

Somali of Ethiopia



Picture Credit: Joshua Project

What Are Their Lives Like?

Somali society is based on the nuclear family, which consists of a husband, wife, and children. A typical family owns a herd of sheep or goats and a few burden camels. Some may also own a herd of milking camels. The more camels a man has, the greater his prestige. The Somali consider themselves warriors, and fights often occur between the clans, resulting in many deaths. Typically, the Somali wear brightly colored cloths draped over their bodies like togas. The men may also wear kilts.

About the Somali of Ethiopia

Several million Somali live scattered across eight countries in the northeastern portion of Africa, commonly called the "Horn of Africa," and in the Middle East. They are one of the most homogenous people groups on the continent of Africa. Over two million live in Ethiopia, where they are known as the Western Somali.

The Somali share a common language, adhere to a single faith, and share a cultural heritage that is an integral part of their nomadic lifestyle.

Population: 8,214,000

Language: Somali

Religion: Islam

% Christian: 0.35%

% Evangelical: 0.22%

Bible Available: Complete (2008)

Ministry Resources: Audio Bible, Jesus Film, Magdalena Film, Android Bible App

What Are Their Beliefs?

Although the Somali of Ethiopia are nearly all Shafiite Muslims, numerous beliefs and traditions have been intermingled with their Islamic practices. The standard Islamic prayers are usually observed; however, Somali women have never worn the required veils. Villagers and urban settlers frequently turn to the wadaad (a religious expert) for blessings, charms, and advice in worldly matters.

What Are Their Needs?

Very few Somali children attend school, and over half of the adults are illiterate. This is not surprising since they did not have a written script until 1972. Access to modern health services is very limited in Ethiopia. Droughts, famines, and wars have created numerous problems. Malnutrition alone has accounted for the death of thousands of Somali since the 1970s. The activities of missionaries among the Somali have met with little success. There are only a few known believers among the Somali living in Ethiopia.

Prayer Points

- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into Ethiopia.
- Pray that God will raise up prayer teams to go and break up the soil through worship and intercession.
- Ask God to grant favor and wisdom to missions agencies focusing on the Somali.
- Pray for effectiveness of the Jesus film among the Somali.
- Ask God to anoint the Gospel as it goes forth via radio and television to the Somali.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to soften their hearts towards Christians so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.
- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Somali.

Information from The Joshua Project at joshuaproject.net



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