

*ELISHĒ*

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History of Vardan  
and the  
Armenian War

Translation and Commentary by  
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*In Which the Virtue<sup>1</sup> of the Armenians Is  
Again Set Forth and the Impiety<sup>2</sup> of Vasak  
Is Shown To Be Even More Wicked*

This text describes a revolt by the Armenians against the Persians (Aryans). Vasak is a traitorous Armenian noble

**T**HEN he (Vasak) again incited Mushkan Nisalavurt and all the Aryan nobility. Taking troops, he reached the fortress in which a detachment of the Armenian army with the holy priests had taken refuge; they joined battle around the castle. Since they were unable to make any impression on them [the Armenians], they resorted to oaths, that they should come down under a pact without [the Persians] engaging in any deceit. Two and three times they had the Gospel brought.<sup>3</sup> But although the priests agreed to go down and present themselves, many of the soldiers were unable to trust Vasak's false pact, since Mushkan Nisalavurt had begun to follow Vasak's wicked advice.

One of the brave Armenian soldiers who had fled to the castle for refuge, Bak by name,<sup>4</sup> went up onto the wall and reviled the impious one. [p. 123] In front of the Persian general he rehearsed all the evils that he had brought upon Armenia. On hearing this, many confirmed the truth of the charge—not only from the Armenian side, but even more of the Persian soldiers. That same night Bak left the fortress with seven hundred men,<sup>1</sup> without them being able to lay hands on him.

1. *Virtue*: see p. 14, n. 1.

2. *Impiety*: *anawrēnut'iwon*; see p. 7, n. 11.

3. For oaths on the Gospel, cf. p. 66, n. 4.

4. Bak is otherwise unattested to.

1. Cf. 4 Kings 3:26, where the king of Moab attempts to escape from a

But those who remained within the fortress, although they well knew that their [the Persians'] oaths were false, had no provisions inside.<sup>2</sup> When they had unwillingly gone down and presented themselves, he ordered two hundred and thirteen of them to be killed. They all cried out, saying: "We thank you, our Lord God,<sup>3</sup> that while the churches are still flourishing and the temples of martyrs are still undestroyed, and the holy covenant of the church is still unbroken and undefiled,<sup>4</sup> you have made us worthy of your heavenly calling.<sup>5</sup> May our death equal the death of the brave heroes, and our blood be mingled with the blood of the fallen wounded. May the Lord look favorably on his churches and this host of willing victims who are mounting this holy altar."<sup>6</sup> Having said this the two hundred and thirteen men were martyred on the spot.

Now the holy priests who were in the castle—the blessed Yovsēp and Levond with their numerous companions—also offered their necks to the sword<sup>7</sup> of the executioner, uttering the same words as the two hundred had spoken. For the blessed ones had no expectation at all of bodily life, but were wisely seeking to be a means for the prosperity of the whole land. Therefore they addressed a complaint<sup>8</sup> to the court and threw the whole blame on the impious Vasak. When Mushkan Nisalavurt heard of this, he was unable to impose the death penalty on them. [p. 124] But after inflicting the bastinado<sup>1</sup> on Yovsēp and Levond, [the Persians] ordered them to be kept under strict

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battle with seven hundred men. But as with the figures of those killed at Avarayr, no ulterior significance may be intended.

2. *Provisions: hambar*; cf. 1 Macc. 6:49, where the besieged in Bethsure give up for lack of provisions. For *hambar* see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 178.

3. *We thank you . . . : gohanamk zk'ēn . . .*; this phrase (with liturgical parallels) commonly begins the prayer of martyrs immediately before death. Cf. Agathangelos §75 (and Thomson, *Agathangelos*, §75, n. 2), 207; *Vkayk'*, p. 207; and p. 149 below.

4. *Undefiled: atak'inats'eal*, which picks up the theme of p. 122, n. 1.

5. Cf. Eph. 4:1 and Heb. 3:1.

6. Cf. p. 114 for these sentiments. "Victim" is the translation for *zuarak* ("bullock," see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 303), which is very common in the O.T.

7. *Necks, sword*: see p. 40, n. 6.

8. *Complaint: bołok'*. For this right of appeal to the shah see Christensen, *Iran*, p. 296. Cf. Paul in Acts 25:11: *καίσαρα ἐπικαλοῦμαι: i kaysr bołok'em*.

1. *Bastinado: gan*; see Benveniste, "Elements parthes," p. 35, and cf. the same term in Luke 12:48, quoted on p. 36 above.

guard because they had addressed a complaint to the court. The other priests they sent off to each one's own place with orders for the recovery and peace of the country.<sup>2</sup>

But the Armenian populace, who were aware of the fickle<sup>3</sup> orders of the king and of the malevolent<sup>4</sup> apostate Vasak, had no faith in the false pardon; rather, they encouraged one another, saying: "What need have we of life in this transitory world,<sup>5</sup> or why should we see the sun after [the death of] our friends? For even if our brave heroes fell in the great battle, and many wounded rolled in torrents<sup>6</sup> of blood on the plain, and all their bodies became carrion for birds<sup>7</sup> and food for animals,<sup>8</sup> and our honorable nobles were brought down to miserable indignity, abandoned their dominions, and are suffering grievously, and all our delicate Armenian women<sup>9</sup> have fallen prey to dangerous afflictions and terrible deprivations—we shall not obey your deceitful commands or submit to your impious princes."

Then they each abandoned their villages, towns, and estates. Brides left their chambers and grooms their rooms;<sup>10</sup> old men fell from their chairs and infants from their [mothers'] bosoms.<sup>11</sup> Young men and maidens and the whole populace of men and women went out and occupied the safe parts of the desert and the secure places of numerous mountains. They considered it better to live like beasts in caves but in piety, than to live luxuriously in their own houses but in apostasy.<sup>12</sup> Without

2. *Recovery and peace*: *shinut'iwñ ew khalafut'iwñ*; the terms often occur together, as on p. 188, or Agathangelos, §130.

3. *Fickle*: *yelyeluk*, as on p. 84, n. 4.

4. *Malevolent*: *ch'arimats'*; as on p. 71, n. 5, of the king.

5. *What . . . world*: as *Vkayk'*, p. 110.

6. *Rolled in torrents of blood*: *tapalets'an yariwñ yapazhoyz*, as in the threat of the king to Shmavon, *Vkayk'*, p. 119, or Moses Khorenats'i, III, 28 at n. 4, with parallels in Ps.-Callisthenes.

7. Cf. Ps. 78:2.

8. Cf. Jer. 16:4; but the expression is frequent in the Bible.

9. *Delicate Armenian women*: *p'ap'kut'iwñ Hayots'*. Although *p'ap'ruk* (tender, pampered) can refer to men, as on p. 67, n. 9, it is usually used by Elishē with regard to women, as of Susanna in Dan. 13:31. See also below, p. 200.

10. Cf. Joel 2:16.

11. Cf. Ps. 106:32, for old men sitting in chairs; infants in bosoms is a common theme, but I am not aware of parallels to the "falling" in this connection.

12. For the theme of living luxuriously in houses cf. Amos 6:4. For the contrast of piety and apostasy cf. above p. 72.



a murmur they endured their food of grass<sup>13</sup> and did not think of their usual victuals. Caverns in their reckoning were like ceilings in very tall buildings, and beds on the ground like painted arcades.<sup>14</sup>

[p. 125] Their whispered<sup>1</sup> songs were psalms, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures their ultimate delight. Every man was a church for himself, was himself a priest. Each one's body was a holy altar, and their souls an acceptable sacrifice.<sup>2</sup> For none of them despairingly mourned those who had fallen by the sword,<sup>3</sup> no one bewailed and sighed over his close friends. Joyfully they endured the rapine of many possessions and did not even recall at all that they had owned prosperity. Patiently they suffered, and very bravely they endured their heroic struggle. But had they not seen with open eyes the joyous hope,<sup>4</sup> they would not have been able to act with such great virtue.

Many were from the families of the great nobility—brothers, sons, and daughters with all their friends in fortified<sup>5</sup> places: some in the benighted<sup>6</sup> land of Khaltik', many others in the South in the inaccessible strongholds of Tmorik', some in the thick forests of Ardzakh, and yet others in the center of the country had seized control of many fortresses. They all endured with great patience their many tribulations for the love of

13. Life like that of beasts and food of grass have verbal parallels in 2 Macc. 5:27 of Judas and his companions living in the desert.

14. The preceding sentence has numerous verbal parallels in *Vkayk'*, p. 38, especially life in caverns (*darap'ork'*) contrasted with lofty (*bardzraberdz*) arcades (*patshgamk'*). For *patshgam* see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 225. Beds on the ground and food of herbs also have parallels in Koriun (e.g., p. 10) of his ascetic companions. *Darap'or* is used in Faustos, III, 14 of Daniel's cell.

1. *Whispered*: *mrmnjunk'*, which has overtones of lament, as in Faustos, IV, 15. Cf. p. 202, for whispered psalms and readings.

2. Cf. Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18. For the themes of church, priest, altar, and sacrifices in these senses, see patristic refs. in Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *ἐκκλησία*, H3; *ιερείς*, C5; *βωμός*, A3a; *θυσία*, 8; *θυσιαστήριον*, A4c.

3. For the Armenian attacks on excessive "despair" (*anyusut'iwon*) at funerals cf. Faustos, IV, 4; V, 31; Moses Khorenats'i, III, 20; *Kanonagirk'*, I, p. 247.

4. I.e., the Second Coming of Christ; cf. 1 Thess. 2:19: *yoys ew khndut'iwon* (here: *yoysn khndalit's*). But note esp. the parallel with 2 Macc. 7:14: "we look for the hope of the rebirth and resurrection of the dead."

5. *Fortified*: *amrakan*, see p. 94, n. 3.

6. *Benighted*: *anloys*. In Agathangelos, §785, the demons fled there from Daranalik'.

Christ. This only did they beg of God—that they might not see the devastation of the holy churches.

But just as we have often shown the impious one's iniquity, [so again now] he urged and pressed the Persian army in the neighboring parts of the country to come in force to their aid by royal command.<sup>7</sup> Many cavalry arrived, making up the numbers of the fallen, so that the army was as numerous as before. They advanced to the center of the country and attacked the large fortress of the Blue Mountain.<sup>8</sup> but the defenders valiantly [p. 126] resisted, struck down many of the Persian troops, and threw the survivors back in flight to their camp. But they [the Persians] resorted to soft words,<sup>1</sup> wishing to subdue them by deceit.

Although no one had the confidence to go down to them lest they be cruelly betrayed into the enemies' hands, yet because of their oaths a priest, whose name was Arshēn,<sup>2</sup> was constrained to go down to them. He parleyed with them in an appealing and friendly way, indicating that the flight of the innocent was harmless. He entreated the apostate Vasak and begged him to remember his earlier allegiance<sup>3</sup> to the Christian covenant, hoping he might soften a little from his terrible cruelty. But he did not listen and paid no heed to his words. He bound and sent off the blessed man and those who had gone down with him. More particularly, when he saw what the commander [of the fort] was following his suggestions, he then began to send out marauders; the numerous people they found outside the fortress they led into captivity, and torch in hand they set fire to many places.

Now when those in the fortresses of Tmorik' heard of all the calamities wrought by the royal army, they reckoned there was no advantage in living inside the fortifications. They

7. *By royal command: ark'uni hramanaw*, cf. p. 121, n. 1.

8. *Blue Mountain: Akinean, Elishē III*, 272, adduces evidence from later writers indicating that this was in Eraskhadzor (the valley of the Araxes) in the province of Arsharunik'.

1. *Soft words: olok'ank'*; cf. 1 Macc. 11:49 of the citizens of Antioch entreating the king. The term is used several times by Elishē, e.g., p. 37 of the demons seducing the unlearned by "blandishments"; p. 86 of the king's "flattering" letter; p. 132 of the king's "appeasing" letter.

2. *Arshēn*: he plays an important role in the last chapter. On the occasion of his martyrdom, p. 179, Elishē says he was from the village of Elegeak in the province of Bagrevand; cf. Łazar, p. 101.

3. *Allegiance: karg*, lit. "rank, station."

bravely went out on the attack with the help of the garrison;<sup>4</sup> reaching the neighboring part of Persia they slaughtered [the inhabitants] mercilessly and made a bloody carnage.<sup>5</sup> The survivors they took captive and imprisoned in the local fortresses, and the buildings of the country they burned down, torch in hand.

Likewise, when those in the mountains of Khałtik' saw that [p. 127] the Persian army was fearlessly daring to descend on the fortresses of Armenia, in great strength they attacked the valley of Tayk'.<sup>1</sup> There they found a large detachment of royal troops who were intending to take captive the garrisons of the fortresses of the country and who were searching the area mercilessly, since they thought that the nobles' treasures were there.<sup>2</sup>

Now when (the Armenians) also saw that the churches in two villages had been set on fire, they were goaded into even greater fury.<sup>3</sup> They rushed to attack, and winning a decisive<sup>4</sup> victory, broke the strength of the Persian troops, slaughtered many of them, and expelled the survivors in flight from the country.

From this audacious attack only the blessed Hmayeak, brother of the Armenian general Vardan,<sup>5</sup> fighting with uncompromising<sup>6</sup> bravery, was heroically martyred<sup>7</sup> for the unity of the holy covenant. All the others escaped unscathed and pursued the fugitives.

After this outcome, the king's troops ceased occupying every place indiscriminately or seizing any more churches. Once more they began to ask the court [for orders].

4. Fortifications, garrison: *amrakank'*; see p. 94, n. 3.

5. Mercilessly . . . carnage: as in 2 Macc. 5:6 of Jason's massacre in Jerusalem (*yankhnay*, *gortsēr*, *kotorats* being verbal parallels).

1. Valley of Tayk': *dzoragawain Tayots'*; Tayk' (see p. 28, n. 2) is usually called simply "province" (*gawar'*), *dzor* means "valley," and the term *dzoragawar'* seems to be a hapax. However, Tayk' is on the river Chorukh.

2. I.e., that the treasures had been taken to the area of Armenia farthest from Persia, not that Tayk' was a depository for royal treasure like Ani (as in Agathangelos, §785, or Moses Khorenats'i, III, 27, 45).

3. Goaded . . . fury: an exact verbal parallel to 1 Macc. 2:24 of the zeal of Mattathias.

4. Decisive: *kamakarut'eamb*, lit. "eagerly, spontaneously."

5. Hmayeak Mamikonean figures prominently in Lazar, but is mentioned only here by Elishē. For *sparapet*, "general," see p. 7, n. 9.

6. Uncompromising: *yankhnay*: lit. "merciless"; cf. p. 126, n. 5.

7. Heroically martyred: as on p. 78, n. 4.

Nor did those who had fled for refuge to the forests of Ardzakh remain quiet<sup>8</sup> and peaceful, but they continually sent to the land of the Huns, urging and exhorting the Hun army and reminding them of the pact which they had made with Armenia and confirmed with a solemn oath.<sup>9</sup> Many of them were pleased to hear these words of flattery. But [the Armenians] also blamed them severely: "Why did you not come prepared for battle?" [p. 128] Although in the beginning they found no way to reach mutual agreement, later (the Huns) gathered a numerous force and attacked the borders of the Persian empire. They ravaged many provinces, took very many prisoners back to their own country, and clearly showed to the king their unity with the Armenian army.

When news of all this reached the Persian general he erupted in anger; in his great wrath he piled the blame on the impious Vasak as being the cause and author of all the calamities.<sup>1</sup> Then he set off and went to Persia, giving the court a full and accurate account in writing and throwing the blame on the apostate.

When the king heard of all the devastation of the country and had been accurately informed about the outcome of the great battle, he desisted from his arrogant boasting; he kept silent and refrained from his perpetual deceitful scheming. He inquired into the failure of that imprudent affair, and wishing to find out, said: "Who might there be who could inform me truthfully about these matters?" Now the person at court who knew about the impious venture was the *hazarapet*<sup>2</sup> Mihrnerseh; he came forward and said to the king: "I can tell you that, noble sovereign.<sup>3</sup> If you wish to hear the plain truth, have the leaders of the Christians in Armenia summoned. They will willingly come and explain everything to you accurately."

Then the king wrote to one of the greatest nobles, Atrorzid by name, whose principality touched on the land of Armenia and who had cooperated with the general in that war,

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8. *Quiet: treat*: cf. 1 Macc. 7:50, where Judaea was quiet (*treats'*) after the death of Nicanor.

9. Cf. pp. 78, 80.

1. *Author of all the calamities: atajnord amenayn ch'areats'*, as in 2 Macc. 4:1 of the slander against Onias.

2. *Hazarapet*: see p. 23, n. 4.

3. *Noble sovereign: ark'ay k'aj*; see p. 9, n. 2.

and he appointed him governor<sup>4</sup> of the land of Armenia. He despatched Mushkan Nisalavurt with all [p. 129] the surviving troops to the lands of the Ajuank' and Lp'ink' and Chilbk' and to Hechmatakk' and T'avaspark' and Khibiovan,<sup>1</sup> and to all the fortresses which the army of the Huns had destroyed because of their pact with the Armenians. The king was exceedingly chagrined, not only over the ravaging of the lands and the loss of troops, but even more at the destruction of the Pass:<sup>2</sup> only with difficulty over a long time had they been able to fortify it,<sup>3</sup> but then it had been taken easily and razed, and there was no likelihood of its being rebuilt. So he ordered Vasak, with the leading Christians, to be summoned to court.

The *marzpan* Atrormizd arrived in Armenia with goodwill and in peace. Following the king's orders he summoned Sahak, the saintly bishop of the R̄shtunik',<sup>4</sup> to learn from him details about the accusation.<sup>5</sup> And although the latter had destroyed a fire-temple<sup>6</sup> and had greatly harassed the fire-worshippers, he did not hesitate to come to the public tribunal.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, a pious priest from the house of the Artsrunik', Mushē by name, who was a prelate in the land of the Artsrunik',<sup>8</sup> had also destroyed a house of fire<sup>9</sup> and inflicted many sufferings on the magi by imprisonment and tortures; yet he did not hesitate either, but willingly came and presented himself to the *marzpan*.

4. Governor: *marzpan*; see p. 61, n. 7. Łazar, p. 73, calls him Atrormizd Arshakan. For this passage see Adontz/Garsoian, *Armenia*, p. 442, n. 21.

1. Is T'avaspark' the same as Tavasparan, p. 94, n. 16? Khibiovan is otherwise unattested to.

2. I.e., the Chor; see p. 94.

3. Fortify: *shinel*, lit. "construct"; the ref. seems to be to fortifications at the pass that were destroyed.

4. Sahak of R̄shtunik' is first mentioned on p. 28 as a signatory of the letter to Mihrnerseh; he is one of the heroes of the last section of Elishē's *History*.

5. Accusation: *ambastanut'ivn*, as on p. 81, n. 9.

6. Fire-temple: *atrushan*, for which term see p. 12, n. 4. This charge seems to refer to the episodes described on p. 69, though Sahak is not mentioned there; but see further p. 174 below.

7. Public tribunal: *atean hraparakin*. For *hraparak* see p. 42, n. 4. *Atean* is used on p. 56 of God's tribunal, on p. 84 of the shah's council, and frequently below of a tribunal of interrogation.

8. Mushē is explicitly called "bishop" on p. 28, as opposed to *arajnard* here. He is mentioned again on p. 179; see Łazar, p. 101, for his martyrdom.

9. House of fire: *krakatun*, see p. 70, n. 2.

Two other blessed priests, called Samuel and Abraham,<sup>10</sup> had destroyed the fire-temple in Artashat<sup>11</sup> and earlier [p. 130] had been imprisoned by the apostate Vasak; they also were added to the company of their virtuous companions.

They also brought to the same place the great Yovsēp and Levond and K'ajaj<sup>1</sup> and Arshēn. When the governor had gained information from them all, he wrote an accurate account of everything to the court, just as he had heard it from their mouths.

Now although Vasak had previously arrived at court and had narrated everything falsely, twisting the facts as he pleased, yet he had been unable to justify himself to the satisfaction of the king, who responded: "When the Christians also arrive, I shall hear you all together at the tribunal."

But since they were bringing the holy priests in bonds, it was two months and twenty days before they reached the winter palace.<sup>2</sup> When the great *hazarapet* heard that they had been brought into the city, he interviewed them himself. But although he was informed about everything by them, he was unable to lay hands on them or torture them because many of the Armenian nobles were still in control of the fortresses of the land and the governor was still fearful. Therefore he ordered the holy ones to be guarded carefully and he commanded the country to be subdued with goodwill. So [the governor] himself went around, assembled gatherings, and began restoration with firm promises.

He ordered the bishops to occupy each his own see,<sup>3</sup> to conduct worship openly according to former custom, and to come out freely in public.<sup>4</sup> He even allowed them to receive gifts and offerings as before.<sup>5</sup> Since the soldiers had occupied

10. Samuel and Abraham play important roles in ch. 7. On p. 179 Elishē notes that Samuel was from Arats in the province of Ayrarat, and that Abraham was a deacon from the same village; Lazar, p. 78, says that Abraham was Samuel's spiritual son.

11. Cf. p. 68, though Samuel and Abraham are not mentioned there.

1. On p. 179 Elishē says K'ajaj was from Rštunik'; according to Lazar, p. 79, he was a disciple of the bishop Sahak.

2. At Ctesiphon. For the length of journey cf. p. 53.

3. See: *ishkhanut'iw*n, frequently used of nobles' domains; it also has the meaning of "authority" or "empire." For bishops each in his own *ishkhanut'iw*n cf. *Kanonagirk'* I, 210 (the ninth canon of Antioch).

4. Cf. p. 83.

5. *Gifts and offerings*: *ēntsayk' ew pataragk'*; for these traditional rights see *Kanonagirk'*, I, 384-385 (canon 32 of "Sahak").

and plundered many provinces, [p. 131] he ordered the taxes of the country to be remitted and he even reduced the burden of the royal cavalry for a time. And the monks, who had disappeared, he ordered to return and occupy each his own place.<sup>1</sup>

"Let [everyone]," he said, "perform all the rites of piety now just as they did in former times in the days of their ancestors. And if any people have gone to a distant land," said the governor, "I have authority from the court to allow them to return and recover their possessions, be they nobles, peasants, or clergy<sup>2</sup>—whatever way of life they may have abandoned."

He sealed sworn oaths and sent [the message] to all parts. Then many did return and repossess their lands.<sup>3</sup>

But what was most important of all, he sent out edicts from the court that if anyone had been forced against his will to accept magism, he could again embrace Christianity. And the king proclaimed to those at the royal court: "As for those who did not happily accept the Mazdaean religion,<sup>4</sup> the gods are angered at such people,<sup>5</sup> nor am I pleased. But today I issue the same edict to all, leaving each man to follow the decision of his own mind; let him worship as he wishes to worship. They are all my subjects."<sup>6</sup> So he spoke, and he put his order in writing for the whole country.

When they heard and saw this, many who were scattered in distant places returned and reoccupied their possessions.<sup>7</sup> And the nobles [p. 132] who were in the fortresses of the country or far away abroad,<sup>1</sup> when they saw the restoration of the country and especially the re-establishment of the church, were encouraged and emboldened to present themselves to the king. Therefore they sent a message to the governor of the country, asking him to present the nobles' petition at court. So he immediately had sent to them from the court by royal command an

1. Cf. pp. 22-23.

2. I.e., the three orders of traditional Armenian society. For the terms *azat* and *shinakan* see p. 52, n. 6.

3. *Lands: kaluats*, lit. "holdings"; for the term see Adontz/Garsoian, *Armenia*, p. 362.

4. *Mazdaean religion: den mazdeen*; see p. 24, n. 5.

5. For the anger of the gods cf. p. 46.

6. *Subjects: tsarayk'*, as on p. 67, n. 8.

7. *Possessions: arark'*; for the term see Adontz/Garsoian, *Armenia*, p. 362.

1. *Far away abroad: i herawor awtarut'ean*, as on p. 9, n. 7. The theme of "abroad/foreign exile" (*awtarut'iwn*) is frequent; cf. pp. 49, 63, 98, 162, 164, and 187, or Lazar, p. 57.

appeasing<sup>2</sup> letter and firm guarantee.<sup>3</sup> But although they knew the cruelty of the authorities and how they were false in everything, they still wished to share the saints' torments; for even if they had faced death they would not have hesitated from fear.

When the king heard this he ordered them to be summoned to his presence, not in bonds but with feet and hands untied. They immediately brought their wives and children and delivered to the governor their possessions;<sup>4</sup> then they went off in haste to the king's winter palace.

And while the king was still in his winter palace he ordered a tribunal to be held to question<sup>5</sup> them. The *hazarapet* presided in order to hear both sides. The proceedings<sup>6</sup> lasted many days, and the side of the apostates lost.

For they presented letters given out by Vasak and all his companions urging that [others] join with him in the pact to rebel: one letter to Georgia, one letter to Albania, likewise a letter to Ajdznik<sup>4</sup>, and a message to the Greek emperor, and a letter to the great general of Antioch.<sup>7</sup> All these letters had been authenticated<sup>8</sup> with Vasak's ring. Similarly, he had been implicated [p. 133] in the death of the magi in Zarehavan.<sup>1</sup> They also revealed letters and orders of his concerning the fortresses seized from the Persians, since he had been governor<sup>2</sup> at the time.

Furthermore, a noble called Atom from the Gnuni family,<sup>3</sup> whom he had sent on an embassy to the Greeks, came forward and accused him before the great tribunal with that very message which he had given him [sealed] with his own ring.

Mushkan Nisalavurt also brought forward an accusation

2. *Appeasing*: *ołok'anats'*; see p. 126, n. 1.

3. *Firm guarantee*: *ukht hastatut'ean*.

4. *Possessions*: *inch's*, used of movable property, not real estate; cf. p. 131, nn. 3, 7.

5. *To question*: *harts'ap'ordzi*, as on p. 181; cf. also *Vkayk'*, p. 210.

6. *Proceedings*: *ambastanut'iwu*; as on p. 81, n. 9.

7. I.e., Anatolius, mentioned above, pp. 7, 23. For the term *sparapet* ("general") see p. 7, n. 9. On this episode cf. Łazar, pp. 63, 84.

8. *Authenticated*: *vawerakan*; for this term see Nyberg, *Manual* II, s.v. *vāparikāneh*.

1. *Zarehavan*: in Bagrevand, see Hübschmann, *AON*, pp. 427-428. On the episode, cf. Łazar, p. 63.

2. For Vasak as *marzpan* cf. p. 63.

3. *Atom Gnuni*: first mentioned on p. 71.



against him, indicating with his companions in arms that even after the end of the war Vasak had caused much blood to be shed: how by false oaths he had tricked [Armenians] into coming down from their fortresses; some he killed, others he took captive as royal slaves and handmaidens.<sup>4</sup> In addition to all this mischief it turned out that he had stolen the tax<sup>5</sup> of the country which went to the royal Treasury.

There were also many of his apostate friends who revealed the crimes he had committed against Armenia. And the surviving magi and lifeguards,<sup>6</sup> who had been kept in prison and had later been brought to court, were questioned about him: "What do you know about his wrongdoing?" They replied: "That man was the cause and author of these calamities:<sup>7</sup> all the tortures which we endured, the great losses inflicted on the royal army, the ruin and captivity of Armenia, and the loss of the royal taxes."

[p. 134] While all these accusations against him were being repeated for so many days, his own relatives—who had also earlier denounced<sup>1</sup> him before the king—came forward. They began to expound and reveal in order how he had made friends with Heran the Hun<sup>2</sup> in concert with the king of Bałas;<sup>3</sup> this was at the time that Heran had slaughtered the Persian troops in Albania and had raided the land of the Greeks, carrying off many prisoners and much plunder from the Greeks, Armenians, Georgians, and Albanians. [They also indicated] how the king himself had learned of his intentions and had slain the king of Bałas. At that time Vasak was governor of Armenia and he had been found to be in collusion<sup>4</sup> with the king's enemies. These relatives also revealed how they had been privy to his wicked plans. All this they made public before the king, as well as many other deceits:<sup>5</sup> he behaved falsely not only to his

4. Cf. the exile of captives to work on royal estates; see p. 71, n. 2. *Royal slaves and handmaidens*: *ztsarāys ew zalakhnays ark'uni*; the two are very frequently associated in biblical texts.

5. *Tax*: *hark*, as on p. 22, n. 9.

6. *Lifeguards*: *p'shtipan*; see p. 65, n. 1.

7. See p. 128, n. 1.

1. *Denounced*: *datakhaz*, which translates *κατήγορος* in Acts 25:16.

2. Heran is mentioned only here.

3. *Bałas*: see p. 76, n. 8.

4. *In collusion*: *khordakhts'*; cf. p. 49, n. 3.

5. *Deceits*: *khordakhts'iwnk'*; only here in Elishē; cf. 2 Macc. 4:6, where it is used of Simon's folly.

friends but most of all toward the king himself, and from his youth he had never acquitted himself honestly.

Then the *hazarapet* gave the order: "Bring here some of the prisoners who are in gaol." They unbound and brought in Sahak, bishop of Ršhtunik', Saint Yovsēp, and the priest Levond from among the blessed men.

When all the court proceedings had been explained to them, Bishop Sahak responded: "Those who have openly denied the True God do not realize what they are doing or what they are saying, for their minds are darkened.<sup>6</sup> They serve their lords for the wrong reasons and enter into a false covenant with their friends. They are Satan's snare,<sup>7</sup> because through them he carries out his cruel will—as [p. 135] is clear with this Vasak. For while he was nominally a Christian he thought he could outwardly<sup>1</sup> cover up and hide all his wickedness from your unwitting majesty; and he did conceal all his treachery with his Christianity. So you respected him and greatly honored him above his worth. You entrusted him with the land of Georgia. Ask that country if [its people] are satisfied with him. You gave him authority over Siunik'. Listen to what his kin say about him. You made him governor of Armenia. And the land which your forefathers had gained by great effort, he lost it all in a single year. Have you seen that when the honorable name of God, which he falsely bore, was removed from him all his villainy was laid bare? For if he has been shown to be false to his God, to whom among mortals will he be true?

"But had you not heard before all the charges against him which have now been uncovered? For whatever reason you concealed them, you yourself know best. It seems to me that he has diverted<sup>2</sup> you with false hopes. But neither you, nor he, nor anyone to come after you will be able to see that in us. So do as you wish; why ask us?"

The great *hazarapet*'s mind was astonished, and he carefully reflected on all the proceedings of the tribunal. Since he realized that the man had rightly been condemned for his un-

6. *Darkened*: *khawarayin*, as on p. 28 of Arhmn; cf. the theme of mental blindness on p. 14. See also n. 7 following.

7. *Snare*: *darank*'; cf. the "gloomy lair" *khawarayin darank*', p. 51, of the magi. For the theme of Satan's snare see patristic references in Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. ἐνέδρα.

1. *Outwardly*: *i verin ertess*, as on p. 11, n. 4.

2. *Diverted*: *khndats'oyts*'; lit. "made happy."

worthy deeds, he entered the palace and expounded all the proceedings of the tribunal. When the king had been informed [p. 136] by the *hazarapet* of the man's guilt, he was exceedingly angry and deeply hurt.<sup>1</sup> But wishing to be patient in bringing ignominy on him, he kept silent for twelve days until the process<sup>2</sup> of the accusation had come to an end.

Then on one special day he ordered all the eminent nobles<sup>3</sup> to be invited to a banquet, including the apostate. According to previous royal customary usage he wore the robe of honor<sup>4</sup> that the king had given him; he also put on his headband and the golden tiara<sup>5</sup> on top. Round his waist he put the girdle<sup>6</sup> of pure hammered gold set with pearls and precious stones, earrings<sup>7</sup> in his ears, the necklace<sup>8</sup> round his neck, the sable cloak<sup>9</sup> on his back; dressed in all his marks of honor<sup>10</sup> he went to court, where he appeared to the assembly as more splendid<sup>11</sup> and distinguished than everyone else.

But the nobles who had willingly come from Armenia and had submitted to investigation and the saints who had arrived earlier were all held in bonds at the royal court. When they saw him coming to the palace dressed up in his finery with a numerous entourage, they began to mock him inwardly and say: "O senseless merchant,<sup>12</sup> you have sold the immortal and eternal honor and have bought the transitory—and even that in a few days you will lose."

1. *Deeply hurt*: *i khor khots'ets'aw*, as on p. 120<sup>13</sup> of Mushkan.

2. *Process*: *p'ursish*; see Nyberg, *Manual II*, s.v. *pursishn*.

3. *Eminent nobles*: *ereveli patuakank'*; see p. 84, n. 3.

4. For the robes of honor in Iran see Christensen, *Iran*, pp. 403ff; and for Armenia, Toumanoff, *Studies*, pp. 134-135.

5. *Golden tiara*: *khoyr osketën*; see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 160, for further refs.

6. *Girdle*: *kamar*: see Nyberg, *Manual II* s.v. *kamār*, and Widengren, *Feudalismus*, p. 29.

7. *Earrings*: *gind*; cf. Moses Khorenats'i, II, 47.

8. *Necklace*: *gumartak*; see Nyberg, *Manual II*, s.v. *gumärtak*, and Armenian refs. in Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 130.

9. *Sable cloak*: *samoyn*; cf. Faustos, V, 38, where it is mentioned as a gift from the shah to the *sparapet* Manuel. See further Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 236.

10. *Marks of honor*: *awrënk' patuoyñ*.

11. *Splendid*: *shk'el*; cf. 1 Macc. 11:58 of Jonathan's splendid insignia as a friend of the King—a passage adapted by Moses Khorenats'i; see n. 7 above.

12. *Merchant*: *vacharakan*: cf. Matt. 13:14 and the preface to Agathangelos (esp. §9-10) on the spiritual interpretation of a merchant's endeavors, here turned around. For martyrs as eternal *vacharakank'* see *Vkayk'*, p. 52.

On his arrival he sat in the inner gallery<sup>13</sup> which was the chamber<sup>14</sup> of the greatest nobles. [p. 137] Then the court chamberlain<sup>1</sup> entered and questioned him: "The king sent [me] to [ask] you from whom you acquired all these honors. Tell me straightway, for what just services?"<sup>2</sup> He reminded him of all the proceedings of the tribunal where he had been condemned. And even the things that had not been mentioned there, these too he indicated to him: that he did not legally<sup>3</sup> hold the lordship of the land of Siunik<sup>4</sup>, but by treachery and intrigue he had had his uncle Vaġinak<sup>4</sup> killed and had taken the title for himself as a reward<sup>5</sup> at court. They had also condemned him on many other charges, to which all the upper nobility bore witness. He was entirely confounded<sup>6</sup> and no true word was found in his mouth.<sup>7</sup> When they had repeated twice and three times [the charges] and had reported within the palace, sentence of death was passed upon him.

Then the chief-executioner<sup>8</sup> entered, immediately stepped forward in front of all the magnates, stripped from him the honors bestowed on him by the court, and dressed him in the garb of a condemned man.<sup>9</sup> He was bound hand and foot, set like a woman on a mare,<sup>10</sup> led off, and delivered to the prison where all those condemned to death were kept.

But the Armenian nobles and holy bishops with the priests, although they were subject to great punishment,<sup>11</sup> did

13. *Gallery*: *dahlich*; see Meillet, "Sur les mots iraniens."

14. *Chamber*: *hraparak*; see p. 42, n. 4.

1. *Chamberlain*: *senekapan*; not used elsewhere in Elishē; Łazar, p. 64, calls Veh(den)shapuh the royal *senekapan*. Denshapuh figures prominently in Elishē and Łazar and is given various titles, including *hambarakapet* (Elishē, p. 143). For the office see Christensen, *Iran*, pp. 283, 390; Toumanoff, *Studies*, p. 168.

2. *Services*: *vastakk'*; see p. 46, n. 2.

3. *Legally*: *ēst kargin, karā rāğiv*, as in 1 Cor. 14:40.

4. *Vaġinak*: according to Koriun, pp. 21-22, Vaġinak of Siunik<sup>4</sup> was succeeded by Vasak; Koriun's picture of Vasak is very different from that of Elishē.

5. *Reward*: *k'ypikar*; see p. 46, n. 5.

6. As in Matt. 22:12 of the guest without a wedding garment.

7. Cf. 3 Kings 12:24.

8. *Chief-executioner*: *dahchapet*; see p. 48, n. 5.

9. Cf. the "dark (or mourning) garments" of the man condemned to death, p. 184.

10. Cf. the later Persian miniatures depicting women sitting behind a rider or facing backwards.

11. *Punishment*: *patuhas*; see Nyberg, *Manual II*, s.v. *pātifrās*.

not at all think of their afflictions which they had suffered or which they expected to come upon them, but rather they wondered at the great revelation effected by God. They consoled one another, saying: "We fought<sup>12</sup> bravely, let us endure<sup>13</sup> even more patiently.<sup>14</sup> We have learned from our holy fathers that the chief [*p. 138*] of all virtues is patience,<sup>1</sup> and perfect piety is heavenly wisdom.<sup>2</sup> But this no one can acquire without torments. Now when torments are drawn out, then the compensating reward will be that much the greater.<sup>3</sup> So if this is the case, let us beg God only that we may be able to endure all trials<sup>4</sup> and the Lord himself will provide the means for our salvation.

"We have heard of the sentence passed on the forty warriors of Christ who suffered many tortures. One of them hastened to the baths<sup>5</sup> and lost the crown,<sup>6</sup> but the thirty-nine patiently endured martyrdom and attained that promise for which they had longed. Now there is our colleague who separated from us at the beginning—behold, he becomes the accomplice of Satan.<sup>7</sup> While his soul is still in the body he has received the pledge<sup>8</sup> of the torments of hell, which provokes not only saints to lamentation, but even all brutal men."

So they spoke and shed many tears over the lost one. But then they began to sing spiritual hymns: "It is better to hope in the Lord than to hope in men. It is better to hope in the Lord than to hope in princes. All nations surrounded me, but

12. Cf. 2 Tim. 4:7.

13. Cf. Jude 3.

14. *Bravely, patiently: k'ajut'eamb, hamberut'eamb; cf. 2 Macc. 15:17, Judas' exhortation to hamberut'iwn and k'ajut'iwn.*

1. James 1:4; cf. 2 Pet. 1:6. But virtue, *arak'imut'iwn*, is a major theme in Elishē. See the Introduction.

2. Cf. Prov. 1:7.

3. Cf. Heb. 10:35ff.

4. Cf. Heb. 10:32.

5. The ref. is to the forty martyrs of Sebastia who were left naked on the ice with baths of hot water at the edge of the pond to tempt them. One was tempted and apostatized. See Gray, *Two Armenian Passions*, p. 375, for another Armenian ref. to this popular story. For Armenian and other versions see *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis*, pp. 156-157.

6. For the crown of martyrdom, cf. p. 150, and see further refs. in Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *μαρτύριον*, 4c and *στέφανος*.

7. *Accomplice: gortsakits'*, here in contrast to 1 Cor. 3:9, where we are *gortsakits'* of God. On p. 6 the same epithet is applied to Yazkert.

8. *Pledge: arhawatch'eay*, which throughout the N.T. refers to heaven, not hell.

through the name of the Lord I conquered them.”<sup>9</sup> They encouraged each other, saying: “Since we know this, brethren, let us not fear the godless nation of the heathen, who in their frenzy are more vicious than bees,<sup>10</sup> for their fury will also turn to their own destruction. But we shall call on the name of the Lord and rout<sup>11</sup> them all.”

The apostate Vasak looked on the unity of the saintly prisoners, who accepted their torments with great joy and appeared just as cheerful and serene<sup>12</sup> as they had been previously at court. He looked and yearned, [p. 139] but no one [allowed] him to join them, as they kept him apart in his own bonds. Day after day he was brought and thrown like carrion<sup>1</sup> into the great square; he was mocked<sup>2</sup> and ridiculed and made the laughingstock<sup>3</sup> of the whole army. They robbed<sup>4</sup> him, taking away everything he possessed; and they so derided him in his poverty that his servants had to beg for bread<sup>5</sup> to bring him. So heavy were the land dues<sup>6</sup> imposed on his house that he had to resort to the possessions of his parents and grandparents as well as his own, and even to the women’s jewelry to pay the fine—and still he was unable to pay off the debts to the court. They even went so far as to ask him: “Is there any treasure in the tombs of our ancestors?” If he found any he was to dig it out and give it as forfeit<sup>7</sup> for himself and his family, as many people had been included in the fine.

After he had been maltreated from all sides in this fashion, he succumbed to painful diseases there in prison. His entrails

9. Cf. Ps. 117:8-10.

10. Cf. Ps. 117:12.

11. Cf. Ps. 117:11.

12. *Serene*: *paytsar*, lit. “shining,” as of the stars on p. 70.

1. *Carrion*: *gēsh*, as on p. 8 of Yazkert or p. 77 of the magi.

2. *Mocked*: *dzalēin*; the only biblical parallel is Matt. 27:31, 41, of the mocking of Christ.

3. *Laughingstock*: *tesil*, as in 1 Cor. 4:9.

4. *Robbed*: *kołoptets’in*, as in Ezek. 26:12.

5. *Beg for bread*: here the contrast with Vasak’s splendor (*shk’el*, p. 136, n. 11) is emphasized; for Prov. 12:9 indicates that he who makes himself *shuk’* will not lack bread. Cf. also Ps. 36:25: the seed of the righteous will not beg for bread.

6. *Dues*: *zparters harkats’*. For *hark* see p. 22, n. 9; for *part* see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 228. The ending *-er* is itself a plural form, based on the collective ending in *-ear*; see Karst, *Grammatik*, pp. 177-179. Two lines below the usual acc. pl. *zparts* is used.

7. *Forfeit*: *tugank’*; for the term see Nyberg, *Manual II*, s.v. *tōxtan*, and Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 253.

began to burn,<sup>8</sup> his chest hurt and was festered, his fat belly shrank. Worms crawled in his eyes and ran down from his nostrils; his ears were bunged up, and his lips were painfully pierced; the sinews of his arms decomposed,<sup>9</sup> and the heels of his feet were bent backwards. The stench of death emanated from him, and his domestic servants fled from him. Only his tongue remained alive in his mouth, but no confession was found on his lips. He tasted the death of suffocation<sup>10</sup> and descended to hell in hopeless misery. All his friends maligned<sup>11</sup> him, while his enemies were not satisfied with his unbearable afflictions.<sup>12</sup>

[p. 140] He who sinfully had wished to be king of Armenia had no known tomb, for he died like a dog and was thrown out as carrion.<sup>1</sup>

His name was not remembered among the saints; neither was his memory recalled before the holy altar in church. There was no crime he left uncommitted during his lifetime; nor was there any terrible evil which did not befall him on his death.

These recollections<sup>2</sup> have been written concerning him in order to reprove his sins,<sup>3</sup> so that everyone who hears and knows them may cast curses on him and not lust after his deeds.<sup>4</sup>

8. Cf. Ps. 38:4.

9. Cf. Job 30:17.

10. Suffocation: *hel'dzaml'dzuk*; cf. *Vkayk'*, p. 80, for such tortures.

11. Cf. Prov. 11:4 of the death of the impious.

12. The above description of Vasak's end is based on the death of Herod in Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I, 7, and the death of Antiochus in 2 Macc. 9:9, as described in the Armenian versions:

*Herod*: diseases, burn, chest hurt, worms, painfully, stench of death emanated, suffocation, afflictions.

*Antiochus*: worms crawled in his eyes, stench of death.

Cf. also Eccles. 7:18: the revenge on the impious is fire and worm.

1. As carrion: *ibrew zgēsh*; cf. p. 139, n. 1. But some MSS, followed by Ter-Minasean, read *zēsh*, "(like) a donkey."

2. Recollections: *yishatakaran*; see p. 104, n. 9.

3. Cf. Ps. 38:12.

4. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:6.

## *Again Concerning the Same War and the Tortures of the Holy Priests*

**N**OW in the sixteenth year of his reign<sup>2</sup> King [Yazkert] in great wrath again marched to the land of the Kushans to wage war.<sup>3</sup> Leaving Vrkan<sup>4</sup> and reaching the land of Apar,<sup>5</sup> he ordered that the nobles and priests be kept in the same fetters in the citadel<sup>6</sup> of Niwshapuh.<sup>7</sup> But two<sup>8</sup> of the blessed prisoners he made march with him. He struck fear into all the Christian communities through which he passed.

A certain Hun of royal descent from the land of the Khaylandurk', Bēl by name,<sup>9</sup> was secretly inclined to the Christians and was eagerly being instructed in the truth by them. He had of his own will submitted to the king's authority, but when he

1. For the problem of numbering the chapters see p. 114, n. 6. The MSS note that this section is separate (*artak'oy*) from the chapters that have gone before. But although the episodes described could be regarded as a supplement to the main theme of the revolt of 450/1, the basic themes in a literary and religious sense remain the same.

2. I.e., 453/4.

3. See pp. 9ff. for the first expedition against the Kushans.

4. *Vrkan*: *Hyrkania*; see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 86; Marquart, *Erānšahr*, pp. 72-74.

5. *Apar*: see p. 10, n. 1.

6. *Citadel*: *dleak*, which translates ἀκρόα in 2 Macc. 4:27 and is translated by the Greek version of Agathangelos, §122 as λόφος.

7. I.e., Nishapur; see Marquart, *Erānšahr*, p. 74.

8. *Two*: i.e., Samuel and Abraham; see p. 143.

9. For the Khaylandurk' see p. 12, n. 2; there the MSS spell the name Khaylndurk', Khaylëndurk', or Khaylënduk'. Bēl is otherwise unknown. For Christianity among the Huns see Maenchen-Helfen, *Huns*, esp. pp. 260-267.



saw the saints being tormented he became very embittered. But since he was unable to help [them], he fled to the king of the Kushans. [p. 142] He went and told him all the details of the sufferings that the king had inflicted on Armenia. He also informed him about the breach in the Pass of the Huns<sup>1</sup> and showed him the discord<sup>2</sup> in the army, whereby many nations had defected from loyalty to the king. He also indicated to him the muttering<sup>3</sup> of the land of the Aryans.

When the king of the Kushans heard this, he in no way doubted or distrusted the man, nor did the suspicion he might be a spy enter his heart. For he had learned a little earlier, and Bēl as it were confirmed it, that [Yazkert] was marching on the land of the Kushans; so he immediately made haste to assemble his troops and organize an army to oppose him with force. For although he was unable to face him in pitched battle, nonetheless, falling on his rear he inflicted many losses on the king's army. And he pressed and assailed them so hard that, overcoming them with a small number of troops, he turned them back. In hot pursuit, he plundered many royal provinces, and he himself returned safely to his own country.

When the king saw that he had returned from his campaign in disgrace and ignominy,<sup>4</sup> he moderated his pride a little and realized that all these calamities had occurred through the disunity<sup>5</sup> of his army. But in the vexation of his heart he did not know on whom to pour out the venom of his bitterness;<sup>6</sup> while the great *hazarapet* was much afraid, for he himself was the cause of all the disasters that had occurred.

He began to make suggestions to the chief-magus and magi, who came [p. 143] before the king and said: "Noble king, we know from our religion<sup>1</sup> that no man can withstand your great power. But the gods have become angry with us<sup>2</sup> because

1. *Pass of the Huns*: i.e., the Chor, as on p. 78, n. 2. See p. 129 for the destruction of the fortifications there.

2. *Discord*: *erkparakut'iwn*, a term often used by Elishē of the disunity among the Armenians; see p. 3, n. 4; p. 89, n. 1.

3. *Muttering*: *trtwj*; a term frequent in the O.T. for the Israelites. For the situation here cf. 1 Macc. 11:39, which describes the disaffection of Demetrius's troops with the same expression.

4. *Ignominy*: *vatt'arut'eamb*, as in 2 Macc. 11:13 of the defeat of Lysias.

5. *Disunity*: see n. 2 above.

6. Cf. p. 7.

1. *Religion*: *den*; see p. 9, n. 8.

2. For the anger of the gods cf. pp. 46, 131.

you have kept the Christians, who are opposed to our religion, alive until today." They further reminded him how "they cursed you in prison."<sup>3</sup> They uttered many other blasphemies concerning the saints and continuously disparaged them, driving the king to violent anger, until he made rapid haste to shed the blood of the innocent.

He gave a command with regard to the two who were there in the camp near him, Samuel and Abraham, that they should be secretly slain. As for those who were in the citadel distant from the camp about fifteen stages,<sup>4</sup> he ordered the intendant,<sup>5</sup> whose name was Denshapuh,<sup>6</sup> to precede him to the city where the holy priests of the Lord were, to bring them to justice, to interrogate them with terrible tortures, and to put them to death by the sword.

But the chief-magus to whom they had been entrusted had previously tortured them frequently, in excess of the king's command. For he was the governing religious authority<sup>7</sup> of the land of Apar and more enthusiastic in magism and more versed in the Zoroastrian religion<sup>8</sup> than most wise men. Furthermore—what they consider a great glory in their erring hierarchy—he had the title of *Hamakden*,<sup>9</sup> he also knew the *Ampartk'ash*, had learned the *Bozpayit*, [p. 144] and was versed in the *Pahlavik* and the *Parskaden*.<sup>1</sup> For these are the five doctrines<sup>2</sup> which comprise all the religion of magism. But beyond these is a further sixth, which they call *Petmog*.<sup>3</sup>

It seemed to him that he was perfect in all knowledge; he regarded the blessed ones as if they had strayed "from our great

3. This charge is not substantiated by any episode reported in Elishē.

4. *Stages*: *awt'*, equivalent to the Latin *mansio*, i.e., a day's journey.

5. *Intendant*: *hambarakapet*, cf. Lazar, p. 104<sup>19</sup>. For the etymology see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 178, and Nyberg, *Manual* II, s.v. *hanbārak*. For the office see Christensen, *Iran*, pp. 102, 283.

6. *Denshapuh*: see p. 22, n. 6.

7. *Religious authority*: *denpet*, otherwise unattested to; see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 139.

8. *Zoroastrian religion*: *zradashtakan awrēnk'*; see p. 19, n. 1.

9. *Hamakden*; i.e., "fully (versed in Zoroastrian) religion"; see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 177.

10. *Ampartk'ash*, *Bozpayit*: see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, pp. 96, 122.

1. *Pahlavik*, *Parskaden*: i.e., the Pahlavi code and Persian religion.

2. *Doctrines*: *keshit*, as on p. 61, n. 5, there translated "cult," but here rather in the sense of "code, dogma."

3. *Petmog*: i.e., the special code of the chief-magi. On this whole passage see Christensen, *Iran*, p. 117.

knowledge" through ignorance. He conceived the vain idea of torturing them unceasingly that perchance, through the inability of the body to endure afflictions, "I may hear from them some words of entreaty."<sup>4</sup> Therefore he separated the priests from the nobles, removed them far from them and cast them into a damp and gloomy dungeon.<sup>5</sup> He ordered that two barley [loaves] and a jar<sup>6</sup> and one-half of water [be given] to each six men at each [meal] time. And he allowed no one at all to approach the prison gates.

When he had tormented them in this way for forty days but had heard no word of vacillation<sup>7</sup> from them, he thought that one of his own servants had secretly received something from them and might have given them food on the sly. He went himself and sealed the skylight<sup>8</sup> and door of the prison, and had men he trusted take the allotted ration<sup>9</sup> to them. He did this for fifteen days.

Nonetheless, the blessed ones were in no way oppressed or troubled. Rather, with great patience they endured this austerity and with unceasing psalms performed the daily service.<sup>10</sup> At the completion of their prayers they would rest for a while in joyful gratitude, with the hard ground<sup>11</sup> as their bed.

[p. 145] But the guards in charge of the prisoners were greatly astonished at their sound health when they heard the ceaseless sound of their voices. Therefore they reported to the chief-magus and said: "These are not ordinary men without great power. For [even] if their bodies were of bronze they would have decayed from the humid dampness. It is a long time that the guarding of this prison has been entrusted to us, but we do not remember any prisoner living for a month in this dungeon. Now we say to you: If you have received a command for their death and you kill them, you know [what you are

4. *Entreaty*: *olokank'*; see p. 126, n. 1.

5. *Dungeon*: *nerk'atun*, used of a cellar; in Gen. 6:16 of the lowest deck in the ark.

6. *Jar*: *dorak*; see Nyberg, *Manual* II, s.v. *dōrak*.

7. *Vacillation*: *t'ulut'iw*; cf. p. 14, n. 1.

8. *Skylight*: *erd*; cf. the *erdik*, the hole in the roof of Armenian houses to let out smoke, on which see Khatchatrian, *L'architecture*, pp. 46 and 63ff. This is different from the *erd* of p. 199, n. 4.

9. *Ration*: *řochik*; see p. 64, n. 1.

10. *Daily service*: *hanapazord pashtawn*, which translates ἡ διακονία ἡ καθημερινή in Acts 6:1.

11. *Hard ground*: *getnakhshiti*, i.e., from *getin* (ground, earth) and *khsteak* (bed, pallet).

doing]. But on the other hand, if you have been detailed to guard and not condemn them, then the prisoners are in terrible danger. Furthermore, we are awestruck and very fearful when we see such unbearable afflictions."

When the chief-magus heard this, he arose and went himself in the middle of the night to the dungeon skylight. Looking inside through the evening gloom, while they were resting from their worship, he saw each one of the prisoners shining like an inextinguishable lamp. Greatly terrified, he said to himself: "What is this great miracle? Our gods then have descended into this prison and their glory<sup>1</sup> has taken fire. If they are not close to them, it is impossible for a mere man to be clothed in such glorious light. I have so heard about this sect<sup>2</sup> that they are deranged in their great folly and take on false forms<sup>3</sup> in the eyes of ignorant men. Perhaps this was some such vision that appeared to me."

He was totally unable to understand the reality of the vision. And while he was thus reflecting, the saints again rose from each one's pallet [p. 146] for the customary worship. Then the chief-magus truly realized that what had appeared to him he had not seen in a confused way,<sup>1</sup> but the illumination was emanating from their very selves. Then for the second time he was terror-struck and said: "On which prisoner ever appeared such an apparition? I know of no one else nor have I heard from our ancestors." And because he was horribly shaken by the great miracle and his whole body was trembling,<sup>2</sup> he remained on the roof stupefied<sup>3</sup> and half-dead<sup>4</sup> until morning. When day dawned, like one ill for many days he arose and went to his lodging, but was quite unable to tell anyone at all what he had seen.

He summoned the guards and said to them: "Go and take

1. *Glory*: *p'araworut'iwon*; cf. the *p'arik'* of the shah, p. 165, n. 5 below, and Agathangelos, §127. For the Iranian *farr* see Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems*, chs. 1 and 2, and Christensen, *Iran*, p. 141. The theme of light around the martyr is common in hagiography; see Delehaye, *Passions*, p. 214. Cf. also 2 Macc. 15:13, for the figure of Jeremiah (*Iserut'iwon p'araworut'ean*) in the vision of Judas.

2. *Sect*: *kesht*; see p. 61, n. 5.

3. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-14 of Satan and false apostles.

1. *In a confused way*: *ayl'end'ayloy*; cf. p. 47, n. 1.

2. *Shaken, trembling*: see p. 14, n. 2.

3. *Stupefied*: see p. 91, n. 2.

4. *Half-dead*: *kisamer*; cf. 2 Macc. 3:29, the collapse of Heliodorus on seeing a vision; and cf. also p. 180, n. 3.

the prisoners to a really dry upper-room<sup>5</sup> and guard them there carefully, as you suggested." One of the executioners,<sup>6</sup> on hearing the chief-magus' orders, hastily ran and informed them as if it were great news: "He has ordered you," he said, "to move to a dry upper-room. Arise quickly, do not be slow, for even we pleaded [with him] about your misery."

But the saintly Joseph began to speak in a gentle way to the executioner, saying; "Go and say to your foolish leader: Have you not heard about the future coming of our Lord or about the wonderful mansions that are reserved for us in readiness from the beginning?<sup>7</sup> Therefore we easily endure this great tribulation for the love of that hope which we shall see. You did well to have pity for the great tribulation of [our] bodies. But we are not at all fatigued<sup>8</sup> like some godless person<sup>9</sup> who has no other hope in his mind [*p.* 147] than what is visible. But we, for love of our Christ, greatly rejoice at this, and we even consider it to be a perfect favor<sup>1</sup> so that we may inherit eternal blessings by these temporary tribulations.

"If we were to desire buildings, we have mansions in heaven made without human hands;<sup>2</sup> to them your royal palace offers no comparison. Likewise with garments and glory and untainted food:<sup>3</sup> if anyone were to wish to speak to you about them, your weak-mindedness would not bear to listen. For because of your inveterate blindness you do not see, or hear, or understand. Therefore you are mercilessly judging us, vainly and unjustly and without guilt [on our part]. But our King is liberal and beneficent,<sup>4</sup> and the door of his kingdom is open. If anyone were to wish to enter, let him enter boldly. He never begrudges anyone who turns to repentance.

"But as for the comforts which you have ordered to be provided us—we had the power back in our own country not to fall into the hands of your king, like the others who escaped

5. *Upper-room: vernatun*, in contrast to the *nerk'natun* of p. 144, n. 5.

6. *Executioner: dahich*; see p. 48, n. 5.

7. Cf. the picture of heaven on p. 103; here based on Matt. 25:34; John 14:2; 2 Cor. 5:1.

8. *Fatigued: dzandzrats'ealk'*, as in 2 Cor. 4:16.

9. *Godless person: anastuats*; a frequent term for the Persians; cf. p. 73 of Anatolius and Florentius.

1. Cf. James 1:17.

2. Cf. 2 Cor. 15:1.

3. Cf. Matt. 6:25-29 and parallels.

4. Cf. p. 152, n. 3.

such troubles. But as we came willingly and readily, although we knew the perils of our danger and yet did not fear such hardships,<sup>5</sup> likewise we also wish that you bring even heavier afflictions upon us until your malice against us has been sated. For if our God, who is Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible, in his benevolent love humbled himself to the race of mankind and put on a passible body,<sup>6</sup> accomplished the whole range<sup>7</sup> of virtue, fulfilled every act of Providence [*թ. 148*] of his own will, was betrayed into the hands of his crucifiers, died and was placed in a tomb,<sup>1</sup> rose by his divine power and appeared to the disciples and to many others, ascended to his Father in heaven, sat at the right hand of the Father's throne, granted us heavenly power so that conformably with his immortality we too in our mortal bodies may be able to suffer with him and share in his immortal grandeur—and if he no longer considers our death as mortal but requites to us as immortals the rewards of our labors—then we count as insignificant these torments for love of the recompense<sup>2</sup> which he bestowed on the race of mankind.”

When the chief-magus heard all that the chief-executioner had to say, he was disturbed and disconcerted in his mind; sleep departed from his eyes for many nights.<sup>3</sup> But one day in the evening watch<sup>4</sup> he arose and went to them, alone and noiselessly, without taking any of his servants with him. When he reached the door of the prison he looked in through a crack<sup>5</sup> and saw a vision similar to the previous one, except that they were in a peaceful sleep. Softly he called the bishop by name, for the latter knew Persian very well.<sup>6</sup> He came to the door and asked: “Who are you?” “It is I,” he said, “I wish to enter and see you.”

5. Cf. pp. 128–129.

6. For Elishē on the Incarnation see pp. 39ff.

7. *Range: handēs*; cf. Rom. 3:25–26.

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1. In the credal statement on p. 40 Elishē simply says Christ was buried.

2. Cf. Rom. 11:35.

3. Cf. Gen. 31:40 of Jacob; or 1 Macc. 6:10 of Antiochus.

4. *Watch: pah*; see Hübschmann, *Grammatik*, p. 217.

5. *Crack: tsak*, the “eye” of the needle in the parable; cf. Matt. 19:24 and parallels.

6. Cf. p. 162, where Sahak interprets. According to Lazar, only the bishop Sahak among the captives knew Persian.

After he had come in among the saints, the sign was no longer visible to him, and he told them of the two appearances of the marvel. The priest Levond replied and said: "God who said light should shine in the darkness<sup>7</sup>—which indeed shone out and illuminated with wisdom the invisible creatures—has today made shine the same power in your darkened mind.<sup>8</sup> The blind eyes of your soul were opened [*p.* 149] and you saw the inextinguishable light of God's grace. Make haste, linger not, perchance you may again become blind and walk in darkness."

When he had said this, they all stood up, reciting from the forty-second psalm: "'Send, Lord, your light and your truth, that they may lead and bring us to your holy mountain and your abode.'<sup>1</sup> Truly indeed, Lord, have you led and brought this wanderer to your unfailing joy and inalienable rest. Behold, this day is like [that] of your holy torments; just as you saved the condemned thief from the second death<sup>2</sup> and thereby opened the locked gate of Eden, so too have you found this man who was lost. He who was the cause of death for many, you have now made the cause of life for us and himself.<sup>3</sup> We thank you, God,<sup>4</sup> we thank [you] and join the holy prophet in saying: 'Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name give glory for your mercy and truth, so that they may never say among the gentiles: Where is their God?'<sup>5</sup>—just as today your great power was revealed in this unbridled and darkness-enshrouded nation."

Then he who had freely found God-given grace began to speak by himself: "'The Lord is my light and my life; of whom shall I be afraid? The Lord is the refuge of my life; by whom shall I be shaken?'<sup>6</sup> For I truly know that henceforth my enemies will be many, and they will wish to approach and consume my body. But you, Lord of all, came for the life of all,

7. Cf. Gen. 1:3.

8. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:14. But see *p.* 14 for the theme of light and darkness or blindness in Elishē.

1. Cf. Ps. 42:3.

2. Cf. Luke 23:43. For the idea of Christ taking the thief with him into paradise in place of Adam see also Grigoris Arsharuni, §29, par. 147; and cf. Hemmerdinger Iliadou, "Un sermon," esp. pp. 10ff.

3. An adaptation of Acts 13:28 and Heb. 5:9, which refer to Christ.

4. See *p.* 123, n. 3.

5. Cf. Ps. 78:10; 115:1-2; Joel 2:17.

6. Cf. Ps. 26:1-2.

that [p. 150] they might turn and live before your benevolence. Do not separate me from the holy lambs whom I have joined, lest as I leave your sheepfold<sup>1</sup> the evil beast fall on me again. Look not, Lord, on my impiety of many years, lest straying from the true life, I make disciples of many<sup>2</sup> to their destruction; but for those for whom I was the cause of death may I also become the cause of life. May Satan, who through me was scornfully arrogant among many who are lost, through me be humbled and shamed among his own disciples.”

When they had thus spoken, they had him finish his prayers and they remained with him until the third watch.<sup>3</sup> Then they all slept peacefully until the morning-hour.

But he remained on his feet; he did not sleep but raised his hands up in prayer. While he was looking attentively to heaven through the skylight,<sup>4</sup> suddenly the building was filled with light. A luminous staircase appeared to him, which led from earth to heaven. Numerous groups of soldiers were climbing up; and the appearance of them all was extraordinary and handsome and awesome and wonderful, like the appearance of angels.<sup>5</sup> He retained in his mind the number in each of the groups he saw: one was a thousand, another thirty-six, another two hundred and thirteen.<sup>6</sup> They came so close that he even recognized three of them: Vardan and Artak and Khorēn. They held nine crowns<sup>7</sup> in their hands and were talking to each other, saying: “Behold, the time has come for these also to join our company. For we have been waiting for them and have brought them [these] tokens of honor as a pledge.<sup>8</sup> But one whom [p. 151] we did not expect has come, presented himself, joined [us] and become as one of Christ’s soldiers.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Although the theme is biblical, the word *p'arakh* (sheepfold) is not. But cf. Moses Khorenats'i, III, 68 (p. 359<sup>2</sup>), where it occurs in a passage adapted from the two Gregories of Nazianzen and Nyssa (see Thomson, *Moses Khorenats'i*, III, 68, n. 5).

2. Cf. Acts 14:20.

3. Cf. p. 148, n. 4.

4. As p. 144, n. 8.

5. This passage has close verbal parallels with Jacob's vision in Gen. 28: staircase, earth to heaven, climbing up, angels. For martyrs as a bridge to heaven cf. *Vkayk'*, p. 48.

6. For the numbers see pp. 120, 123.

7. The nine are those listed by name on pp. 119–120; for the theme of crowns see p. 138, n. 6.

8. Cf. p. 138, n. 8.

1. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:3.



Three times this wonderful vision appeared to the blessed man. He woke the saints from their sleep and told them the entire vision in order.

Then they rose up and prayed, saying: " 'Lord, our Lord, how marvelous is your name in the whole earth. Your great majesty has been raised higher than heaven. From the mouths of young suckling children you have confirmed blessing<sup>2</sup> that the enemy and opponent will be destroyed.'<sup>3</sup> Henceforth [we] shall no longer say: 'I shall see heaven, the work of your fingers,'<sup>4</sup> but: I shall see you, Lord of heaven and earth, even as you appeared today through your holy soldiers to this distant stranger, who had given up hope of life.

"Behold, Lord, in your mercy you have crowned your beloved ones, and in your compassion<sup>5</sup> you went out to seek this lost one;<sup>6</sup> you brought him back and joined him to the ranks of your saints. He not only saw heaven, the work of your fingers, but he saw heaven and its inhabitants; and while he was still on earth he joined the company of the myriads of your angels. He saw the souls of the just martyrs, he also saw the likeness of the glory of the invisible preparations,<sup>7</sup> and saw in their hands the sure token<sup>8</sup> which is kept ready by the Architect.<sup>9</sup> Blessed is he for this holy vision, and blessed are we for his approaching us, because through him we have learned for sure that he to whom such wonders are revealed has received a large portion of your inexhaustible<sup>10</sup> blessings. Your gifts, Lord, are inexhaustible, and without [*p.* 152] being asked you give with your abundant and generous liberality to whomever you please. And if you do not withhold from those who do not ask, open, Lord, the gate of your mercy to us who from our childhood have desired to share the blessedness of your saints. We make this newly found creature<sup>1</sup> of yours an intercessor for us; let not the ship of our

2. Cf. Matt. 21:16, which is based on Ps. 8:3. See next note.

3. Cf. Ps. 8:2-3.

4. Cf. Ps. 8:4.

5. *Mercy, crowned, compassion*: cf. Ps. 102:4.

6. Cf. Luke 15:4-6.

7. Cf. Rom. 9:23.

8. *Token: thunay*, the Greek ἀπαβών, which in the Armenian N.T. is translated as *aihawatch'ey* (for which see p. 138, n. 8).

9. *Architect: chartarapet*, as in Heb. 11:10 of God; cf. p. 175 below. For patristic exegesis of this term see Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *τεχνίτης*.

10. *Inexhaustible: anspar*, as of the Lord's mercy, Lam. 3:22.

1. *Creature: dastakert*, which refers to an estate. It seems to be a calque on γέωργιον (which it translates in Prov. 24:5) in the sense of a field to be

faith sink in the billowing sea of sin."<sup>2</sup>

In such fashion they prayed for a long time, shedding abundant and intense tears for their own selves. They entreated the Benefactor<sup>3</sup> for mercy, that the voice of their supplications might be heard, that they might remain firm in their toils and afflictions lest they be deprived of the desirable crowns which the saints held in their hands—as they had been warned by the Holy Spirit that the time of their calling had approached; that they might go fearlessly, relieved of the uncertainty about the future which they had endured with much anguish; that through that small pledge they might attain the heavenly riches which they had long desired.

Since the chief-magus himself was the governor<sup>4</sup> of the land and the city prisoners had been entrusted to him, therefore in the morning he openly took the prisoners to his palace. He washed and cleansed them from the sores of the prison, then took the water in which the saints had washed and threw it over his own body. He set up a font in his own house and received Holy Baptism from them.<sup>5</sup> He communicated in the life-giving body and expiatory<sup>6</sup> blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In a loud voice he cried out: "May this Baptism be for me a washing away of my sins and a new rebirth in the Holy Spirit,<sup>7</sup> and may the taste of this immortal Sacrament [bring me] to the inheritance of heavenly adoption."<sup>8</sup> He also placed [*p.* 153] before them a table of food for the body, offered them a cup of consolation, and joined them in [eating] the blessed bread.

~~But although he himself had attained heavenly blessings and was not afraid of human torments, nonetheless he was in~~

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titled, and hence of evangelizing; cf. 1 Cor. 3:9. See Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *γεώργιον* and related words.

2. Cf. Agathangelos, §10, 16, for sailing through the stormy sea of sin. The theme of the church as a ship is very common; see Lampe, *Lexicon*, s.v. *ναῦς*.

3. *Benefactor*: *barerar*, a common term in the Bible and in Elishē.

4. *Governor*: *ishkhan*. See Christensen, *Iran*, p. 494, for this term, applied by Armenians to the *spāhbadh* who was governor of a province.

5. There are verbal parallels here with the story of the jailer in Acts 16 who was converted, washed the sores of Paul and Silas, and was baptized.

6. Cf. Rom. 3:25.

7. Cf. Titus 3:5.

8. Cf. Rom. 8:23.