

# Nahum and the needs of North Africa

## 1 READ JEREMIAH 18:5-10, JONAH 3 AND NAHUM

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What do we learn about God in Jeremiah 18:5-10?

What do we learn about the Ninevites in Jonah 3 and Nahum?

Does He care whether they are righteous or corrupt? See also Luke 13:34-35

How does Nahum show the converse of Romans 8:31 – i.e. if God be for us, who can be against us?  
Have you ever experienced this in your own life, with all your circumstances going against you?  
What might Romans 8:31-39 tell us about us and our present and future as Christians?

## NEEDS OF NINEVEH (NORTHERN IRAQ) TODAY<sup>1</sup>

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Republic of Iraq. Population: 31,466,698. 62% unreached with the gospel. Religion: Muslim (30,179,710, 95.91%; Evangelicals (53,371, 0.2%)

**Answer to Prayer:** The emergence of Iraqi Arab evangelicals in recent years is an answer to prayer. During Hussein's rule, there were a few hundred; now there are an estimated 53,000 in the country. Many of them come from Muslim backgrounds but have encountered Christ through evangelical witness, gospel radio and especially through dreams and visions of Jesus. They are obvious targets for persecution.

**Challenge for Prayer:** Iraq's future remains uncertain. Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was removed, but a host of problems still plagues the country. Pray for:

- a) The establishment of a national government that fairly balances the conflicting expectations of the various religious and ethnic communities, and provides an environment that promotes accountability to the people, economic growth and religious freedom. Without these, the future is bleak. Anarchy, civil war, fragmentation of the country and further suffering for the people – especially Christians – could follow. Pray therefore for anointed national leaders who can act with wisdom, courage and integrity.
- b) Healing after decades of suffering. Nearly every person bears some scars of traumatic experiences – from Hussein's cruelty, from the US-led invasions or from the sectarian violence

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<sup>1</sup> Both Iraq and Algeria prayer information comes from Operation World

that has followed. Only the gospel can provide a full solution; pray that this may be freely proclaimed.

- c) The elimination of corruption. Iraq is ranked as one of the world's most corrupt nations. This has significantly held back the nation from repairing damage and achieving development.
- d) The suffering the Iraqi people have endured. The number of lives lost as a result of invasions, insurgencies and deprivation may be as high as 600,000, with nearly two million people displaced. More than half of the population live in poverty.

- i Women suffer forced marriage, abduction, honour killing, violence and rape, used as a threat and weapon against them. They have almost no recourse to legal protection, and the religious establishment does little or nothing to protect them.

- ii Children live in a context of instability and uncertainty. Many do not attend school, less than half have access to safe drinking water and some even face malnourishment. Hundreds of thousands face life as refugees in neighbouring, and often unwelcoming, countries.

## NEEDS OF NORTH AFRICA: THE FORMER CENTRE OF BIBLICAL THOUGHT AND GROWTH

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### People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Population: 35,422,589. Religion: Muslim (34,462,637, 97.29%); Evangelicals (84,081, 0.2%)

**Answer to Prayer:** The growth of the Algerian Church over the past decade is an answer to prayer. A long road of tearful sowing by a tenacious succession of missionaries and intercessors is bearing beautiful fruit – while impossible to assess accurately, some believe that the number of believers far exceeds 100,000. The large majority are Kabyle Berber in background, but faith is growing among Arabs and almost every other people as well. New fellowships are popping up all over the country. This is in part due to the commitment of Berber believers to move into unreached, Arab areas in order to sow the seeds of the good news.

**Challenge for Prayer:** Algeria has suffered deeply in the past. From French colonial exploitation to the war of liberation to the more recent brutal civil war that cost over 100,000 lives, its people are familiar with violence and loss. Pray for the following issues:

- a) The spiritual and psychological legacies of a land fraught with bloodshed. Fear of murderous attacks by terror groups has lessened, but the violence has never ended. Many people are war-weary and wish for the upheaval to end, but that seems a distant dream.
- b) Democracy is enshrined in the constitution but struggles elsewhere to hang on. A single-party state more or less remains, and the freedoms promised on paper rarely materialize.
- c) Human rights abuses are widespread. Change to some laws opened the door for further abuse. The Charter for Peace and National Reconciliation is more lenient to the perpetrators of civil war crimes than to the victims; few will be brought to account for the terrible crimes committed (by both terrorist groups and state security forces), and the media will be subject to greater state control. Most vulnerable are non-Muslims.