



# Assyrian Church Of The East - Los Angeles

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## SARGON II fragment

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**Sargon II** ( 𐎶𐎵𐎺𐎠𐎶 in [Syriac](#)) (r. [722 BC-705 BC](#)) was an [Assyrian](#) king. He took the throne from [Shalmanassar V](#) in [722 BC](#). It is not clear if he was the son of [Tiglath-Pileser III](#) or a usurper unrelated to the royal family. In his inscriptions, he styles himself as a new man, rarely referring to his predecessors, and he took the name **Sharru-kinu**, true king, after [Sargon of Akkad](#), a mighty king who had been found in a wicker basket, a child of a temple prostitute and an unknown father. Sargon is the name given by the [Bible](#).

Beset by difficulties at the beginning of his rule, Sargon made a pact with the [Chaldean Marduk-apla-iddin](#). He freed all temples, as well as the inhabitants of the towns of [Assur](#) and [Harran](#) from taxes. While Sargon was thus trying to gain support in [Assyria](#), Marduk-apla-iddin conquered [Babylon](#) with the help of the new Elamite king [Ummanigash](#) and was crowned king in 721 BC.

In [720 BC](#) Sargon moved against Elam, but the Assyrian host was defeated near [Der](#). Later that year, Sargon defeated a Syrian coalition at [Qarqar](#), which gained him control of [Arpad](#), [Simirra](#), and [Damascus](#). Sargon conquered [Gaza](#) in [Philistia](#), destroyed [Rafah](#), and won a victory over [Egyptian](#) troops. On his way back, he had [Samaria](#) rebuilt as the capital of the new province of [Samerina](#) and settled it with [Arabs](#).

In [717 BC](#) he conquered parts of the [Zagros](#) mountains and the [Hittite](#) city of [Carchemish](#) on the Upper [Euphrates](#). In [716 BC](#) he moved against the kingdom of [Mannai](#), where the ruler [Aza](#), son of [Iranzu](#), had been deposed by [Ullusunu](#) with the help of the [Uartians](#). Sargon took the capital [Izirtu](#), and stationed troops in [Parsuash](#) (the original home of the Persian tribe, on lake [Urmia](#)) and [Kar-Nergal](#) (Kishesim). He built new bases in [Media](#) as well, the main being [Harhar](#) and [Kar-Sharrukin](#). In [715 BC](#), others were to follow: [Kar-Nabu](#), [Kar-Sin](#) and [Kar-Ishtar](#), all named after Babylonian gods and resettled by Assyrian subjects.

The eighth campaign of Sargon against [Urartu](#) in [714 BC](#) is well known from a letter from Sargon to the god [Ashur](#) (found in the town of [Assur](#), now in the [Louvre](#)) and the [bas-reliefs](#) in the palace of [Dur-Sharrukin](#). The campaign was probably motivated by the fact that the Uartians had been weakened by incursions of the [Cimmerians](#), a [nomadic steppe](#) tribe. One Urartian army had been completely annihilated, and the general [Qaqqadanu](#) taken prisoner.

The Cimmerians were mentioned a number of times in letters by the crown-prince [Sennacherib](#), who ran his father's intelligence service, that unfortunately cannot be dated exactly, but are believed to have been composed before [713 BC](#). The letters relate how Sargon crossed the upper and lower [Zab](#) and moved over

the mountains of [Kullar](#) in the direction of Lake [Urmia](#), crossing the country of [Zikirtu](#), whose ruler [Metatti](#) had fled to [Uishdish](#), the provinces of [Surikash](#), [Allabria](#) and parts of Parsuash. The reliefs show the difficulties of the terrain: the war-chariots had to be dismantled and carried by soldiers (with the king still in the chariot), the latter describes how ways had to be cut into the intractable forests.

After reaching Lake Urmia he turned east and entered Zikirtu and [Andia](#) on the [Caspian](#) slopes of the [Caucasus](#). When news reached him that king [Rusas I](#) of Urartu ([730 BC-713 BC](#)) was moving against him, he turned back to Lake Urmia in forced marches and defeated an Urartian army in a steep valley of the Uaush (probably the [Sahend](#), east of Lake Urmia, or further to the south, in [Mannaean](#) country), a steep mountain that reached the clouds and whose flanks were covered by snow. The battle is described as the usual carnage, but King Rusas managed to escape. The horses of his chariot had been killed by Assyrian spears, forcing him to ride a mare in order to get away, very unbecoming for a king.

Sargon plundered the fertile lands at the southern and western shore of Lake Urmia, felling orchards and burning the harvest. In the royal resort of [Ulhu](#), the wine-cellar of the Urartian kings was plundered; wine was scooped up like water. The Assyrian host then plundered [Sangibuti](#) and marched north to [Van](#) without meeting resistance, the people having retreated to their castles or fled into the mountains, having been warned by fire-signals. Sargon claims to have destroyed 430 empty villages.

After reaching [Lake Van](#), Sargon left Urartu via [Uaiaish](#). In [Hubushkia](#) he received the tribute of [Nairi](#). While most of the army returned to Assyria, Sargon went on to sack the Urartian temple of the god [Haldi](#) and his wife [Bagbartu](#) at [Musasir](#) (Ardini). The loot must have been impressive; its description takes up fifty columns in the letter to Ashur. More than one ton of gold and five tons of silver fell into the hands of the Assyrians; 334,000 objects in total. A relief from Dur-Sharrukin depicted the sack of Musasir as well (that unfortunately fell into the Tigris in [1846](#) when [Paul-Åmile Botta](#) transported his loot to [Paris](#)). Musasir was annexed. Sargon claims to have lost only one charioteer, two horsemen and three couriers on this occasion. King Rusa was understandably despondent when he heard of the loss of Musasir, and fell ill. According to the imperial annals, he took his own life with his own iron sword, like a pig.

In [713 BC](#) Sargon stayed at home; his troops took, among others, [Karalla](#), [Tabal](#) and [Cilicia](#). Some Mede rulers offered tribute. In [711 BC](#), [Gurgum](#) was conquered. A rising in [Ashdod](#), supported by [Judah](#), [Moab](#), [Edom](#) and [Egypt](#) was suppressed, and Ashdod became an Assyrian province.

In [710 BC](#) Sargon felt safe enough in his rule to move against his Babylonian arch-enemy. One army moved against Elam and her new king [Shutruk-Nahhunte II](#) (Shutur-Nahundi); the other, under Sargon himself, against Babylon. Sargon laid siege to Babylon, and Marduk-apla-iddin fled. He was finally captured in the swamps of the [Shatt-el-Arab](#) (though as he seems to have proven a thorn in the side of Sennacherib later on, this might not have been quite true). Southern Babylonia, settled by nomadic [Aramaic](#) tribes, was conquered and turned into the province of [Gambulu](#).

After the capture of Marduk-apla-iddin, Babylon yielded to Sargon and he was proclaimed king of [Babylonia](#) in 710, thus restoring the dual monarchy of Babylonia and Assyria. He remained in Babylon for three years. In [709 BC](#), he led the new-year procession as king of Babylon. He had his son, crown-prince Sennacherib, married to the Aramaic noblewoman [Naqi'a](#), and stayed in the south to pacify the Aramaic and Chaldean tribes of the lower [Euphrates](#) as well as the [Suti](#) nomads. Some areas at the border to Elam were occupied as well.

In 710, the seven kings of Ia' ([Cyprus](#)) had accepted Assyrian sovereignty; in 709 [Midas](#), king of [Phrygia](#), beset by the nomadic Cimmerians, submitted to Assyrian rule and in [708](#), Kummuhu ([Commagene](#)) became an Assyrian province. Assyria was at the apogee of its power. Urartu had almost succumbed to the Cimmerians, Elam was weakened, Marduk-apla-iddin was momentarily powerless, and the Egyptian influence in Syria was temporarily waning as well.

Sargon preferred [Nineveh](#) to the traditional capital at Ashur. In [713 BC](#) he ordered the construction of a new palace and town called [Dur-Sharrukin](#) (House of Sargon, [Khorsabad](#)), 20 km north of Nineveh at the foot of the [Gebel Musri](#). Land was bought, and the debts of construction workers were nullified in order to attract a sufficient labor force. The land in the environs of the town was taken under [cultivation](#), and [olive](#) groves were planted to increase Assyria's deficient oil-production. The town was of rectangular layout and measured 1760 by 1635 m. The length of the walls was 16,280 Assyrian units, corresponding to the numerical value of Sargon's name. The town was partly settled by prisoners of war and deportees under the control of Assyrian officials, who had to ensure they were paying sufficient respect to the gods and the king. The court moved to Dur-Sharrukin in [706 BC](#), although it was not completely finished yet.

In [705 BC](#), Sargon fell in a campaign against the Cimmerians, who were later to destroy the kingdoms of Urartu and Phrygia before moving even further west. Sargon was followed by his son Sennacherib (Sin-ahhe-eriba, [704 BC-681 BC](#)).

Under his rule the Assyrians completed the defeat of the [Kingdom of Israel](#), capturing [Samaria](#) after a siege of three years and dispersing the inhabitants. This became the basis of the legend of the [Lost Ten Tribes](#).

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