

Water as Weapon and Military Target in Ancient Mesopotamia

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Water in Antiquity

Cura Aquarum in Israel

Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, October 14-20, 2012

Introduction

Offensive function

Transportation

Safeward of
water supply

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Conclusions



DEFENSIVE PURPOSES

- 1) Transportation of troops, civilians and provisions by water
- 2) Safeward of the water supply in case of siege
- 3) Man-made and natural obstacles



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- 2) Safeward of water supply for troops
- 3) Water and hydraulic works as military targets
- 4) Water as weapon



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Offensive function

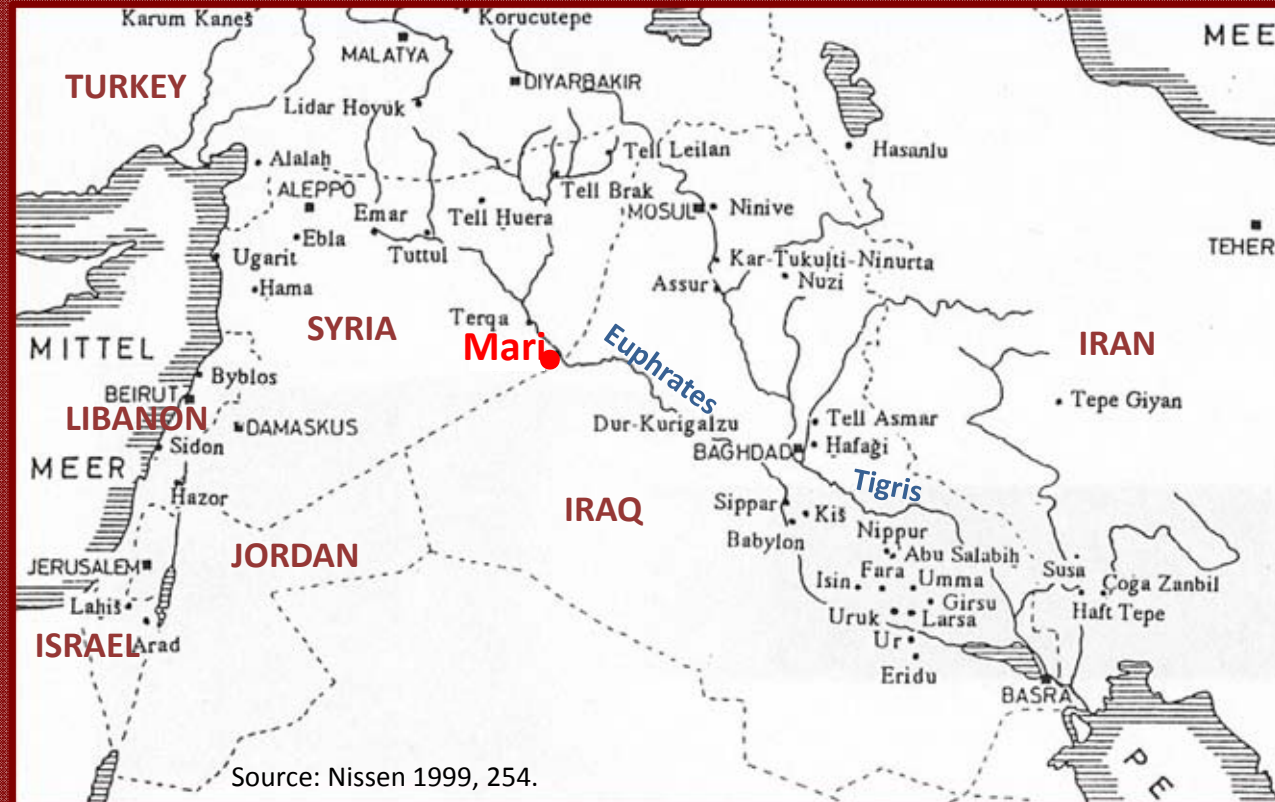
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Source: Nissen 1999, 254.

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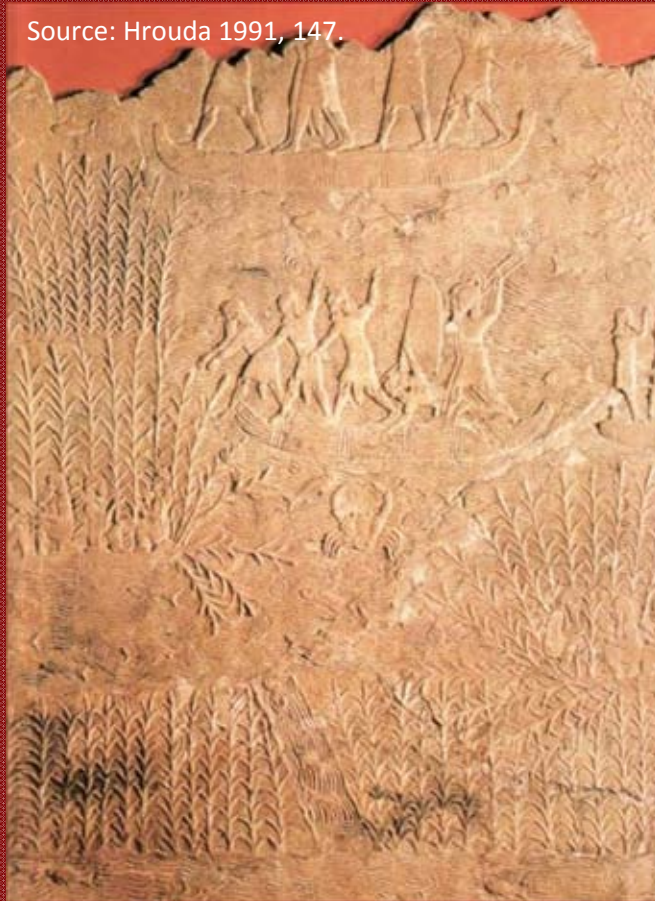
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Source: Hrouda 1991, 147.



Sennacherib's troops in the
Babylonian marshes

(7th cent. BCE, Nineveh, South-West Palace)

Source: Hrouda 1991, 207.



Phoenician warship

(8th cent. BCE, Khorsabad, Sargon's Palace)



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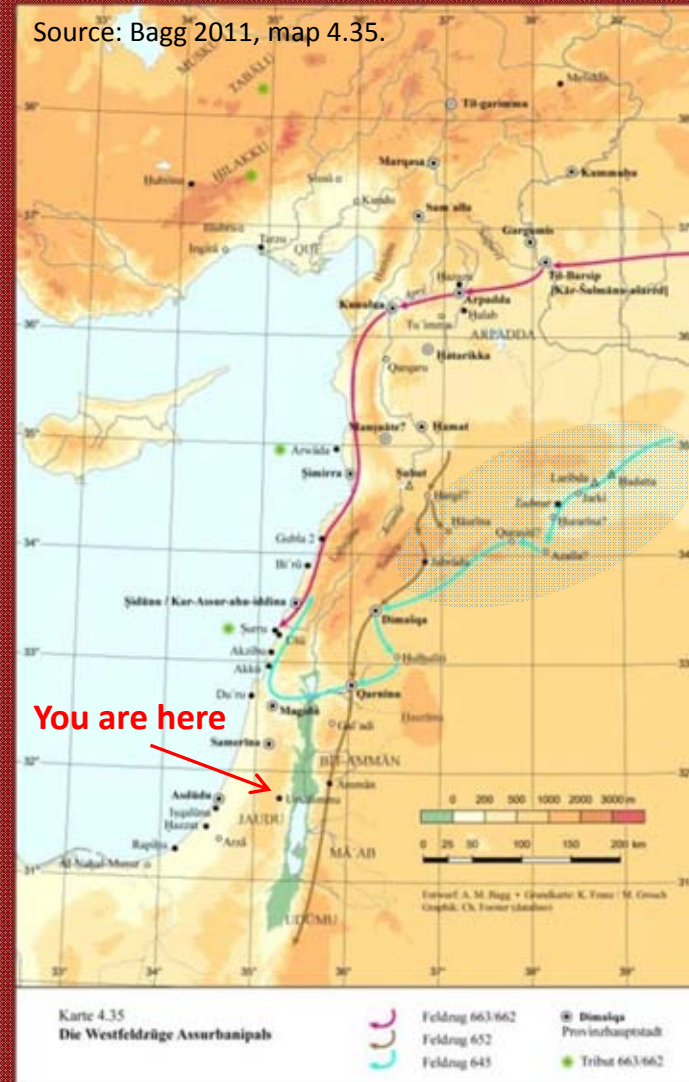
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Source: Bagg 2011, map 4.35.



Ashurbanipal campaign against Arab tribes

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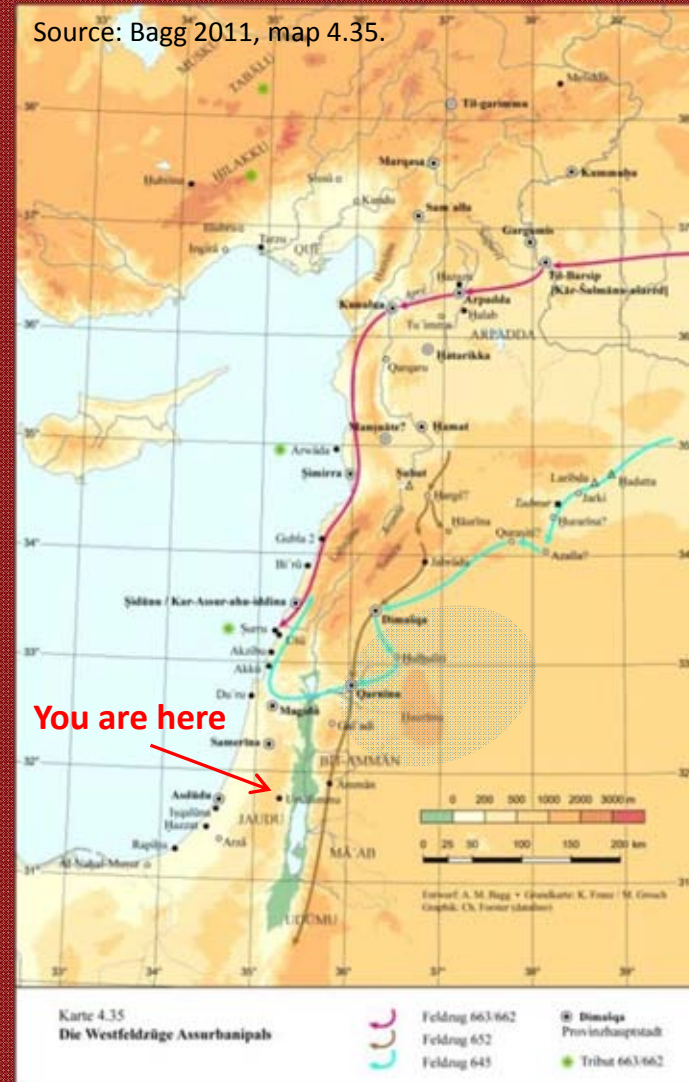
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Source: Bagg 2011, map 4.35.



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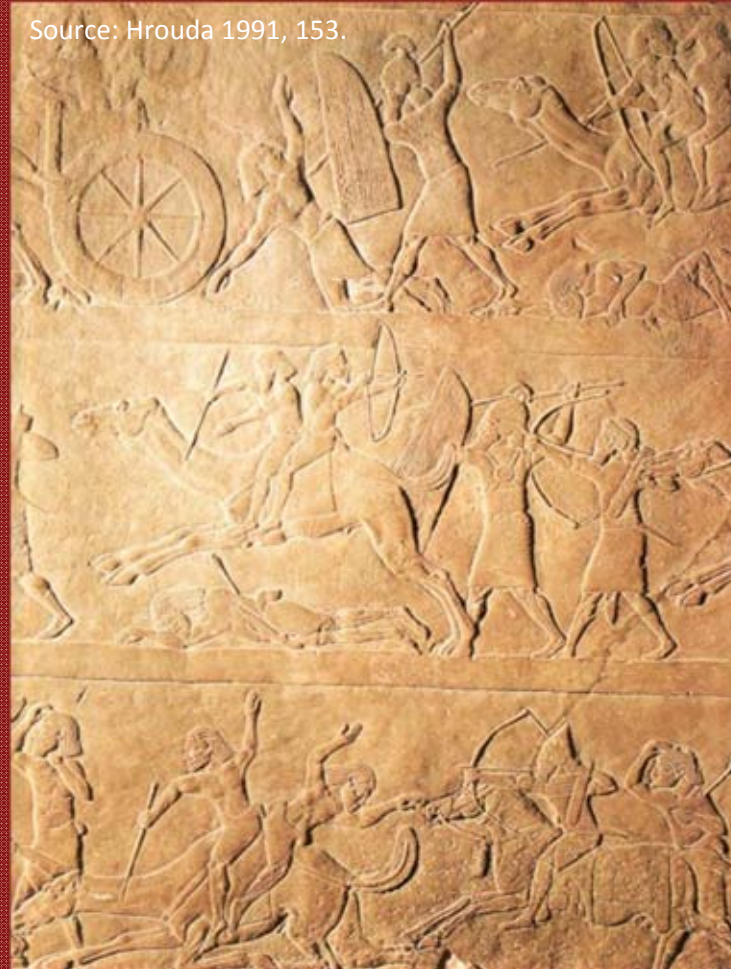
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Source: Hrouda 1991, 153.



Ashurbanipal's campaign against Arab tribes
(7th cent. BCE, Nineveh, North-Palace)



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Source: Curtis/Reade 1995, 75.



The battle of the river Ulai

(7th cent. BCE, Nineveh, South-West Palace, room XXXIII, BM 124801)



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Ancient Tyre, Assyrian Şurru, modern Şūr (Libanon)



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Source: J. E. Curtis/J. E. Reade 1995, 46.

Episode from a siege
(9th cent. BCE, Nimrud, South-West Palace, BM 118906)



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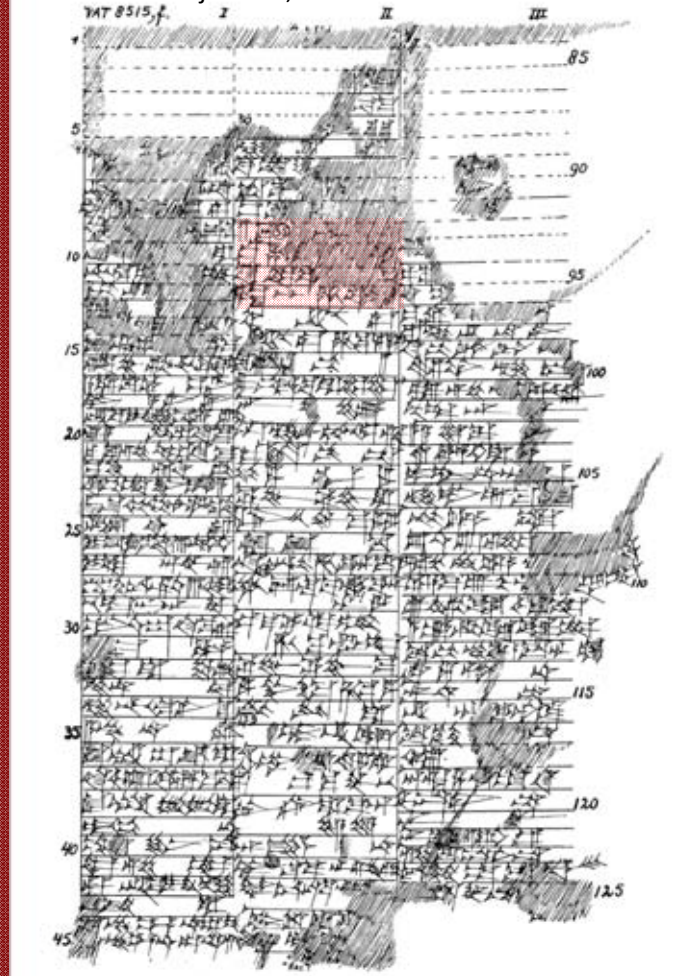
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Source: van Dijk 1965, 2.



An unknown enemy cut off Larsa's water supply
(VAT 8515, obv. 55-58)



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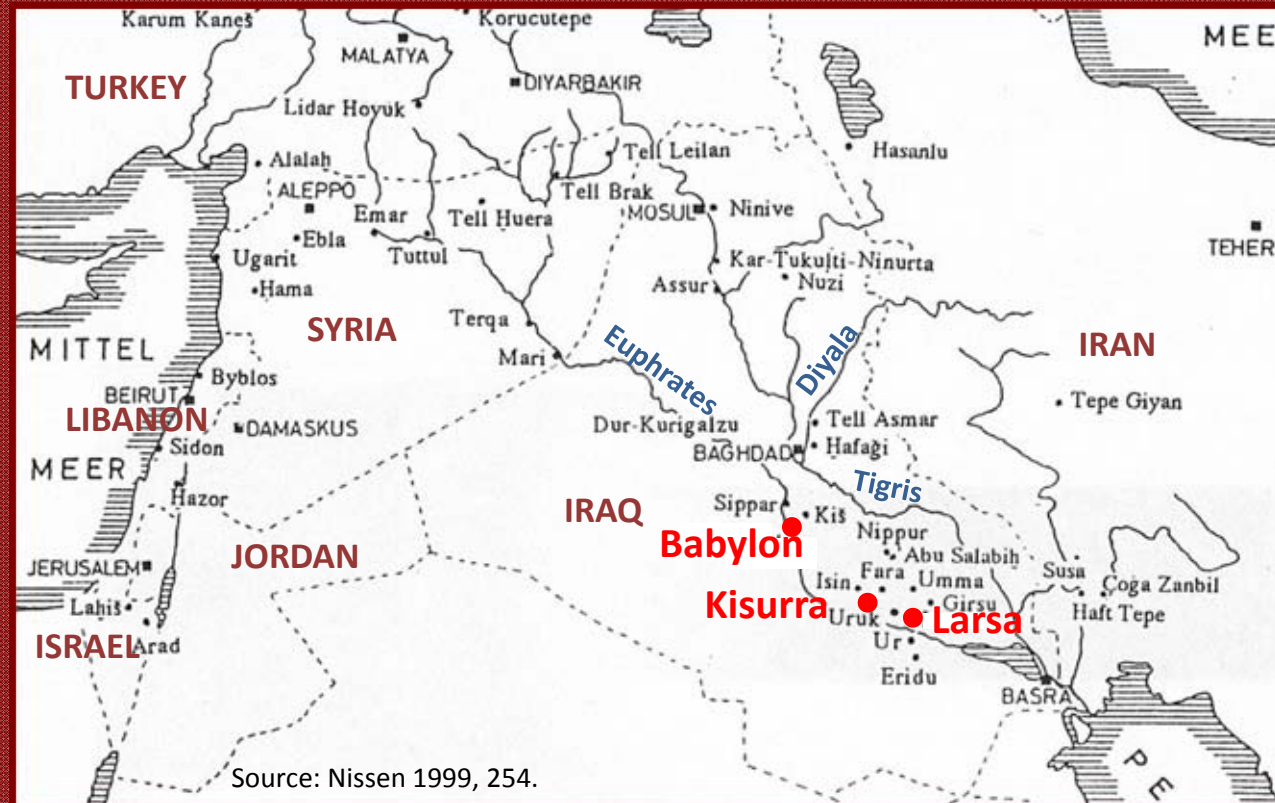
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Source: CDLI

Sargon's campaign against Urartu in 714 BCE
(AO 05672, obv.)



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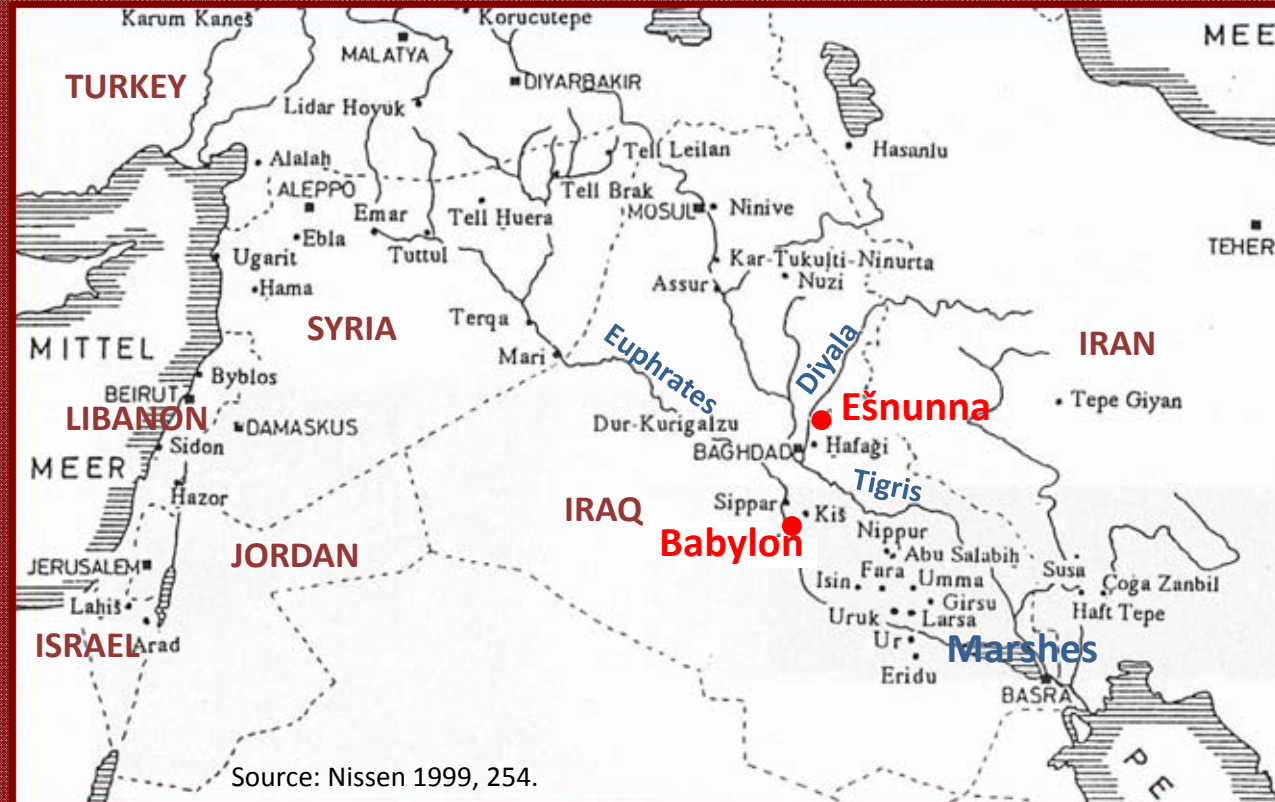
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Source: Nissen 1999, 254.

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Source: Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, USA.

The Fall of Babylon
(John Martin, 1789-1854, mezzotint, 1835)



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Source: Bloomsbury Auctions, London, UK.

The Fall of Nineveh
(John Martin, 1789-1854, mezzotint, 1829)



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Satellite view of Nineveh (Mosul, Iraq)



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Source: US army corps engineers



Marsh Arabs poling a traditional mashoof in southern Iraq



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Source: US army corps engineers



Marsh Arabs poling a traditional mashoof in southern Iraq

Thank you very much for your attention!

