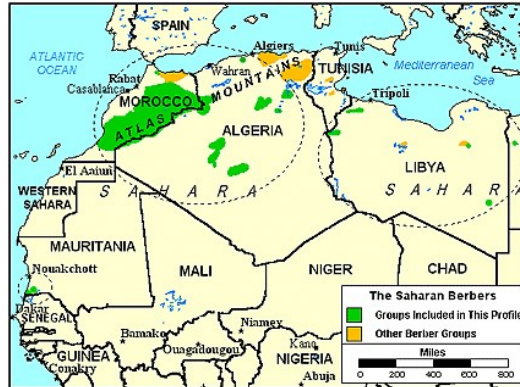


# Berber, Menasser in Algeria



Photo: Anonymous



Map: Bethany World Prayer Center

*"Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest."*

People Name	Berber, Menasser
Country	Algeria
Status	Unengaged Unreached
Population	71,000
Language	Tamazight, Central Atlas
Religion	Islam
Written Scripture	Yes
Oral Scripture	No
Jesus Film	Yes
Gospel Recordings	Yes
Christ Followers	No
Churches	No
Workers Needed	1
Workers Reported	0

## BACKGROUND

There are about ten million Berbers scattered across the vast regions of Northern Africa. Their tribes stretch from the Siwa Oasis in Egypt to the Atlantic Ocean. It is thought that they once inhabited the entire North African territory, forcing the Negro population to move further southward through the desert. However, the exact origins of the Berbers and how they arrived in North Africa still remain a mystery.

Although the Maghrib has been, for the most part, "Arabized" by language and Islamic culture over the centuries, there are still groups of Berbers, like the nine Saharan Berber tribes, who have retained much of their original Berber traditions and characteristics.

## WHAT ARE THEIR LIVES LIKE?

Since the Sahara Desert is a harsh environment, most of the Saharan tribes occupy a number of oases. While there are many similarities between the various Berber groups, their particular lifestyles and quality of life vary according to the region in which they live.

The native Berber economy rests on a fine balance between farming and breeding cattle. Every tribe, without exception, depends heavily on domestic animals for

carrying heavy loads, milk and dairy products, meat, and hides or wool.

The Berbers are often noted for their skills in various crafts. Domestic tasks such as weaving and pottery are the main work of the women. The men specialize in woodworking, metalworking, and, more surprisingly, fine needlework. In regard to labor, the men do most of the farming, while the women are responsible for milking and gathering.

Berber societies can be broken down into three basic units: the community, the district, and the tribe. The community is a political collection of clans; the district is a cluster of communities; and the tribe is a group of districts that are characterized by a common territory, name, and culture.

## WHAT ARE THEIR BELIEFS?

The majority of Algerians are Muslims. However, other Berber groups such as the Kabyles, Shawiya, Tuareg, and other Saharan Berbers are only nominally Muslim. Their observances of Islamic law are generally lax.

The concept of baraka, or holiness, is highly developed in North Africa. The Berbers believe that many people are endowed with baraka, of which the holiest are the shurifa, or the direct descendants of Mohammed.

Another class of holy people is known as the marabouts. Among some Berbers, the Tuaregs in particular, the marabouts are considered to be different from ordinary men. They are believed to possess, even after death, the powers of protection and healing.

In view of the general acceptance of Islam, it is particularly interesting that almost all Berbers prefer monogamous marriages (marriage to only one partner). Even the oasis dwellers and the Tuareg hold this preference. In the few tribes where polygamy does exist, it is practiced only by the few wealthy men.

## WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?

The Saharan Berbers have few Christian resources available to them. Because it is difficult to reach them geographically, they must be the focus of individual church planting efforts.

The quality of life for the Berbers is quite poor. The need for community development projects may provide open doors through which missionaries may enter.