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“ At Christians for Armenia, we aim at strengthening this
Christian heritage “

The Behistun inscription

Dear friends,

Behistun is a town situated in the district of Kermanshah in modern Iran, halfway between the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. It is famous for a monumental cuneiform inscription engraved on a nearby cliff in three antique languages (old Persian, Akkadian and Elamite). A low relief depicting Persian king Darius the Great as a conqueror over rebellious nations, separates two of the three texts. Nine human characters face Darius, their hands tied behind their back. The scene is topped by the Persian god Ahura-Mazda. The Behistun inscription and low relief are generally dated 515 BC, thus during Darius' reign (522-486 BC). It was deciphered by Henry Rawlinson between 1835 and 1845. Rawlinson was an English officer at the service of the Persian Shah of the time. His deciphering of these texts gave a decisive impetus to studies in Assyriology and other cuneiform texts.



The cliff or Behistun in modern Iran, halfway between the Caspian Sea and the Gulf of Persia

If I mention this remarkable archeological site, it is because the name of Armenia appears in the Behistun inscription as such (in all three languages) for the very first time in history : Armenia, which followed the significant empire of Urartu-Ararat in the ancient Middle



Darius the Great's cuneiform inscription, with the mention of Armenia in three languages





East, is mentioned as one of the nations subjected by king Darius. In the course of history, Armenians were subjected to various Persian dynasties (Achaemenide, Arsacid, Sassanid, later Safavid), also facing Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Turkish, Russian and finally Soviet domination, until the independence of contemporary Armenia in 1991. Intermittent periods of relative independence did occur during this long history of confrontation with powerful neighbors. What remains remarkable, though, is the persistence of a linguistic and cultural Armenian identity rooted in the adoption of Christianity at the eve of the 4th century AD. Despite so many trials and challenges through the centuries, Armenians have been able to preserve and build on their unique heritage, an example of tremendous resilience against all odds.

Strengthening a Christian heritage

At *Christians for Armenia*, we aim at strengthening this Christian heritage by bringing back the Armenian people to what should remain their firm anchor and hope of survival : the Lord and ruler of kings on earth (Apoc. 1.5). Our translation of the Old Testament is making good progress : in accordance with our planned schedule, Isaiah has been completed and Jeremiah is on its way. Incidentally, it is in chapter 51 of Jeremiah that three kingdoms are summoned against Babylon : Ararat-Urartu, Minni and Ashkenaz. More significantly, we read in Jeremiah 31.33 the following words that I invite you to meditate upon as we approach our celebration of the incarnation of the Son of God : *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

Wishing you all a blessed celebration of Christmas.

Warmly in Christ,

Rev Eric Kayayan

On behalf of the committee of Christians for Armenia

Please send your donations to the following address :

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P.O. Box 8208 Kentwood, MI 49508

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