The Book Titled

ONDOLINDÊ

After the events chronicled in *The Lay of Leithian*, the remnants of men dwelt in the northwest of Arda, ruled by Fingolfin. He was the High King of the Elves, until he died in the Nîrnaith Arnoediad, the Battle of Unnumbered Tears, as he fought against Morgoth, the Dark Enemy. Suffering the loss of his foot to the elven king, the wrath of the Ainu of Evil was stirred against the kingdoms of the elves, and his forces ravaged Beleriand until Gondolin remained as the last.

Gondolin, the City of Seven Names, was sung as this: “Gondobar am I called and Gondothlimbar, City of Stone and City of the Dwellers in Stone; Gondolin the Stone of Song and Gwarestrin am I named, the Tower of Guard, Gar Thurion or the Secret Place, for I am hidden from the eyes of Melko; but they who love me most greatly call me Loth, for like a flower am I, even Lothengriol, the flower the blooms on the plain.” This city Turgon, the last High King of Elves, had built out of the stone in the encircling mountains of Tumladn, foreseeing the need of a hidden stronghold upon an attack by Morgoth. Once the city was completed in secret, Turgon proceeded to gather the remnants of the Deep Elves to its fortresses.

Now the Deep Elves, known as the Noldor, had forsaken the Blessed Realm at the beginning of history, in the pursuit of Morgoth and the stolen Silmarils. It was Fëanor, the Prince of the Noldor, who first cursed Melkor, the Ainu of Evil, as the Morgoth, the Dark Enemy of the World. After the Kinslaying, the Noldor, then known as the Exiles, separated themselves from the other elves. Some still hungered for revenge on Morgoth and the retrieval of the Silmarils, while others lamented their removal from Elfinesse.

Turgon, meanwhile, wished only for the survival of the Noldor, and built Gondolin in a way that attackers could be seen from far off. The city was shut off to all, and its concealing magic prevented all but the admitted from catching a glimpse of the fortress. Yet the first man to enter the gates of Gondolin was Tuor, the son of Huor of the House of Hador, the only remnant of the noble men decimated during the Nîrnaith Arnoediad. Here is the tale of how Tuor came to Gondolin.

Drawn by the call of the sea which he had never seen, the son of Huor stumbled into the Gates of the Noldor, a vast underground passage, from Hithlum in the season of his prime. After wandering for three days, he found himself at the rock-strewn shore, and he was entranced. Then Ulmo, the Dweller in the Deep, appeared before Tuor out of the waves as a vassal of Ilúvatar, the Lord for Always.

Here is the speech that Ulmo made to Tuor: “Son of Huor, you must not remain by these entrancing shores, but hurry to the city of Gondolin, the elven Stone of Song. I have heard the One declare its time of advance. You are to take this cloak of mine and fasten it around your shoulders, for it will shield you from unfriendly eyes and enable you to speak the words of
Ilúvatar, who speaks through me.” Then the King of the Sea sank back into the waves, and Tuor started on his journey.

By and by, Tuor met Voronwë, a broken and battered elven sailor, mourning on the shore. Desiring a guide to the city, Tuor approached him. “Here now, wise one,” he said, “come be my guide to the hidden city of Gondolin.”

“For what purpose?” Voronwë asked sorrowfully. “Morgoth has laid waste to Beleriand. The fair kingdoms of the elves have fallen. There is no meaning in anything anymore.”

“And yet the city of Turgon still stands, Gondolin,” Tuor responded. “or so says Ulmo, the Dweller in the Deep. And his roots spread far, in every river and stream, so his knowledge must be great.”

“The elves are forsaken,” Voronwë replied, “and yet there must be hope if the King of the Sea continues to follow his attentions in Endor. Therefore, I will be your guide.” Then, with a sigh, he got up and joined Tuor.

After a time of weary journeying, the travelers found themselves in a valley walled off by mountains of stone. Having been followed by the servants of Morgoth all the while, they despaired of ever reaching the city. Then they found themselves surrounded by warriors of blue steel and white helms, the guards of the Tower of the King. Learning that Voronwë was one of their own, of the Noldor, and that Tuor was the son of Huor, the brother of Húrin the Valiant, they rejoiced and welcomed them, guiding them to the gates of the city.

Now, the Seven Gates of Gondolin were a marvel of elven workmanship. The First Gate, the Gate of Wood, was a great portcullis. The Second Gate, the Gate of Stone, was a pivoting boulder. The Third Gate, the Gate of Bronze, was built with two great doors between three towers. The Fourth Gate, the Gate of Withen Iron, had designs of a moonlit forest and a great eagle on its four towers. The Fifth Gate, the Gate of Silver, was a low, broad gate of white marble with designs of pearls, flowers, and great trees. The Sixth Gate, the Golden Gate, was similar to the Gate of Steel, but with designs of diamonds, chains, and a great pyramid. The Seventh Gate, the Great Gate of Steel, had a fence of steel between two round towers. It was here that Turgon, the High Elven King and Lord of Gondolin, met Tuor and Voronwë.

After greeting his long-lost sailor, Turgon inquired after the message Tuor had from Ulmo. At this point, the power of Ilúvatar came over the son of Huor and he said: “Father of Gondolin, I am sent as a messenger of the Dweller in the Deep. The vengeance and threats of Morgoth have come to the attention of the Valar. The time has come for the armies of Gondolin to march forth and engage the enemy. If you forsake this command, then Morgoth will surely lay waste to the beautiful city you have built. Yet, even should this terrible event occur, the mighty Ilúvatar shall bring deliverance to the elves, but in such a way that not even the mighty Valar have hoped for.”

But then Turgon, being filled with pride for his beloved city, answered thus: “Neither the powers in Arda nor in the Void shall make me do this thing. The Noldor have suffered innumerable losses with any attack on the Enemy, and this mistake will not be repeated. We have
spent ages strengthening Gondor, building up it’s defenses, bolstering its might. Even now, it is like the city of the elves in the Blessed Realm. This I will not endanger on a foolish attack on the Dark Lord.”

At this, Tuor and Voronwë were dismayed, yet they stayed in Gondolin and grew to love its beauty. Idril, the daughter of Turgon, fell in love with Tuor, and they were married with the blessing of the High King. All the elves rejoiced at this union, except one named Maeglin. He was the son of Aredhel, the sister of Turgon, who had been seduced by Eöl, the Dark Elf. When Aredhel had the opportunity to escape, she fled with her son, Maeglin, to Gondolin, and Eöl, following them, was killed. Maeglin, objecting to both the killing of his father and, loving Idril himself, Turgon’s disapproval of their marriage, held these things in his heart and grew to hate Tuor for cheating him of his prize.

Now, Morgoth hated Gondolin and desired most to cast it down, since it had long eluded him. Ever since before the count of time when he had tainted the music of Ilúvatar with tension and discord, and had been thrown down to the Earth, he hated the elves, the Firstborn of Ilúvatar more than all other creatures. He had taken some of them and, twisting and deforming them to his own designs, had created the race of orcs to be his vile servants. These had a stature of that of men, but walked hunched over, grew yellowed teeth, and often dripped black bile out of their mouths. They had a detest for beautiful things that they shared with their master. These Morgoth often sent out to scout for the location Gondolin.

On one of these searches, Maeglin was caught and taken. Believing this to be his chance for revenge upon Gondolin, the elf told Morgoth all about the defenses of the city and how one might besiege it. Morgoth then began preparations for his attack, and in the seventh year of Eärendil, son of Tuor and Idril, the Dark Enemy was ready.

Idril, daughter of Turgon, then had a vision in which Maeglin built a great fire and cast both her and her son into it. She told her husband, Tuor, about it and confided in him her worries about an attack by Morgoth. At her urging, Tuor began construction in secret of an escape route through the rear mountains of Gondolin called the Eagle’s Cleft. However, Maeglin, learning of this plan, informed Morgoth of it and warned him to include it in his plans.

Finally, on the day of a spring festival of Gondolin, Morgoth began his attack. Thousands of orcs, and metal siege engines, and fire-drakes of his devising, the offspring of Glaurung, the Great Worm, whom Tuor’s cousin, Túrin, killed, descended upon Gondolin in a burning rage. Balrogs riding fiery mounts joined them. Now balrogs were creatures of Morgoth’s own creation, fire demons with teeth and claws of iron, wings of darkness, and whips of burning flame. They were led by Gothmog, and none had ever been killed up until that time.

The elves of Gondolin immediately responded to the attack by arming their weapons, calling out the eleven houses, and having every man, woman, and child clothed in mail, including Idril and Eärendil. Now, the eleven houses of the defense of Gondolin were as follows: The house of the king and the White Wing were led by Tuor, and all its members wore the colors of white, gold, and red, with emblems of moons, suns, scarlet hearts, and swans and gulls wings.

The Swallow was led by Duilin, and all its members wore fanned plumes of feathers, colors of white, dark blue, purple, and black, with arrowhead emblems, and were armed with bows.
The Heavenly Arch was led by Eglamoth and all its members wore all kinds of jewels on their shields and mantles. Eglamoth alone used a curved sword, but he and all the others also were archers.

The Pillar and The Tower of Snow were led by Penlod.

The Tree was led by Galdor and all its members wore green and were armed with clubs and slings.

The Golden Flower was led by Glorfindel and all its members wore shields with the rays of the sun.

The Fountain was led by Ecthelion and all its members wore colors of silver and diamond, were armed with pale swords, and battled with the sound of the flute.

The Harp was led by Salgant and all its members wore tassels of silver and gold and the emblem of a harp.

The Hammer of Wrath was led by Rog and all its member wore the emblem of the Stricken Anvil and the colors red gold and black iron. This house killed the most Balrogs recorded.

Thus the battle raged. More Balrogs were killed than at any other time. Tuor killed Maeglin, and the orc lords Othrod, Balcmeg, Lug, and five Balrogs with his axe Dramborleg. Ecthelion, killed the orc chief Orcobal, three balrogs, and Gothmog, the lord of balrogs, as he sank with him in the King’s Fountain. The King’s House killed forty balrogs, and even forced a great fire-drake into the Fountain, dousing its spark, but dooming the Fountain. But for it all, Morgoth’s forces obliged the defenders to flee into the Eagle’s cleft, the secret passage that Tuor and Idril had made. Turgon, however, refused to leave his beloved city, and perished as a great worm threw down the main tower. As the remaining elves fled through the Eagle’s cleft, they were ambushed by a battalion of orcs and a balrog. Glorfindel fought with it on a rocky pinnacle, and finally threw himself down with it, saving the remnant of Gondolin.

The survivors made their way down from the mountains and back to the sea, where they flourished as the last remnants of the mighty elven kingdoms. They mourned over the great fall of Gondolin, but Ilúvatar was to make good of the disaster. For it was Eärendil, the son of Tuor and Idril, who was to sail to the Blessed Realm, the land of the Valar, appeal to them, and urge them to return to Arda, spelling the doom of Morgoth, the Dark Enemy of the World

***

The Fall of Gondolin resembles the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews by Babylon. The Jews had forsaken their God, so He sold them into captivity, all the while planning their glorious salvation and His ultimate triumph over Satan, the Dark Enemy of the World.