TRAGEDY AND OPPORTUNITY BECKONS IN SOUTHERN EUROPE

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Dear Praying Friends,
Spring is here, and there probably will be new groups of people migrating from the Middle East to Europe this month. For those of you who get the printed edition of the *Global Prayer Digest*, we always keep the March and April editions together, and in this case it is very appropriate. March focuses on migrants and refugees who are arriving in southern Europe from Muslim nations like Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia. In April, we will pray for some of the same people groups as they continue migrating north to Sweden. In May we will pray for unreached immigrant groups here in Los Angeles.

On another topic I would like your feedback about our experiment with using Bible verses without commentaries or prayer lines. Please let us know if you like the new format, or if you prefer that we go back to what we were doing before. In many cases, the Bible verses speak for themselves, and they are often useful in our prayer requests. Having straight Bible verses are much easier for translators. Over 90 percent of *GPD* readers use this prayer guide in Spanish, Korean, or Chinese. Yet Bible commentaries also have their merits. Let me know what you think.

We will keep the same format at least through April.

In Christ,

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Pray for a Christ-ward Movement Among Every People group in Spain, Greece, and Italy
For many years, cross-cultural missions were directed to people in the countries of their birth, generally in Majority World areas. Foreigners present among or around the intended focus of ministry were not viewed as part of mission ministry. Diaspora missions focus on these peoples, who are now actually and virtually in more accessible places. This book will help you understand the dynamics behind this accelerated movement of peoples from one region to another, biblical principles and precedents that guide ministry today, the application of social and communication studies, and actual cases of ministry to and with diaspora peoples.
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Devotional Ideas
How can you make the most of this prayer digest:

• Some people use it as a supplement to their regular devotional time.

• Others enjoy reading and praying around the dinner table with the entire family.

• We encourage you to gather monthly with other Christian friends who are involved in this movement.

Every day at the top of the page you’ll find the name of an unreached people group for which to pray. The small maps will help you locate the day’s feature.
The Middle East and parts of Africa are exploding with conflicts, and people are fleeing to Europe for safety. This has been going on for a number of years; but last year the situation greatly intensified. In 2015 the number of people seeking asylum in the European Union reached crisis levels. More than 300,000 people used sea routes to reach Greece on their way to other parts of Europe.

Who Are the Refugees, and Why Now?

A large number of the refugees are coming from the Pashtun, Tajik, and Hazara people groups that live in Afghanistan. This area of the country has fighting going on between the Taliban and government forces and it is a very unpleasant place to live. Since almost all Afghans are Muslims, some of the young ones decide to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Since life in Afghanistan is so unpleasant and dangerous, instead of heading back home after visiting Mecca, many young Afghans register as refugees in a camp in Lebanon. When the camp has run out of food, a group of the refugees may pool what money they have to buy a boat. They then sail the boat to a Greek island in search of a better, safer life.

Both Arabs and Kurds are fleeing from Iraq. Some Iraqi Arabs are Christians, and others are moderate Muslims. ISIS terrorizes both of these groups. ISIS especially hates Christians and Yazidis, and both groups face persecution and death if they remain in the parts of Iraq controlled by ISIS. The Muslims who refuse to become radicalized also face violence from ISIS. For this reason many Iraqis have fled to Turkey. The Turks aren’t eager to receive foreigners, so the refugees are forced to move on. Those leaving Turkey often end up on a Greek island in hopes of using that as a jumping off point to a northern
European country. It’s unlikely many will stay in Greece since there is a high unemployment rate in that country.

Another group of people are fleeing the civil war in Syria, which began during the Arab Spring Revolutions in 2011. The Syrian Army, other rebel groups, ISIS, or sometimes all of these are terrorizing Syrian citizens. The people who are fleeing Syria may be Christians or Muslims. Many of them realize that the civil war isn’t going to end soon, so they make a desperate attempt to escape never ending violence.

Not all of these people come from the Middle East. Some come from West Africa, especially Nigeria. Some of them are Christians who have been terrorized by Boko Haram. Most of the West Africans, however, are looking for a place to earn a living. Typically they pay a smuggler to take them to Libya. In Libya they pay a smuggler to put them on a boat for Italy. Often these boats aren’t seaworthy, so they often have to be rescued by the Italian Coast Guard.

From East Africa people are fleeing Eritrea where a brutal dictator is making life miserable. You cannot do anything without government permission. For example, the citizens of Eritrea have to get a permit before buying a mobile
Tragedy and Opportunity

phone. Those who violate this law can get a long prison sentence. This month and next month when we cover Sweden, we will pray for Muslim Somalis who are looking for an opportunity to earn a living. People fleeing Eritrea and Somalia often start by heading for Lebanon or Libya. From there they board boats that take them to Greece or Italy.

Greece doesn’t have the capacity to patrol the hundreds of islands she controls in the Aegean Sea and can’t stop refugee boats from landing on those islands. Greece has done little to resettle the refugees. Often the Greek navy transports the people they pick up to the mainland portion of the country. Trucks then take them to the northern border, where they are encouraged to cross into Macedonia.

Refugees rescued by the Italian Coast Guard are taken to the Italian mainland. Italy’s refugee camps are overloaded. Refugees unable to register at such camps often head north to Austria.

Austria has been lukewarm about helping refugees passing through their country from Italy and Hungary. The Austrians encourage such people to head further north into Germany or Sweden.

One of the countries most impacted by the refugee crisis has been Hungary. Refugees expelled from Greece often make their way through Macedonia and Serbia. Hungary closed her southern border to prevent unwanted people from entering the country from Serbia. These measures haven’t worked. The refugees keep finding unguarded border checkpoints where they can enter Hungary.

For many refugees the ultimate destination is Germany. Jobs are relatively plentiful in that country. Germany also has a history of being willing to assimilate people seeking political asylum. A close second is Sweden, and we will pray for their situation next month.

Refugees or Migrants?

Complicating the refugee crisis are migrants. Migrants are people seeking to relocate for economic, not political reasons. Many migrants come from Serbia, Albania, and West Africa. Migrants aren’t protected by international treaties, and they are often deported from the countries they hoped would be their new homes. By contrast, refugees are often given asylum and a new, safe home.
Perhaps the best way to end the refugee crisis is to restore peace in the Middle East. If the fighting would end in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, then fewer people would want to leave those countries. This would take a spiritual change in the hearts of those who try to gain power through force. Unfortunately, there is no principle in Islam that says that one who leads must be the servant of all. Leaders who take power become the masters of all who don't have the power to resist them.

An Opportunity for the Gospel

Many of these refugees come from closed countries where missionaries aren't welcome. Followers of Jesus Christ have taken advantage of the situation to show the love of Jesus Christ to suffering people. For example, churches in Serbia have provided food and water to refugees passing through their hometowns.

Mission agencies have also reached out to the refugees. The International Mission Board (IMB), a ministry of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been especially active in Hungary. IMB missionaries have provided food, water, and shelter to refugees stuck in Hungary and unable to travel further. Such acts open the door for conversations about spiritual matters. (http://stories.imb.org/eurasia/stories/view/refugee-migration-through-europe)

Other believers are helping the public to know what is happening with these refugees (http://careforcatania.com/)

Let’s Pray!

• Pray for the restoration of peace in the Middle East and Africa so that innocent people will not suffer.

• Ask God to awaken the churches in Europe to the outreach possibilities presented by the refugee crisis.

• Pray that God would open the hearts of the refugees to the message of salvation.

• Pray that the current tragedy will result in entire people groups having movements to Christ that will affect the Middle East and Africa.

• Ask God for multiple discipleship movements among the various refugee populations.
Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.”

As Geni and Soni were growing up in the tiny Balkan country of Albania, there was a Stalinist style communist dictator named Hoxha who ruled the country and systematically imprisoned or executed believers. All practice and talk of any religion was banned. In fact in 1967 this dictator declared Albania atheistic. It was the first nation in history to do so. Albania was known in the 1980s as the most closed country in the world.

In the 1930s until WWII there had been missionaries and Albanian believers; but after Hoxha died in 1985 only five older Christian men could be found. All of them had endured severe persecution.

Because of the strictness in the country, neither Geni (whose family had been Catholic before the regime) nor Soni (from a Muslim family background) had heard anything about the importance of faith or religion.

In 1991 the country was beginning to open, and the first evangelistic campaign was held in the capital. Geni was a part of that campaign, accepted Christ and began to be discipled by some of the first Western missionaries. Soni heard about the Lord in 1993 when she went to an English “class” sponsored by missionaries in her city.

Geni and Soni met at Discipleship Training School in 1995 and were drawn together as they discovered their desire to work in a Muslim country outside of their own to bring the good news of Christ.

Praise God for the calling on young believer’s lives and pray for believers to hear and be obedient to that call.
“In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

Geni and Soni were both leaders in their churches, leading Bible studies and prayer groups. They married in 1999, the same year as the violent Kosovo crisis. When Kosovo refugees fled across the border into Albania, Geni and Soni were involved in helping the refugees, and they had the opportunity to see some come to Christ. Not long after that the first Albanians were asked to come to Kosovo to help start a church.

In 2007, three believers were leading the mission movement in the church in Albania. Geni was one of them. In prayer they came up with the idea to have a training school to train Albanians for mission work. They desired to have it outside of Albania in a Muslim context. Geni and Soni felt it was time to get involved. They said, “It was just too comfortable in Tirana, with our friends and family close by and many opportunities to worship.”

They only had one person sign up for the school, but he was the first of a new, eight member missionary team in Kosovo. As far as is known, this is the first Albanian-led mission team outside the country of Albania.

Praise God for the incredible team He brought to Kosovo for this ministry. Pray against discouragement for the team when people walk away from a decision to follow Christ. Pray for those on the team who face daily financial difficulties.
At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.”

The Albanian couple reports, “People make a commitment, but then the next day they walk away. It is difficult to know who is serious. They have trouble with their family and friends and feel like they are betraying their traditions when they come with us.”

The team has tried many types of evangelism with drama, invitations to events, and door-to-door witnessing. They go every week to meet the young people near their schools, and they have literature to explain the message. They have offered camps for young people and children for three years. The camps are well attended with lots of excitement, but often follow up is very difficult. The team in Kosovo has also had the privilege of opening a kindergarten. Muslim parents are grateful for the school and often express their thanks. The team leaders say: “We have to remember that this is groundbreaking work, and we are planting the seeds. We pray that others will water them, and that there will be lasting fruit for the kingdom.”

Praise the Lord for the positive example of the kindergarten and the lives it touches. Pray for the right people to help train their team to be more effective in children’s ministry and for outreach to the parents of the children who attend. Pray for the children of team members, some of whom are struggling with depression and loneliness. Pray that the team will allow God to teach them in the midst of difficult times.
Afia, a young Bangladeshi woman, hurried down the cobblestone path leading into the town. Walking by the facades of ancient buildings, she admired the distant horizon, with its azure blue waters calmly glistening in the morning sunbeams. Nature appears so calm even in the face of such turmoil. Afia was musing about the Greek Financial Crisis.

Everyone was hurrying to the nearest ATM to withdraw the maximum money that they could take out from the bank in a day. The line was already several blocks long when Afia arrived. “I hope there is something left on the shelves of the grocery store by the time we get there,” said the elderly woman in front of her. Afia fished her cell-phone from her handbag and quickly dialed her husband’s number and told him what she had just overheard. Her husband confirmed that “panic buying” was the daily routine in Greece. He suggested, “Why don’t you wire some money home? I just heard that we will not be able to do it for a while if we don’t do it today.” Afia hurried into the tall imposing bank building to join another serpentine line of Bangladeshis and other expats trying to wire money to their families.

Bangladeshi immigrants face the same daunting sense of uncertainty as others who live in Greece during these volatile times.

*Pray for wisdom for the Greek rulers. Pray that the financial crisis will give many Bangladeshis the desire to look to God for answers.—EJD*
Pakistanis in Greece

W asim once owned a thriving mithai (sweet) shop in the town square. His cashew nut candy was famous, and many Greeks thronged to his shop to buy it. However, things turned sour when the Greek economy began its downturn. Shoppers dwindled, as they became more concerned about stocking their cupboards with essential staples. Exotic sweets became a luxury that people could live without.

Wasim was initially optimistic. He kept his shutters open. “They will all come back, and this crisis will soon pass,” he consoled his wife. Now Wasim no longer has the sweet shop. He sent his wife and children back to Pakistan to live with extended family. He found a job at a local restaurant catering to tourists. With refugees coming to Greece’s shores by the hundreds, the tourists began to go elsewhere, and Wasim wondered if he would be able to even keep this low-paying job.

Like others living in Greece, the nearly 40,000 or so expatriate Pakistanis have been affected by the debt crisis in the country. This is especially true for the many Pakistanis who own small businesses. Many have moved their families back to Pakistan.

Pray that Muslim Pakistanis who live in Greece will find in Jesus Christ their provider for both physical and spiritual needs. Pray that a movement to Christ will emerge among Pakistanis that will have ripple effects in Pakistan.—EJD
Syrian Arabs in Greece

 Splash! The pregnant Syrian refugee watched in horror as her husband slipped under the waves. He had leapt off the rubber dinghy into the Aegean Sea, but only to save their lives. The overcrowded raft had taken on so much water that it would not stay afloat to reach the shores of Greece.

Last year, about 2,500 Syrian Arab refugees died trying to cross the sea. Most of those were killed in sunken boats. Syrians board these flimsy, overcrowded rafts once they have paid 1,000-3,000 dollars to people smugglers. More than 200,000 refugees, mostly from Syria, arrived in Greece in 2015. Almost half of them arrived in Lesbos, a small island six miles off of Turkey. They are fleeing ISIS and the Syrian War.

But in Greece they still battle for their lives. Once arriving on Greece’s shores, refugees must walk 40 miles to reach refugee camps. The camps have little infrastructure; few sanitary toilets nor clean water are available to refugees. The weather also poses a challenge to many who have only a backpack. After waiting sometimes weeks for official refugee papers, they again risk their lives to move to wherever they can find safety and economic opportunity.

Pray that the Syrian refugees encounter believers and organizations that will help them to build a discipleship making movement. Pray that Syrian Christian refugees will disciple the Muslim refugees in the ways of Christ.—LR

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measurement of weight, or capacity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin; I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. You shall thus observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them; I am the LORD.”

Lev 19:33-37, NASB

A Syrian teenager
“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”

One refugee tackled another, thrusting punches to his face. The Pashtun Afghani girl, Mina, cowered as her brother pummeled the Syrian refugee who had grabbed her. The violence in the Greek refugee camps where the overflow of refugees gather makes surviving even more difficult.

“Our country is also in a war. Why does Greece give preference to the Syrians, and not us?” Mina later said to her brother, expressing the concerns of other Afghan refugees. She thought of her sisters hiding out with relatives, hoping to eventually join Mina and her brother in Sweden.

Last year more than 25,000 refugees, mostly Afghan and Syrian, camped out on Greece’s Lesbos Island. Hundreds more arrive daily. They arrive hungry, afraid, some sick, most nearly drowned, all desperate. Both groups flee war; Afghans flee the Taliban, while Syrians flee ISIS.

Afghan refugees in Europe considered themselves middle class, some sporting name brands and head phones. All have cell phones to communicate with family back home. Afghan refugees must wait weeks longer than Syrians to receive papers documenting their refugee status. Fights break out daily between the refugee communities at a time when Greece can barely keep up with their own basic needs.

Pray that God the Father will give a heart of compassion to Pashtun and Syrian refugees for each other. Pray that these refugee camps will become places where people can learn about Christ and can receive the hope that only He can offer.—LR
Did you know that many of the Apostle Paul’s letters were written to churches in what is now Turkey and Greece? Many of the people the Apostle Paul impacted directly were residents here as well. Known now as Rumelian Turks, they have scattered all over the southern and eastern European region, taking Muslim beliefs and practices with them.

These Turks are descendants of the Ottoman Turks, who helped to found the powerful Ottoman Empire, which lasted for 500 years. The Ottomans conquered Greece’s Byzantine Empire in the mid 1400s, and there have been bitter feelings towards the Turks ever since.

The Greek government has a policy of not referring specifically to the Turkish community, but, instead, to the entire Muslim minority in their country. Partly because of this, we do not have much specific information about the Turks in Greece, except that there are 52,000 of them. Their fundamental rights are protected in the Greek constitution. They are nearly all Muslims, nearly always marry within their own ethnicity, and hold to very old, respected traditions.

Pray that the Turks in Greece will begin to hunger for spiritual truth and call on the Lord for salvation and guidance. Pray for God’s children to begin to disciple Turks in Greece who are interested in spiritual truth. Pray for the discipleship movement among Turks in Greece to spread throughout Turkey.—JR

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job; and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. Seven sons and three daughters were born to him. His possessions also were 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys, and very many servants; and that man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

His sons used to go and hold a feast in the house of each one on his day, and they would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them. When the days of feasting had completed their cycle, Job would send and consecrate them, rising up early in the morning and offering burnt offerings according to the number of them all; for Job said, “Perhaps my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.”
The LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.” Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Most of the refugee peoples we will pray for this month arrived recently from their homelands. But the Jewish people in Greece have been there since the fourth century BC! A majority of the Jewish population, which totals around 8,000, lives in the Athens and Thessaloniki areas. The largest particular group is known as the Sephardic Jews. This population came to Greece after they were expelled from Spain in 1492, along with Jews from Portugal and Italy. They know what it is to be discriminated against but, since the end of World War II, they have known freedom in Greece.

This does not mean that the Greek population is favorable to them. A poll published in June of 2015 by the Washington Free Beacon shows that 85 percent of Greeks believe that Jews hold too much power over global finance. The same poll found that 90 percent of respondents believe that Jews have too much power in the financial world, and 51 percent said that Jews don’t care about what happens to anyone but their own kind (http://freebeacon.com/issues/poll-85-of-greeks-believe-the-jews-have-too-much-power-over-global-finance/). Jewish leaders in Greece, however, point out that there has not been violence against Greek Jews in recent years, and that this data is somewhat misleading.

Pray that Greeks would soften their hearts toward the Jews in their midst. Pray that Greek Jews would honestly investigate the claims of the Messiah and turn to Him, and be used to spread His fame to Jewish communities around the world.—JR
Shahina’s gnarled and worn hands gripped her two-year-old grandson fiercely to her body. She had already lost sight of her son and older grandson. She prayed fervently that they hadn’t fallen overboard in the high waves and pelting rain.

She thought of the days in 1951 when Italy had given her homeland of Libya its independence. How their lives had changed! For years Shahina’s family members found work in the oil industry and had lived in prosperity. ISIS now terrorized them. They chose to flee across the Mediterranean Sea to Italy in an attempt to save themselves.

The landing on the tiny island of Lampedusa, the first possible point to disembark, was chaotic. There were bodies floating near the shore, and the place they were directed to go was so packed with people it was impossible to pass. Soaked from the sea and rain, people were already staking out places to sleep around the perimeter of the building, hoping to enter the next morning. Behind them European Union (EU) rescue boats were bringing hundreds of Libyans to a place that had long since run out of food, clothing, and water.

Pray that Christ’s ambassadors will reach out to Libyan Muslims and demonstrate the love and kindness of Christ as they continue to flood into Italy. Pray that this ordeal will actually lead to a movement to Christ among Libyan Arabs.—PE
While he was still speaking, another also came and said, “Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and behold, a great wind came from across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young people and they died, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD.” Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.

Abdul swung his slender body into the metal opening of Milan’s sewer system. The dark tube was stacked with household items left by homeless Moroccan immigrants as they searched for work and a place to live. The 450,000 Moroccans in Italy makes them the largest non-European migrant group in the country. A newspaper headline was being translated for a cluster of men. “It says ‘Eight human traffickers arrested in the deaths of 49 migrants.’” Shocked whispers fluttered through the group.

Although there are laws prohibiting discrimination, Moroccan Arab families who do find work earn over 50 percent less than Italian families. With the economic downturn in Europe, even Italian families are hoping their children can go abroad to find work. The head of the household is generally the sole breadwinner for Moroccans, and their families are usually large. The shores of Italy are sometimes the closest route for Moroccans who wish to escape poverty and violence in North Africa.

Pray that Christ’s followers will reach out to the Moroccan refugees with provisions and the love of Christ. This may be the only gospel contact they have ever had. Pray that Jesus Christ will be glorified and made known to the Moroccan Arabs during this crisis. Pray that many of these Muslims will find Christ, and be used by Him to start a Christian movement in Italy and Morocco.—PE
Hassam had paid $6,000 to traffickers to ride in their boat across the Mediterranean Sea, but before they were halfway to their destination Hassan saw 12 Christians being thrown overboard. All 350 Syrian refugees were then locked below deck as the captain jumped to another ship and left them alone and drifting. They were finally rescued by the overworked Italian Coast Guard and transferred to shore.

In Italy 54 percent of the refugees are Syrian, and in Greece the number is even higher at 71 percent. The great majority is Muslim, and the few Syrian Christians are at risk of being killed.

The immigrants come from some of the most difficult places in the world for Christian missionaries to work. Yet the countries are completely open to the gospel. The Italian church is beginning to seize the opportunity. They are reaching out to Muslims and helping the Christians form their own churches, so that they also can reach out to the lost with the love and gospel of Christ.

Pray that the Italian church will use the opportunity God presents to them. Pray that the Word of God will go forth mightily among the spiritually starving people arriving at their shores. Pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate Christ’s true story of love and redemption so that multitudes of Syrian Muslims will turn to Him, be discipled, and disciple others.—PE
Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women speak. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky.

Do you recall the classic movie, Ben Hur, which took place during the Roman Empire? There was an Arab in one scene. Indeed, Arab people were part of the Roman Empire; three Roman emperors were from what is now the Arab World. Consequently there is nothing new about Africans or Arabs living in either Italy or Greece. What is new, however, is their numbers, status, and reason for being in southern Europe.

With serious turmoil in Arabic speaking nation states in the Middle East and Africa, many Arabs are fleeing the chaos and butchery. Those arriving in Italy come mostly from Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Libya. Many come illegally.

There are also 2,000 Arabs from Sudan in Italy; they are about three percent Christian, and the rest are Muslim. They even have a web site for maintaining ties with Africa.

In Greece, Sudanese Arabs often face racism. Some are beaten up by the Greek equivalent of the Ku Klux Klan. They are often blamed for Greece’s economic crisis. Their presence heightens anti-immigrant prejudice in Greece. Even those with papers may be harassed.

Pray that the churches and believers will take advantage of this opportunity to minister to, befriend, and reach Sudanese Arabs with the gospel. Pray for strong fellowships among Sudanese Arabs that will spread to their African homeland.—TP
Swahili People in Greece

Kiswahili is a lingua franca of eastern Africa, a mixture of Bantu, Arabic, and Persian; for some it is an indigenous language. We know it as Swahili. It is spoken by Africans who live in the coastal countries of East Africa, especially Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Even some Kenyan whites speak Swahili. Its presence and spread is directly due to Muslim Arab and Persian traders who introduced Islam to East Africa, beginning with coastal island settlements. Over time, the traders moved inward, a west-ward movement. Today the majority of these people practice Sunni folk Islam, a mixture of Islam and African traditional religion.

Since A.D. 2000, some 61,000 Swahili speakers have immigrated to Greece from East Africa. Among them are some Christians, numbering some five percent of Greece’s Swahili population. They have settled in three metropolitan areas, including Athens. Some are well-known athletes. Muslim or Christian, athlete or not, they fear racism. Most of them are not being reached with the gospel.

Pray that Greek Christians and churches will speak out against racism, and help these Africans get jobs and learn the local language. Pray that mission agencies will seek to reach Muslim Swahili-speakers in Greece and strengthen Swahili-speaking churches. Pray that Christians will reach their fellow Swahili-speakers with the gospel.—TP

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding, who set its measurements since you know? Or who stretched the line on it? On what were its bases sunk? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

Day 14
Job 38:1-7, NASB
(This fictional dialogue between two siblings portrays the situation facing many Somalis trying to reach Europe.)

“W e can’t just leave,” Aweys muttered. His younger brother, Ibrahim replied, “But our brother, Maahir, left. He is in Italy, waiting for us to join him. We can do it!” Aweys shook his head. “It isn’t that simple. What about mother and father?” Ibrahim said, “They will understand. Our country is disintegrating around us. They have vowed to stay. But we don’t have to.” Aweys said, “First, we would have to find a way to slip out of Somalia without getting killed. Then we have to face the deserts of Sudan and Libya. After that, there’s the Mediterranean Sea. Our brother made it, but he almost died twice.”

Many of the Somalis living in Europe risked their lives to escape from their troubled, war-torn nation. Those who have successfully reached Italy face a harsh new reality: little or no money, no job, no friends or family. And most do not speak the language. Settling in to their new country and culture can be very difficult.

On the positive side, Somalis in Europe tend to be more open to those who are preaching and demonstrating the love of God than those who live in Somalia.

Pray for God to soften the hearts of the Somalis in Europe and bring them into contact with the gospel. Pray for them to call out to God in their distress and put their faith in Christ.—CL
Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden place. Then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you.

Reaching the Fula Jalon of West Africa has been a huge challenge! Spread across the nations of north and West Africa, they are historically a nomadic people, moving through the deserts in search of good water and grazing for their animals.

Telling this people group about God’s love for them has required the ability to locate them, learn the language, be accepted into their society, and slowly introducing the truth of Christ…. Until now.

At present members of this Fulani subgroup are coming to Italy in great numbers. They are the ones attempting to learn the local language and be accepted into society. They are seeking employment and trying to make sense of their new lives. This is a great opportunity to share the gospel with them.

The Fula Jalon people group is nearly all Muslim. They were one of the first people groups in Africa to convert to Islam. Religion is central to their identity and integral to their families and communities.

Pray that the Fula Jalon who are arriving in Italy will have encounters with God’s people. Pray for churches to be successful in their efforts to share Christ with these people. Ask God to establish His Kingdom among the Fula Jalon.—CL
Day 17
Job 42:1-6, NASB

Then Job answered the LORD and said, “I know that You can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted…. Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes.”

Once the dominant people of West Africa, the Wolof people have now been very resistant to the gospel. The New Testament, audio recordings, and the JESUS Film are available in the Wolof language, yet few have responded. If you look up the Wolof people group on the Joshua Project website, you’ll find them listed as unreached no matter where they live. Approximately 98.5 percent of them are followers of Islam. But that could be changing if people begin to reach them in the right way and in the right place.

Like other people groups in Africa (and all people, really), the Wolof are looking for ways to improve their lives. One means of doing that is to relocate to an area where they believe opportunity lies. According to the Joshua Project website, 80,000 Wolof people now reside in Italy. They have made the difficult, often dangerous, journey from Africa and are seeking to begin a new better life. Perhaps this will be their chance to learn about Jesus Christ as they establish a different life on an unfamiliar continent.

Pray for the Wolof to hear the gospel message and put their faith in Christ. Ask God to speak to their hearts and draw them into a relationship with Himself. Pray for the Wolof to come into God’s Kingdom and for His will to be done among them. Pray for culturally sensitive believers to reach out to the Wolof people in Italy.—CL

Wolof People in Italy
After the USSR dissolved in the 1990s, Muslim Tajiks fled their homeland of Tajikistan when the country was in transition. Many were well-educated and participated in public service and business. They swam or took precarious little boats across the Amu Darya River to Afghanistan, which was already ravaged by war.

Since then, the Tajiks have realized that Afghanistan cannot be their new home, and now many of them are on the move again. Neighboring Pakistan and Iran are in no position to accept refugees, and these countries are deporting those who make it across their borders. Now many Tajiks are making the perilous journey across Iran, Turkey, and the Mediterranean Sea to Italy. According to Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the migrants believe that the streets of Europe are “paved with gold.” Some 5,000 Tajiks have arrived in Italy, which ranks 5th in Europe in the number of asylum seekers.

One day, some people will see streets “paved with gold.” According to Revelation 21:21, the street of the New Jerusalem will be “pure gold, like transparent glass.” We cannot picture this now, but we can trust that the new city will far exceed our human expectations.

Pray for these Sunni Muslims to meet followers of Christ in Italy who can share the good news of a future city paved with gold, a heaven which can be their permanent home, a home where they will live in the presence of the loving Lord Jesus.—CMW
Picture a young family at a protest rally in Milan, Italy. The husband’s name is Abous, and until last year he was an English teacher in Afghanistan. His wife Laila used to work as a mid-wife. They have a baby whom they carried on their 3,000-mile trek to Italy’s safer shores. Abous once stayed awake all night on their journey to protect his baby from mosquitoes.

They are Hazaras from Afghanistan and now live in Europe, trying to find a future for their child. They still remember their homeland, so they are rallying in solidarity for Hazara families back home.

The Hazaras are a large Shi’ite Muslim minority that has often been abused by the Sunni majority. Some have pursued higher education, enrolled in the army, and held top government positions. The first woman minister in the history of Afghanistan, the first woman governor, and the first ever woman mayor were all Hazara women.

Since the late 1990s, however, the Sunni Taliban have systematically persecuted, kidnapped, displaced and “ethnically-cleansed” the Hazaras, targeting them for their Shi’ite Muslim faith. Those who were able to flee are now in a safer home in Europe.

Pray that as they strive for security, dignity, and a chance to succeed, someone will tell the Hazaras of the freedom and security they can have in Christ Jesus. Pray that they will find peace in the true and living God and will share it with other Hazaras.—CMW
Persians in Italy

Persia, an ancient civilization that at one time was the world’s greatest superpower, continues today to have a great influence on global events, though under a newer name: Iran. This land was settled by Persians as far back as 1000 B.C., and grew in cultural complexity over the next millennium. Formerly practicing the Zoroastrian religion, Persians converted to Islam when the Arabs invaded during the 1500s. Although today the majority of Persians still live in Iran, many live in other parts of the world, including the USA and Italy.

While the Iranian presence in Italy has historically been sparse, there have been notable times when migrants entered the country for education, business, and refuge. For example, the Iranian-Iraqi conflict of the 1980s produced a wave of refugees that went to Europe seeking safety. Persians in Italy tend to have close ties to their homeland and do not consider themselves to be immigrants; but they often maintain the goal of eventually returning to the motherland. Their bonds are more with family than with Iran itself. Today there are a few Persians who have come recently to Italy, but they are still considered to be an unreached people group.

Pray that the Iranians in Italy will encounter the gospel and will turn to Jesus, finding their identity in Him. Pray that soon there will be a discipleship movement among Persians that will affect their communities in Italy as well as Iran.—BK

See day 3 of next month’s GPD for an encouraging report on Iranians in Sweden.
And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal kindly with you as you have dealt with the dead and with me. May the LORD grant that you may find rest, each in the house of her husband.” Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept. And they said to her, “No, but we will surely return with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Return, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 

Who are these Central Asian people, 1,300 of whom now live in Italy? In the 20th century this people group was heavily affected by the atheism of the Soviet Union. Today they are now mostly irreligious or nominal Muslims. They once practiced Shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Christianity. Today they are known as the Kazakhs.

Once tribal and nomadic, their history was strongly shaped by the Kazakh Khanate which existed during the 1400s. While tribalism is still an influential mindset, Kazakhs now consider themselves to be a single people. Introduced during the 8th century, Islam slowly replaced the other practiced religions. Islam, in turn, was largely replaced by secularism during the Soviet Era. As a result there is a modern day push to revive and celebrate Islam as part of the Kazakh heritage.

Though mostly found in Russia and Central Asia, there are numbers of Kazakhs that live world-wide, including Italy, which is one of Kazakhstan’s main European trading partners. The two countries formed diplomatic relations in 1992, and now they cooperate in many areas.

Little is known of the Kazakhs in Italy except that they are in need of the gospel. Christian resources are available in the Kazakh language, and there is an open door for anyone who wants to give these items to the people.

Pray that the Kazakhs in Italy would discover the good news of Christ. Pray that as they are reached, the gospel would spread back to Kazakhstan, igniting revival among all peoples of Central Asia.—BK
Eastern Europe’s Balkan Region has long been an area overrun by many invading civilizations. The nation we now call Bosnia-Herzegovina has been in the crossfires of religious battles throughout the centuries. Caught between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox churches, Bosniaks (ie, people of Bosnia) developed their own indigenous church, Krstjani. After Bosnia fell to Ottoman control in 1463, most Bosniaks became Sunni Muslims, not because they were coerced to do so, but because they wanted to enjoy the privileges afforded the more powerful Muslims in their country. The warfare in their homeland 10 years ago resulted in many Bosniaks settling throughout Europe, particularly in southwestern Italy.

It is common for different Italian villages to be composed of clusters of immigrants from the same area. Bosniaks find comfort in being with those who speak their language and understand their culture. Estimates of Bosniaks in Italy vary widely from 3,600 to 30,000, depending upon the research agency. These Bosniaks in Italy are usually Muslim in name only. The glue that binds them together is their culture, not Islam.

Tragic upheavals wreak havoc on traditional homelands, but they also present opportunities for evangelization. Many people who would not previously have had the opportunity to hear the good news flee to areas where the gospel message can be given out unhindered.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead mission groups to target displaced Bosnians in Italy who are now far easier to reach with the good news than they were previously. Pray that efforts to reach them will result in Bosnian fellowships creating Bosnian churches throughout southern Europe.—JS
So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the woman said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the LORD has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?” So Naomi returned, and with her Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, who returned from the land of Moab. And they came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest.

Pomak People in Italy

Considered the outcasts of Bulgarian society, the Pomaks are a Slavic people whose name means “people who have suffered.” Indeed they have suffered! They, as many other Balkan minorities, were forced to convert to Islam during the centuries when the Ottoman Empire controlled their land. However, their Christian roots are still there. Because of their isolation in the Balkan Region, they never adopted many Islamic practices. Many Christian customs appear during special occasions like weddings. Once ashamed of their Pomak names, now due to the social media, many are seeing a resurgence in their culture and are proud of their ethnic identity.

Pomaks really suffered under the communist regime. Some were forcibly relocated when it was believed that they were disloyal to the regime. Now with the Internet and open borders since the 1980s and the fall of the Soviet empire, the Pomaks are rediscovering their identity, their music, and their culture. They live throughout the Balkans, primarily in Bulgaria, but also in Greece, Romania, and Turkey. There are about 2,500 living in Italy. These Italian Pomaks are those who can most easily be reached with the gospel message.

Pray that Pomaks in Italy will come to Christ, and then will establish His church among Pomaks throughout Europe. Ask God to give Pomak believers creative ways of witnessing, particularly at Christian weddings and holidays. Pray that the Pomak people will find their lost identity in Jesus.—JS
When is a language considered dead? Would this be when it is no longer used as a means of communication among a people group? We often think, “Italian is the language of Italy”, or “German is the language of Germany.” However, there are many old languages still spoken in these countries as well as new ones from various migrant communities. Mocheno is one of these languages, and it is almost dead.

There are only 1900 speakers of Mocheno left in the valley of Fersina in the Tretin Alps of Italy. Linguists think that it is similar to Bavarian or German. Mocheno is officially recognized in Trentino by provincial and national law. It is being taught in schools, and officials have changed street signs to Mocheno.

It is important for people to hear about and read about God’s good news in their heart language. These Mocheno speakers are precious in God’s sight, and they will be present at the throne of God as the Apostle John proclaims, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands” (Revelation 7:9, NIV).

Pray that the Father will draw many Mocheno speakers to come together in His Name. Pray for a movement to Christ among this people.—JS

Now Naomi had a kinsman of her husband, a man of great wealth, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, “Please let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain after one in whose sight I may find favor.” And she said to her, “Go, my daughter.” So she departed and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and she happened to come to the portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Now behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers, “May the LORD be with you.” And they said to him, “May the LORD bless you.”
Jews of Italy

Much of this month we have focused on minority groups living in Italy; now let us discuss the Jews. For more than 2,000 years Jews have had a strong presence in Italy. The Apostle Paul was addressing a large Jewish (as well as Gentile) population in his letter to the Romans.

Jewish history in Italy has been mixed between tolerance and persecution. Even during the Roman Empire it depended upon who the ruling parties were. The height of recent persecution was, of course, during World War II with the death of six million European Jews in the Holocaust. Jews in Italy were rounded up and sent to death camps in large numbers.

Today there are 28,400 Jews in Italy with most of them living in Rome. One may think that post-war Jewish anti-Semitism does not exist in Italy anymore, but that is not the case. Jews are finding themselves once again targets, not from the recent influx of Muslims, but from Italians of European descent. Cameras have picked up images of mostly young Italian men defacing Jewish property and writing neo-Nazi hate slogans across walls.

Ask God to send loving Christ followers to reach out to the Jewish communities in Italy. Pray that they will understand that Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah. May God soften their hearts as they hear the message of salvation, resulting in a church planting movement that will extend beyond Italy.—JS
Punjabi Sikhs in Italy

Italians love their Sikh neighbors! Here are some of their comments:

“Sikh farmers have rescued our mozzarella [cheese] from extinction.” said Marco Omizzolo, “They have great skills with buffalo. They have farming and breeding backgrounds. They nourish respect for all life forms.” One Italian mayor said, “When the area was hit by an earthquake in 2012, the Sikh community cooked and took food to victims twice a day. They donated a car for blood transfers to the Red Cross.” Some volunteer for civil protection. They are part of our community. They are Italians.” (http://europe.newsweek.com/sikh-migrants-keeping-italys-mozzarella-industry-alive-327179)

Young Sikhs have come a long way since their grandparents first arrived in Italy. Some have removed their turbans and cut their hair to fit in with the Italian majority. They see themselves as Indo-Italians. They speak with the local accent and have the same aspirations as their Italian peers, becoming educated and entering professions. Ancient religion is not a priority in their lives.

However, _gurdwaras_ (Sikh places of worship) dot the country, so there are practicing Sikhs in Italy. Punjabi Sikhs have their own scriptures which require a high degree of morality and good deeds in order to be accepted by their creator.

*Pray that their respect for life will lead them to the maker and sustainer of all life, who has provided forgiveness of sin and the way to eternal life. Pray that the Punjabi Sikhs in Italy will embrace the Savior as their own.—KH*
Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen carefully, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field; furthermore, do not go on from this one, but stay here with my maids. Let your eyes be on the field, which they reap, and go after them. Indeed, I have commanded the servants not to touch you. When you are thirsty, go to the water jars and drink from what the servants draw.” Then she fell on her face, bowing to the ground and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight that you should take notice of me, since I am a foreigner?” Boaz replied to her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband has been fully reported to me, and how you left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and came to a people that you did not previously know.

The weapons of our warfare are not human weapons, but are made powerful by God for tearing down strongholds. 2 Corinthians 10:4, NEB

Did you know that the first Japanese immigrants arrived in Spain as members of an embassy? Many Japanese people eventually settled in the Catalonia Region of Spain in the late 1960s. The first Japanese business established in Spain was Sanyo in 1969. Later Japanese from South and Central America came to get away from troublesome environments.

According to Spain’s National Statistics Institute, nearly 5,000 Japanese citizens resided in Spain in 2009. Spain has a number of Japanese restaurants. Japanese people in Spain are usually followers of Buddhism or Shintoism, though many are secular, especially the younger generation. Young Japanese adults are pursuing an education and profession. They are laboring to enjoy material possessions and activities; yet their spiritual lives are empty. They do not yet know that life simply will not bring happiness unless the Lord Jesus Christ is at the center of it.

Pray that the Lord will raise up believers who will introduce the Japanese to the true and living God who loves them. Pray that the light of the gospel will drive out false religion from among the Japanese Buddhists in Spain so that they can spread the gospel to their relatives and friends in Japan.—KH
Maghrebi Arabs in Spain

(This is a fictional account based on facts.)

Youssef, a Maghrebi Arab who lives in Spain, was testy when a visiting Muslim cleric asked him why he no longer went to the mosque. He said, “When people in Spain hear the word ‘Islam,’ they think about ISIS. I’m against terrorists, suicide bombers, and everything those fanatics call jihad. I’ve lived in Spain for many years and have worked hard so my family can have a good life. But every time we hear about another bomb going off, the feeling of prejudice against Muslims living here grows. So I don’t want to be seen near a mosque.”

Maghrebi Arabs are identified as a people group who originated in certain regions of North Africa called the Maghreb. Out of the estimated one million Muslims living in Spain, the majority are Maghrebi Arabs. Most of them are laborers in Spain’s agricultural, construction, hospitality, and service industries. They have long felt that they are regarded as second-class citizens who do not receive the same opportunities in education and jobs as Spanish Catholics. Spaniards are concerned because some of their people are converting to Islam, and Maghrebi Arabs are marrying Spanish women. Very few Maghrebi Arabs in Spain have left Islam.

Pray that followers of Christ in Spain will patiently embrace the responsibility to disciple Maghreb Arabs into the family of God. Pray that work among Maghrebi Arabs will result in movements to Christ throughout North Africa.—PD

Her mother-in-law then said to her, “Where did you glean today and where did you work? May he who took notice of you be blessed.” So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked and said, “The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz.” Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed of the LORD who has not withdrawn his kindness to the living and to the dead.” Again Naomi said to her, “The man is our relative, he is one of our closest relatives.”
All the people who were in the court, and the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachel and Leah, both of whom built the house of Israel; and may you achieve wealth in Ephrathah and become famous in Bethlehem. Moreover, may your house be like the house of Perez whom Tamar bore to Judah, through the offspring which the LORD will give you by this young woman.”

Moors in Spain

One great place to learn about Muslim history is Spain! For almost 800 years (711-1492) Spain was ruled by nomadic Berbers from North Africa called Moors. It was through them that Europe experienced one of its greatest periods of cultural enrichments including education, architecture, medicine, science, and engineering. If you visited Spain you would want to see the majestic Alhambra Castle and gardens built in AD 889 located in Granada on the southern tip of Spain. Alhambra Palace received almost 2.4 million visitors in 2014, but the number of visitors dwindled last year because of fear of terrorist attacks in Europe.

Almost 350,000 Moors were expelled to North Africa starting in 1609. Some Moors remained in Spain and converted to Catholicism. Currently there are about one million Muslims living in Spain, and the majority of them are not citizens. Only about 11,000 are Moors. About all we know is that they are entirely Muslim.

Pray that believers will impact the lives of these Moorish Muslims so they will know that the greatest gift the world has is a relationship with the living Lord. Pray that Christ followers will bring many Moors in Spain to the Savior, and that this will result in Moors in North Africa following Him as well.—PD
“My business is legal!” shouted Asad, an Algerian Muslim who immigrated to Spain 20 years ago. He opened a kebab shop and a halal grocery store with his Spanish wife in the seaside town of Tarragona in northeastern Spain. Pressure was increasing from the local government as new laws were being passed to make local stores like his become more Spanish and less Islamic. Frustrated he railed at a city government official. “Do I need to sell pork to be a ‘traditional Spanish business’? Do I need to sell wine? I pay my taxes. I do not support any Islamic terrorist group. So what are you so worried about? This is discrimination, and it’s growing every day.”

Spain is home to about 60,000 Algerian Muslims. Lately there is a growing concern that some of these Algerians are supporting ISIS by sending them funds. Increased hostility has caused many Algerian Muslims to feel they are not wanted in Spain. This, however, has not stopped some Algerians from trying to get into Spain, often risking their lives at sea. Almost all Algerian immigrants are Muslims and rely on the Muslim community for support.

Pray believers will be open to helping and befriending these Algerian Arabs. May Algerian Arabs accept Jesus, not just as a prophet, but as their only hope of salvation. Pray for grateful Algerian believers to spread His fame throughout Algeria.—PD

So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the LORD enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”
Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David. Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.

Can a nation correct the errors of her past? On October 1, 2015, Spanish legislators passed a bill that allowed Jewish people (known as Sephardic Jews) the “Right of Return” after their ancestors were expelled 500 years ago. At that time, Spain was emerging as a world power after being controlled by North African Muslims for nearly 700 years. They used their new power to start the Inquisition where Jews, Muslims, and Protestants were persecuted. Many from these same groups had to leave Spain, Portugal, and their New World colonies.

Now Spain is welcoming the descendants of these Jewish people back to their country. The World Jewish Congress estimated that there could be up to 40,000 Sephardic Jews currently living in Spain. The Spanish government expects up to 200,000 Sephardic Jews to apply for citizenship, following the “Right of Return” that will last for three years. With increased anti-Semitism in some South American countries, Turkey and France, many Sephardics have started to apply for Spanish citizenship.

North African Muslims feel they should have the same right of reciprocity because they too were expelled at that time. However, the Spanish government does not plan to make citizenship easier for them since their communities tend to depend on government benefits.

Some Sephardics living in Spain have become Messianic Jews; pray that God will use them to extend His grace to traditional Sephardic Jews. Pray for a discipleship movement to emerge among Sephardic Jews in Spain.—PD
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