of the Lake Urmia basin, and the Greek translation of the Bible is noted as part of the Araratian Kingdom i.e., part of Armenia."*²⁰⁷

In the following reference, the Kingdom of Minni is considered part of Armenia:

*"Ararat and Minni were districts in Armenia. Ashkenaz, most probably an adjacent district."*²⁰⁸

The father of Armenian history, Moses of Khoren, has also spoken about Prophet Jeremiah's call without mentioning Minni. He wrote;

"And that our nation really had a kingdom at that time, the Prophet Jeremiah also witnessed in his Book of Prophecy by calling a war against Babylon. "Give a command, he says, to the Araratian Kingdom and Ashkenazian Troops." This is

²⁰⁶. Bible, Genesis, 10:1–3.

²⁰⁷. Mardigyan Suren and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 134–135.

²⁰⁸. Kuist T. Howard, *The Layman's Bible Commentary*, Jeremiah, Vol. 12, p. 136.

*proof that we had a kingdom then.”*²⁰⁹

These are proofs that Minni was then part of the Kingdom of Ararat.

Let us also explain why Jeremiah's appeal was aimed at the people of the regions North of Babylon—the states in the Armenian Highland and Asia Minor. Through my research on ancient times, I learned that many powerful empires collapsed in Mesopotamia because of incursions from the North. North was known as the Armenian Highland and the regions of its immediate vicinity. Here are examples of such kingdoms, which were destroyed by incursions from the North.

1. The country of Korduk, located to the north of Assyria, destroyed the Semitic Empire of Akkad.²¹⁰ Here is an excerpt:

*“With the strong leadership of Korduk (Land of Kuti) from the strikes of the militant Armenian Highland and the seventeen principalities blocks of the surrounding areas (about 2,200 BC).”*²¹¹

2. The Semitic Amorites of the ancient Babylonian Empire,²¹² known as the Dynasty of Hammurabi after its renowned King Hammurabi (1793–1751 BC), was destroyed in 1595 BC. The destruction was due to the unexpected and destructive invasions of the Hittite King Mursili I (1620–1590 BC) from the western territories of the Armenian Highland. After the Hittite's departure,

²⁰⁹. Khorenatsi Movses, *Patmutyun Hayots*, p. 110.

²¹⁰. Empire of Akkad was named after the famous city of Akkad in Mesopotamia. It was founded by Sargon I about 2350 BC

²¹¹. Mardigyan Suren and Movsisyan Artak, *Mer Haghtanaknere*, p. 135.

²¹². Amorites were Semitic people who took control of the administration of Babylonia for approximately 400 years (2000–1595 BC).

the barbarous mountainous tribes of Kassites²¹³ used the opportunity and conquered Babylon, ruling it for nearly four centuries.

3. The southern territories of the Armenian Highland, the Kingdom of Mitanni,²¹⁴ delivered deadly attacks, ending the Old Assyrian Kingdom at the time of its renowned King Sawshdar (1455–1435 BC).

4. From Shalmaneser III's death in 824 BC to Tiglath-pileser III's reign in 744 BC, for nearly eighty years, Assyria remained captive under the influence of the mighty Kingdom of Van–Urartu, as discussed in chapter 1.

5. The Armenians of Arme-Shubria, in the southern territories of the Armenian Highland, participated in the destruction of the last Assyrian Empire in 612 BC, after making a coalition with the Babylonians and Medes.

Thus, the ancient world, in this case, Judea, saw the mighty Babylonian Empire's deadly attack coming from the North. Prophet Jeremiah's book titled *Judgment against Babylon* describes the people of the North, as mentioned in the excerpt below:

“41 Look, a people is coming from the north; a mighty nation and many kings are stirring from the farthest parts of the earth.

42 They wield bow and spear; they are cruel and have no mercy. The sound of them is like the roaring sea; they ride upon horses, set in array as a warrior for battle, against you, O daughter Babylon!

²¹³. The original homeland of the Kassites is not well known, but it is thought to have been located in the Zagros Mountains in Lorestan, current Iran.

²¹⁴. An ancient kingdom established in the 2nd millennium BC encompassing parts of Armenian Highland and Mesopotamia.

43 *The king of Babylon heard the news of them, and his hands fell helpless; anguish seized him, pain like that of a woman in labor.*"²¹⁵

According to Boris Piotrovsky, "*the people coming from the north*," as mentioned in the previous passage, are the Cimmerians and Scythians.²¹⁶ Perhaps, also with them, were the Armenian Highland people and its adjacent areas' people.

As mentioned in Jeremiah's appeal, there is a question related to the Kingdom of Ararat: Was it referenced to the *weakened Urartu*, or the *growing Orontid State in Arme-Shubria*, who historically became the successor of Urartu?

In Prophet Jeremiah's appeal, out of the three kingdoms, the first mention is the Kingdom of Ararat, which makes us believe it was the most influential.

Here, there are three explanations about the stated "Kingdom of Ararat." in Prophet Jeremiah's appeal. They are:

The 1st Explanation— Here, the *Kingdom of Ararat* was not Urartu, but the Orontes Kingdom of Arme-Shubria; the Armenian dynasty, whose patriarch Skayordi was also known as Eruanduni (Ervanduni or Yervanduni). Therefore, as we shall see later, the Armenian Kingdom that succeeded Urartu was called Eruandean (Eruandian, Ervandian), and Van-Tosp, the capital of Urartu, was named Eruandashat (Ervandashat). Moses of Khoren named the state of Skayordi the *House of Togarmah*. In the next section of this chapter, we will elaborate on this further. The excerpt below is from The Chrestomathy of the History of Armenians notes:

"The Araratian Kingdom, where Jeremiah was appealing

²¹⁵. *Bible*, Jeremiah, 50:41–43. *Judgment against Babylon*.

²¹⁶. Piotrovsky, *Urartu Undergovgasi Amanahin Badoutune*, p. 56.

*against Babylon, most probably, was the newly established Armenian state of the Orontes. There are also views that it was the declining Urartian state, which is unlikely. In the Hebrew version of the Bible and its Latin translation, the mentioned countries' names are the following: "... to the Araratian, Minni and Ashkenazian kingdoms," in the Greek version, "... Araratian kingdom and Askanazian Troops."*²¹⁷

Let us also note an excerpt from Levon Shahinyan, where he shows the Prophet Jeremiah's appeal targeted to the established Armenian Kingdom in Arme-Shubria. He writes;

*"This prophecy dated to 594–592 BC. It means, right from the beginning of VI century BC, an Armenian or Araratian kingdom existed, which was considered promising and leading against mighty Babylon; it had a significant position and recognition in the world of its time. According to Jeremiah, this meant that that kingdom had existed from much earlier times, as noted by Movses of Khoren, and from the Babylonian chronology and Esarhaddon's chronicle."*²¹⁸

In the Book of Prophet Isaiah, the "*Land of Ararat*," where the two patricidal brothers sought refuge, is the Armenian Highland region known as Arme-Shubria. A century later, we come across the name "*Land of Ararat*" in Prophet Jeremiah's appeal once again. Judah pleaded for help from the Armenian Kingdom of Arme-Shubria to escape the Babylonian invasion.

The Orontes state of Arme-Shubria had started to present itself as Urartu's successor—the Kingdom of Van. Perhaps, that was

²¹⁷. Hay Zhoghovrdi Patmutyan *Krestomatia*, Vol. 1, p. 117.

²¹⁸. Shahinyan Levon, *Urartui Areghtsvatse*, p. 58.

why Prophet Jeremiah used *Ararat* loosely when referring to *Urartu* or its successor *Orontid state*, which he meant to be *Armenia*.

The 2nd Explanation— In this period, Urartu was weak and in a struggle with Assyria. If Prophet Jeremiah's appeal was to the falling Urartu in the Armenian Highland, that meant how influential Urartu had been in suppressing the power of Assyria, thus keeping it away from both the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

As we discussed in section II of this chapter, after the fall of Nineveh, a fierce struggle broke out between Babylon and Egypt to control the West. During this struggle, Kings Nabopolassar and Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon has organized military expeditions toward Urartu. Perhaps Prophet Jeremiah was under the influence of all these events when he mentions Urartu—the Kingdom of Van, in his appeal, as mentioned in the excerpt below by Boris Piotrovsky:

"A Babylonian chronicle which gives us a detailed account, month by month, of events between 616 and 609 B.C., mainly connected with the defeat of Assyria, refers to an expedition against Urartu (and specifically against the town of Urashtu²¹⁹) in the year 609; but the outcome of the campaign is not known, since the text breaks off at this point. In continuation of this text, written on another tablet and giving an account of events from 608 to 605 B.C., there is a further reference to an expedition by Nabupalasar into the mountainous area, Bit-Hanunia "a district in the land of

²¹⁹. In the Babylonian inscriptions, Urartu was named Urashtu. An old Armenian noble family was called Rshtuni, which many scholars believe were the descendants of Rusa I. The Rshtuni House ruled the region of Rshtunik south of Lake Van for many centuries.

Urartu." It is possible that these expeditions by the Babylonians against Urartu were still in existence at the beginning of the 6th century B.C. And a passage in the Book of Jeremiah dated to the fourth year of the reign of King Zedekiah (i.e., 594 B.C.) talks of calling together against Babylon the Medes, the Urartians ("Ararat"), the Mannaeans ("Minni"), and the Scythians ("Ashchenaz").²²⁰

The 3rd Explanation— Nicholas Adontz gave a completely different explanation compared to the previous two.²²¹ According to this explanation, Adontz places Prophet Jeremiah's appeal nearly twenty years early from Assyria's fall (612 BC). The following is an excerpt from his writing:

*"Undoubtedly, there was a conflict between the Assyrian and Urartian ideologies explained by the fact that the prophet appeals upon Urartu to get support to destroy Nineveh."*²²²

In this explanation, the period of Prophet Jeremiah's appeal to destroy Nineveh has been changed and adjusted to the period of Babylon's fall. Adontz attributed Jeremiah's request to destroy Nineveh to Assyria's inhuman and nefarious deeds. The following is an excerpt from Adontz:

"Human beings, his worth and dignity, had no value for Assyrians. That is how they explained their infinite ruthlessness. One is terrified from the monstrous statements their monarchs did without regret and pride. They talked about themselves that they were attacking their foes "Like a

²²⁰. Piotrovsky B. Boris, *The Ancient Civilization of Urartu*, p. 198.

²²¹. Adontz Nicholas, *Hayastani Patmutyun*, p. 282–283.

²²². Ibid., p. 285.

*rabid dog," trampling their land like a "wild bull," and were imposing them "heavy and unbearable bondage." With a sickening passion, they were describing the terrible acts that they were doing."*²²³

In conclusion, the reality of the matter remains that Prophet Jeremiah has appealed to Armenia and the Armenian people, be that Urartu, Arme-Shubria, or the Orornit Kingdom. His purpose was to destroy the powerful dictatorship in Mesopotamia, be that Assyria or Babylon.

²²³, Ibid., p. 284.

IV.

Prophet Ezekiel prophecy and Urartu

Before Prophet Jeremiah's appeal, in the Biblical Book of Prophet Ezekiel, we come across names of nations who came from the North to help Judea; among them was the House of Togarmah.

In 597 BC, Prophet Ezekiel and King Jehoiachin of Judah and the first group of Jews were taken captive to Babylon. Ezekiel was contemporaneous to Jeremiah but lived in captivity in Babylon, whereas Jeremiah lived in Jerusalem. The Book of Ezekiel refers to the Prophet's visions during his captive years, how he foresaw the downfall of Judah's enemies.

The Book of Prophet Ezekiel consists of 48 Chapters and divided into two main parts, Chapters 1–24, written before the fall of Jerusalem, and Chapters 25–48, written after the fall of Jerusalem, of which, Chapters 25–38 are those prophecies related to other nations and their afflictions upon Judah. There are references to the Armenian Highland in these chapters, in two places, more precisely about the House of Togarmah (see Table 7) in chapter 4 section I.

Chapter 26 verses 1–4 *Proclamation against Tyre*, Prophet Ezekiel refers to his predictions of Tyre's destruction by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II's hands since the city of Tyre spoke badly of Jerusalem. Tyre was a Phoenician city located on the coastal plain between the mountains of Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea:

"1 In the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came to me. 2 Mortal, because Tyre said concerning Jerusalem, "Aha, broken is the gateway of the

peoples; it has swung open to me; I shall be replenished, now that it is wasted.” 3 “Therefore thus says the Lord God: See, I am against you, O Tyre! I will hurl many nations against you, as the sea hurls its waves. 4 They shall destroy the walls of Tyre and break down its towers. I will scrape its soil from it and make it a bare rock.”²²⁴

In the same Book, Chapter 27 verses 12-14, *Lamentation for Tyre*, Prophet Ezekiel describes the prosperity of Tyre and its trade-ties with other countries, one of which is the Armenian Highland, specifically, the House of Togarmah -Beth-Togarmah, where horses and mules were exported from:

“12 Tarshish did business with you out of the abundance of your great wealth; silver, iron, tin, and lead they exchanged for your wares. 13 Javan, Tubal, and Meshech traded with you; they exchanged human beings and vessels of bronze for your merchandise. 14 Beth-Togarmah exchanged for your wares horses, war horses, and mules.”²²⁵

The tradition of exporting noble horses from Armenian Highland to the neighboring countries existed for centuries. The excerpt below is from Gurgun Karapetyan when referring to Armenia’s natural resources. He notes;

“A country can be distinguished, not only for its mines and metalwork but also, for its advanced agriculture. The mountainous meadows allow breeding of not only large and small horned animals but also noble horses, whose export was widely accepted, and the high quality of these horses was

²²⁴. Bible, Ezekiel, 26:1-4.

²²⁵. Bible, Ezekiel, *Funeral song for Tyre*, 27:12-14.

evident even in remote Palestine.”²²⁶

Ezekiel’s reference to the prosperity of the Armenian state is considered essential. Like Arme-Shubria, Urartu also had trade ties with Tyre, Damascus, Jerusalem, and other cities. However, which Armenian state was Ezekiel referring to, Urartu-the Kingdom of Van- or Arme-Shubria? Prophet Ezekiel’s reference to the **House of Togarmah** was probably to Arme-Shubria and not Urartu since Arme-Shubria, at that time, was a powerful kingdom. During the reign of Urartu’s last King Rusa III (605–585 BC), Urartu was feeble. In the previous section, we mentioned that the renowned historian Moses of Khoren named the Armenian state, established by Skayordi in Arme-Shubria, as the House of Togarmah (House of Torgom in Armenian pronunciation).

As stated earlier, Ezekiel has written this chapter after the fall of Jerusalem; at that time, he was in captivity in Babylon. For distant Babylon, Urartu was weak, not presenting any threat. Babylon and its inhabitants’ attention must have been on the “empowered Kingdom of Arme-Shubria.”

Ezekiel’s second mention of the **House of Togarmah** is in Chapter *Gog as the Instrument of God*. During the military march of Gog, the chief ruler of the land of Magog, and the prince of Meshech and Tubal, Prophet Ezekiel foretold the destruction of the land of Gog, where the House of Togarmah was involved. Ezekiel’s prophecy began in the fifth year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity.²²⁷

King Jehoiachin reigned approximately 30 years (598–597 BC). Therefore, Ezekiel’s account should match those in 593 BC. The Prophet wrote;

²²⁶. Karapetyan Gurgun, *Hayots Patmutyan Urvagtses*, Vol. I, p. 15.

²²⁷. Bible, Ezekiel, 1–2.

*"1 The word of LORD came to me: 2 Mortal, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. Prophesy against him 3 and say Thus says the Lord GOD: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; 4 I will turn you around and put hooks into your jaws, and I will lead you out with all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great company, all of them with shield and buckler, wielding swords. 5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Put are with them, all of them with buckler and helmet; 6 Gomer and all its troops; Beth-Togarmah from the remotest parts of the north with all its troops-many peoples are with you."*²²⁸

As referred to in this passage, the story of Gog and the Land of Magog historically cannot be attributed to Ezekiel's times. Many scholars believe that this story is symbolic. Our study is essential in the sense that it reveals that "Beth-Togarmah" was among those who came to aid Jerusalem. Also, note that the provided aid was not ordinary since Beth-Togarmah came *"with all its troops."*

Ezekiel predicted the destruction of Gog's country and noted that the Beth-Togarmah was among the destructors. All came to ally with Israel and defend Jerusalem since the Kingdom of Israel was already destroyed in 721 BC, a century-and-a-half earlier. Bible refers to the Jewish people and the people of Judah as Israelites. Thus, aid was to help Israelites and the people of Judah in Jerusalem.

As to why the people of the Armenian Highland were called the *Nation of Togarmah*, Levon Shahinyan writes;

²²⁸. Bible, Ezekiel, Gog as an instrument of God, 38:1-6

*"According to the Bible, Togarmah is a descendant of Noah's son, Japheth, to be more precise, Japheth's great-grandson (Japheth, Gomer, Tiras, Togarmah, see Genesis 10: 2-3, Sons of Noah 1: 5-6). Thus, on this basis, the non-Armenian medieval historians and scholars consider Armenians as descendants of Togarmah. Thereby, they often named Hayk²²⁹-Hayastan (the Armenian name of Armenia), also the House of Togarmah, and the Armenians, as Sons or the Nation of Togarmah, Togarmahny, or Togarmiank. And because the name Hayk, according to Armenian historiography, descended from the Patriarch Hayk's name, and Hayk was the son of Patriarch Torgom (Togarmah), that meant the House of Togarmah preceded the name Hayk, that is to say, around the end of the first half of the 3rd millennium BC. Implying that the ancient Jews have known the name house of Togarmah, and later the land of Ararat, and the Araratian Kingdom in parallel, which they used in their oral and written words instead of the name Hayk; until the time of Prophet Ezekiel and afterward."*²³⁰

According to the Bible, Togarmah was the great-grandson of Patriarch Noah, as recorded in Genesis 10;

"1 These are the descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth; children were born to them after the flood. 2 The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. 3 The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz,

²²⁹. Armenia was called in Armenian "Hayk," the land of Hayk, the patriarch of the Armenian nation.

²³⁰. Shahinyan Levon, *Uratui Areghtsvatsee*, p. 58-59.

Riphath, and Togarmah."²³¹

The renowned Urarteologist, Boris Piotrovsky, refers to Togarmah as the patriarch of Armenia, the "Father of Armenia." He writes;

*"In the Bible's genealogical chart, Gomer (Kimmira according to cuneiform inscriptions) is considered the son of Japheth, and the father of three sons, Ashkenaz (Ashkuza according to cuneiform inscriptions), Riphath (of Paphlagonia) and Togarmah (the father of Armenia)."*²³²

To remind the reader that the English translations of the Bible refer to the House of Togarmah as follows:

*"6 Gomer and his troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you."*²³³

Furthermore, in another version, it is noted;

*"6 Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-Togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you."*²³⁴

Thus, the name "House of Togarmah" mentioned in the Bible refers to Armenia. It is interesting to learn that there are ludicrous publications about this topic. The excerpt below is one representation of such publications:

"Gomer means Cimmerians, while Beth-Togarmah was a

²³¹. Bible, Genesis, 10:1-3.

²³². Piotrovsky B. Boris, *Urartu Undergovgasi Amanahin Badoutune*, p. 56.

²³³. *The Holy Bible: The New King James Version*, Ezekiel 38:6.

²³⁴. *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version, James Version*, Ezekiel, 38:6.

location on the Black Sea in the north."²³⁵

The author of this excerpt is either unaware of the region's authentic history or is purposely changing the record, as we have seen such examples in section VII of chapter 3. He has placed "Beth-Togarmah" near the Black Sea. If he had performed proper research, he could have found that, in all references, "Beth-Togarmah" was referred to the people of the Armenian Highland and the Armenians as *Sons of Togarmah*, *Togarmahnity*, or *Togarmaniank* as we stated above. Unfortunately, such references can mislead the reader, distort, and undermine Armenians' rich ancient history and contribution to shaping the region's history.

²³⁵. Carl G. Howie, *The Layman's Bible Contemporary*, Ezekiel, p. 76.

V.

Who Participated in the Fall of Judah?

The renowned great King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar II, in 587 BC attacked Judah to suppress its uprising. He conquered Jerusalem after nearly 18 months of besieging. To put an end to Judah's Kingdom's continuous uprisings, Nebuchadnezzar II executed all the leaders and took tens of thousands of Jews into captivity to Babylon. The Bible also mentions this captivity as the *Babylonian Captivity*. Nebuchadnezzar II has destroyed the Kingdom of Judah. So, after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel (721 BC), the Kingdom of Judah survived for nearly 135 years, half of which was subordinate to Assyria.

In my research, I noticed that the Jewish captives' exile roadmaps indicate that they were taken to Aleppo, then, along the Euphrates River, to unique places near Babylon. Urartu, in these maps, is referred to as a country on the northern border of the Assyrian territory.²³⁶ During this period, the Kingdom of Van-Urartu- was in its final years of existence. In our opinion, Urartu had no participation in the conquest of Jerusalem, as we will address this issue a little later.

The connection between the Armenian King Hrachya and Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II introduces another opinion worthy of address.

The only information we have about the Armenian participation in Judah's decline comes from Moses of Khoren, whose source of information is unknown. According to Moses of

Khoren, Hrachya had a bright face and ardent eyes, have succeeded his father, Paruyr. Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar II, who captured many Jews, has lived during Hrachya's times. The following is an excerpt from what Moses of Khoren wrote about Hrachya;

*"He was called Hrachya, best known for having a bright face and ardent eyes. It is said that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylonians, lived during his time, who took the Jews captive. Furthermore, they say that he asked Nebuchadnezzar to give him one of the captive Hebrew leaders by the name of Shambat and, brought him and settled him in our country with great honor."*²³⁷

Per Movses of Khoren, there is no mention of Hrachya's participation in Nebuchadnezzar's military conquest of Jerusalem. However, Hrachya asked Nebuchadnezzar II to hand Shambat over to him. Nebuchadnezzar did not refuse, which meant that they were either comrade in arms, allies, or at minimum, friends.

On the other hand, King Hrachya greeted the released Shambat and his followers with many gifts and accepted them in Armenia. In our opinion, there is enough information to conclude that Shambat was either of Armenian origin or a descendant of the Hurrian Jebusites of Jerusalem.²³⁸ One can find more information on this topic in my other books.

Moving on to our main question, whether Urartu contributed to Judah's final destruction, it is essential to elucidate some details.

To this day, Urartu's final years of decline remain unknown. Leaning towards the fact that the last king of Urartu, Rusa III, called himself the "son of Erimena," makes us speculate that the two kings

²³⁶. *The Holman Illustrated Study Bible*, p. 1141.

²³⁷. Khorenatsi Movses, *Patmutyun Hayots*, p. 108.

²³⁸. Virabian Nerses, *Mortsvats Tsegh Me*, p. 117-118.

of Urartu, Erimena and Rusa III, did not belong to the Urartian royal family; they descended from another tribe or dynasty.²³⁹ One can assume that the Armenian kingdom of Arme-Shubria had occupied Urartu and had crowned the last kings of Urartu. Or, perhaps Arme-Shubria and Urartu had joined as one state.

If it is possible to endorse that historically Paruyr Skayordi was, actually, the same as king Erimena of Urartu and that Hrachya was Rusa III of Urartu as Rafael Ishkhanyan has noted;

*"As we know, in ancient times, kings had two or more names. When the crown prince sat on the throne, they gave him a new name. Or, the same king in one language was called one name, and in another language, a different name. Therefore, Paruyr, in contemporary Neo-Hurrian minor inscriptions, was called Erimena. In contrast, his son was named Rusha III, a widely accepted name among the past kings of Van.: Khorenatsi called him Hrachya."*²⁴⁰

Then, it is possible to conclude that Urartu, perhaps militarily, participated with Babylon in Jerusalem's conquest, either as a separate state or as a joint state after its unification with Arme-Shubria. However, we should emphasize that these conclusions are not proven yet. There is a slim likelihood that Urartu or the kingdom of Orontid was the participant in the decline of Judah's Kingdom and the capture of its capital Jerusalem in 586 BC.

²³⁹. Kasuni Yeghia, *Nakhahaykakan Hayastan*, p. 560; Gyuzalyan Garnik, *Hayots Patmutyun*, Vol. 1, p. 85.

²⁴⁰. Ishkhanyan Rafael, *Patkerazard patmutyun haots*, Book 1, Vol. 1, p. 91.

EPILOG

The Urartu-Assyria struggle, in general, had a positive impact on both the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah; that helped the two kingdoms to survive for more than two centuries, although their location was in an area of paramount importance to the superpowers of the Middle East.

From 825–745 BC, Assyria declined, not because of its King Shalmaneser III's weak successors or their involvement in Assyria's internal affairs, but because in that period, the Kingdom of Urartu rose in the Armenian Highland, surpassed Assyria, and took it under its shadow. These important historical events in the region were the main reason for the small Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah to enjoy peace and prosperity in the region.

When Urartu stood against Assyria, the two Jewish kingdoms (Israel and Judah) enjoyed a relatively peaceful and prosperous period. In (785–750 BC), the Jewish people lived in their Second Golden Age, which corresponded with the reign period of the two most powerful kings of Urartu, Argishti I and Sarduri II.

Due to the rise of Urartu's power, the historical and political events led the two small Jewish kingdoms of Israel and Judah to constantly plea for help from the regional peoples, including the Armenian Highland. This is evident in the Bible, in the Books of Prophet Jeremiah, and Prophet Yezekial with their famous plea to help the Jewish people free from Assyria and Babylon invasions.

In those same passages, we come across periods where Assyria recovered its strength in the West, during the reign of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III, pushing Urartu out of the region and striking deadly attacks to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In 721 BC, Israel was destroyed following the Assyrian invasion. Furthermore, when Urartu entered its downfall period and

retracted from the West, the Kingdom of Judah was destroyed by the Babylonian invasion in 586 BC.

This book also sheds light on the Old Testament recordings of these historic events putting those recordings in their actual historical perspective. Also, and most importantly, it clarifies the confusion and uncertainty around the naming of the people and nations who lived in the geographic region known as the **Armenian Highland**, which is also known as, **Ararat-Urartu, the Kingdom of Van, the Land of Ararat** in the murder of Sennacherib by Prophet Isaiah, **the Kingdom of Ararat** in Prophet Jeremiah's plea to arm all people against Babylon, and **House of Togarmah** by Prophet Ezekiel in his accounts for about Gog and Tyre.

As noted in the Biblical Book of Isaiah, where the patricidal brothers sought refuge, we conclude that the Land of Ararat was the **Sassoun** region of the Armenian Highland, where an Armenian state existed, known as **Arme-Shubria** and **not Urartu**—The Kingdom of Van.

This study used references written by Armenian and non-Armenian historians. It cited twenty-two excerpts from the Bible. We used maps, graphs, tables, and charts to illustrate the many centuries of historical events, kings, and Prophets' works. Each reference testified of the Armenians existence in the region of the Armenian Highland. Moreover, from the start of the history of humanity, Armenia existed in the area with all its might, power, and weakness. We presented quotes, inserts, and conclusions of ours and various scholars' actual writings and Biblical scriptures without omissions to prove the point. However, holding the conviction that no man's work can be perfect, we would be more than happy to hear any comments from our readers.

Table 8
Contemporaneous Kings of Urartu and Assyria

PERIOD	ASSYRIA	URARTU
900 BC	Adad-nirari II 912-891 BC	
	Tukulti-ninurta II 891-884 BC	
	Ashur-nasir-pal II 884-859 BC	
	Shalmaneser III 859-824 BC	Arame ca. 870-840 BC
	Shamshi-adad V 824-811 BC	Lutipri (?)
	Semiramis (Shammu-ramat) 811-806 BC	Sarduri I 835-825 BC
800 BC	Adad-nirari III 811-783 BC	Ishpuini 825-810 BC
	Shalmaneser IV 783-773 BC	Menua 810-786 BC
	Ashur-dan III 773-755 BC	
	Ashur-nirari V 755-745 BC	Argishti I 786-764 BC
	Tiglath-pileser III 745-727 BC	Sarduri II 764-735 BC
	Shalmaneser V 727-722 BC	
700 BC	Sargon II 722-705 BC	Rusa I 735-713 BC
	Sennacherib 705-681 BC	Argishti II 713-685 BC
	Esarhaddon 681-669 BC	
	Ashurbanipal 669-631 or 627 BC	Rusa II 685-645 BC
	Ashur-etil-ilani 631-627 BC	Sarduri III 645-625 BC
	Sin-shar-ishkun 627-612 BC	
600 BC	Ashur-uballit II 612-608 605 BC	Erimena (?)
		Rusa III (?)

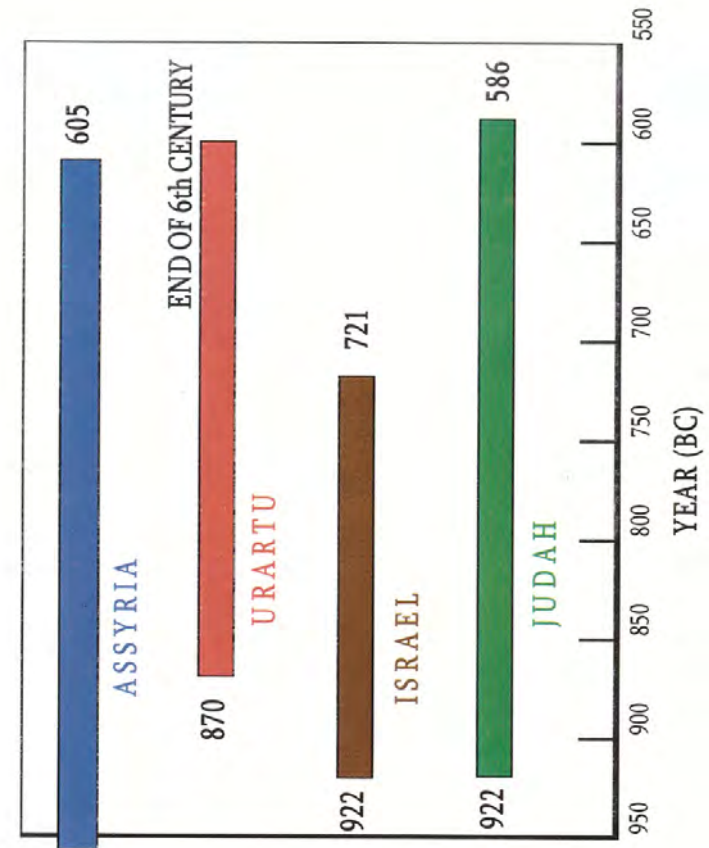
Table 9

Contemporaneous Kings of Assyria, Israel, and Judah

ASSYRIA	ISRAEL	JUDAH
Adad-nirari II 912-891 BC	Nadab 901-900 or 910-909 BC	Asa 913-873 or 911-870 BC
Tukulti-ninurta II 891-884 BC	Baasha 900-877 or 909-886 BC	Jehoshaphat 873-849 or 870-848 BC
Ashur-nasir-pal II 884-859 BC	Elah 877-876 or 886-885 BC	Jehoram 849-842 or 848-841 BC
Shalmaneser III 859-824 BC	Zimri 876-876 or 885-885 BC	Ahaziah 842-842 or 841-835 BC
Shamshi-adad V 824-811 BC	Tibni 876-876 or 885-880 BC	Athaliah 842-837 BC or 841-835 BC
Semiramis (Shammu-ramat) 811-808 BC	Omri 876-869 or 885-874 BC	Jehoash I 837-800 or 835-796 BC
Adad-nirari III 811-783 BC	Ahab 869-850 or 874-853 BC	Amaziah 800-783 or 796-767 BC
Shalmaneser IV 783-773 BC	Ahaziah 850-849 or 853-852 BC	Azariah 783-742 or 767-740 BC
Ashur-dan III 773-755 BC	Joram 849-842 or 852-841 BC	Jotham 742-735 or 740-732
Ashur-nirari V 755-745 BC	Jehu 842-815 or 841-814 BC	Ahaz 735-715 or 732-716 BC
Tiglath-Pileser III 745-727 BC	Jehoahaz 815-801 or 814-798 BC	Hezekiah 715-687 or 716-687 BC
Shalmaneser V 727-722 BC	Jehoash 801-786 or 798-782 BC	Manasseh 687-642 or 687-643 BC
Sargon II 722-705 BC	Jeroboam II 786-746 or 782-753 BC	Amon 642-640 or 643-641 BC
Sennacherib 705-681 BC	Zachariah 746-746 or 753-752 BC	Josiah 640-609 or 641-609 BC
Esarhaddon 681-669 BC	Shallum 745-745 or 752-752 BC	Jehoahaz II 609 BC
Ashurbanipal 669-631 or 627 BC	Menahem 745-738 or 752-742 BC	Jehoiakim 609-598 BC
Ashur-etil-ilani 631-627 BC	Pekahiah 738-737 or 742-740 BC	Jehoiachin 598-597 BC
Sin-shumu-lishir 626 BC	Pekah 737-732 or 740-732 BC	Zedekiah 597-587 or 597-586 BC
Sin-shar-ishkun 627-612 BC	Hoshea 732-731 or 732-722 BC	
Ashur-uballit II 612-608 605 BC		

Chart 1

The Duration of Existence of Urartu, Assyria, Israel, and Judah
(X-VI) Centuries



144

[illegible]

145

This map illustrates the ancient Near East, focusing on the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys. Key features include:

- Geography:** The Tigris and Euphrates rivers are shown flowing from the north towards the south, where they meet the Persian Gulf. The Great Western Sea (Mediterranean) is to the west, and the Eastern Sea (Black Sea) is to the north.
- Major Cities and Regions:**
 - Assyria:** Includes cities like Nineveh, Nimrud, and Ashur.
 - Babylonia:** Includes Babylon, Uruk, and Ur.
 - Levant:** Includes cities like Damascus, Tyre, Sidon, and Jerusalem.
 - Other Regions:** Includes Media, Elam, and the Kingdom of Israel.
- Other Labels:** The map also shows the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, and various smaller cities and regions like Hittite, Arameans, and the Kingdom of Judah.

Author: Bedros M. Tomassian
Cartographer: Tigran Vardanyan

Map 2

Argishti's Victorious Military Campaigns



Map 3

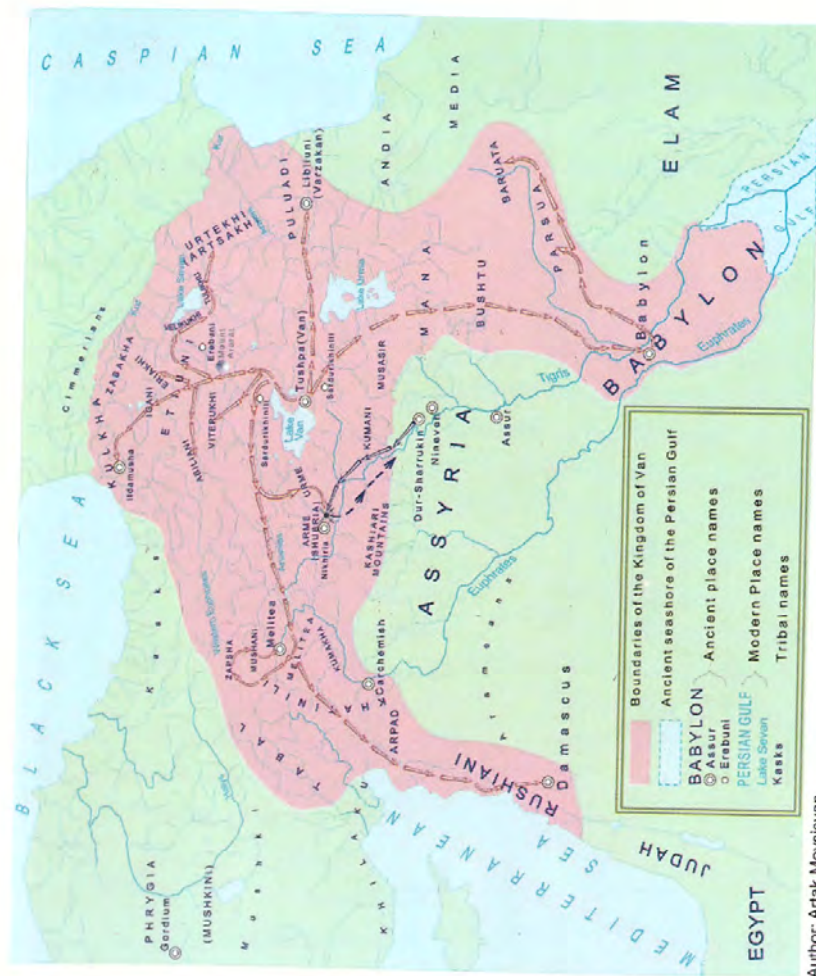
Kingdoms of Israel and Judah



Author: Bedros M. Tomassian
Cartographer: Tigran Vardanyan

Map 4

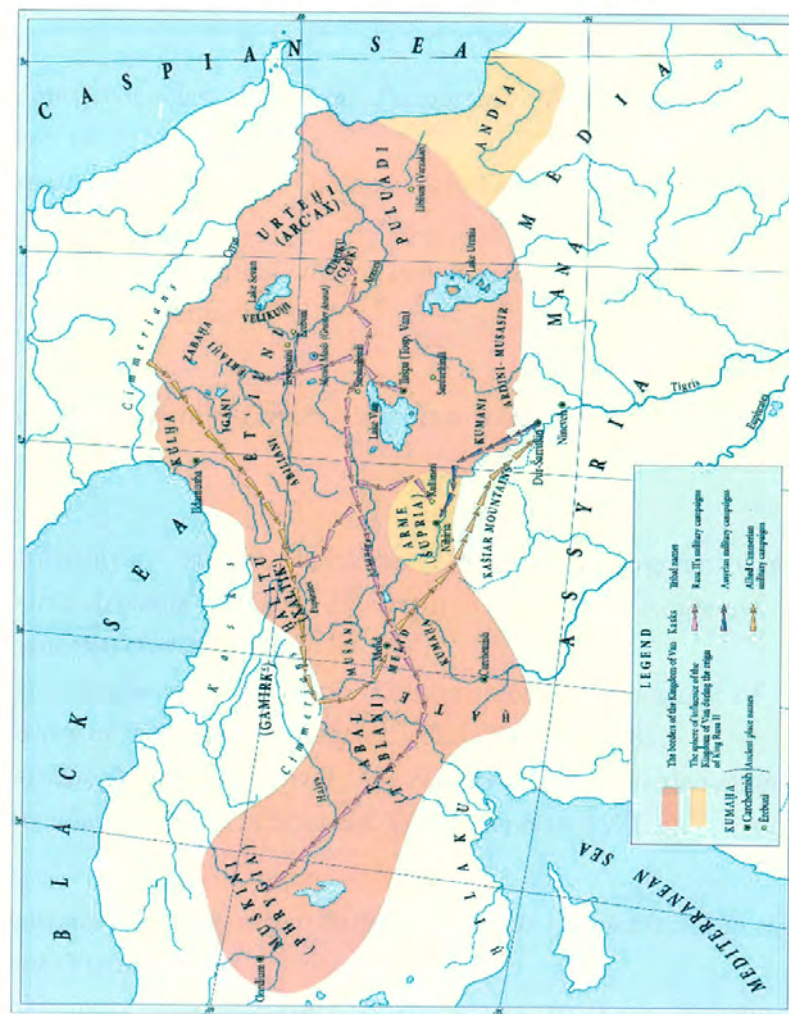
Kingdom of Van During the Reign of Sarduri II



Author: Artak Movsisyan
Cartographer: Tigran Vardanyan

Map 5

The Domain of the Kingdom of Van During King Rusa II



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The Sponsor

Dr. Nubar P. Boghos Boghossian, MD-
Hematology & Oncology specialist

Education:

Elementary education: United Armenian
National School of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

Secondary education: Baghdad College,
Baghdad, Iraq

1982-1988 - M.B.Ch.B: The University of
Baghdad, College of Medicine Medical
School, Baghdad, Iraq

1994 - M.D.- Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden.



Worked in:

1988-1990 Baghdad, Iraq

1991-1992 Amman, Jordan

1992-1997 Stockholm, Sweden

1997-1999 London, United Kingdom

1999-2005 Maimonides, New York, USA

2005-till now Los Angeles, California USA

Membership in Medical Societies:

Swedish Young Doctors Association.

Swedish Medical Society.

General Medical Council, United Kingdom.

American Society of Hematology (ASH).

American Society of Clinical Oncology.

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The recent publications of the well-known national figure Mr. Bedros Tomassian, the Armenian diasporan researcher, are invaluable, where the work of Ararat-Urartu stands out. It is gratifying that this monograph, which was entrusted by the Armenian scientific community, is now being submitted to the English scientific community, hence forwarding to a larger number of researchers and readers, and of course, will have a significant value in the course of the general struggle against the distortion of the Armenian history.

Ashot Melkonian, Historian, professor
Head of Institute of History, NAS (RA)

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Artak Movsisyan, Dr. of Science (History)
Head of Armenian History, YSU (RA)

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Petros Hovhannisian, Professor
Former Head of Armenian History, YSU (RA)

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