



God brings good out of evil

“I remember praying for the Kurds back in the early 1980s,” said Tim, recalling his student days. “We knew they were a large people group and that God had made promises about all nations, but as we sat there praying, there was virtually a blank sheet in front of us.”

How God has answered prayers! There is certainly no longer a blank sheet in front of us now as we pray for the Kurds. God has done great things, even using wars in his sovereign purposes. The PKK’s long struggle for Kurdish rights in Turkey has meant a) Kurds have fled to Istanbul and Europe where they have been converted and got involved with Bible translation, radio evangelism and the like. And b) Turkey has had to bow to European pressure and allow broadcasting in Kurdish, which has helped standardise Kurmanji and make it a language people are happy to use to discuss the big issues of life.

God has used Saddam Hussein too, because it was his cruelty that led John Major to create a ‘safe haven’ for Iraqi Kurds in 1991, and thus open the door for aid workers to come into Iraq, taking the gospel with them. In Sorani, the dialect spoken by most Iraqi Kurds, even the OT (in draft form) is out and churches made up of former Muslims (as opposed to Assyrians) are slowly but steadily, if shakily at times, emerging.

What part can UFM play in the building of Christ’s church among the Kurds? The Lord is beginning a work among the Northern Kurdish speakers in N Iraq, which remains a very strategic place for gospel work. The Kurdish authorities there, in their autonomous region, wholeheartedly support the development of the Kurdish language, whereas the governments of Turkey, Syria and Iran still view their Kurdish minorities as something of a threat. Though nearly all Kurds are Muslims, Bible translation is seen by some ministers as an honouring of Kurdish culture.

A quarter of the Kurds in Iraq speak a dialect called Bahdini and it is really a sub-dialect of the Kurmanji that is spoken across a huge area (shaded green on our map) stretching from Northern Syria to Armenia. If churches can be firmly established in this area, there is

great potential for training believers to reach out across the wider region in their mother tongue. Great numbers of builders, truck drivers and students come from Turkey and spend time in N Iraq. May these people, who often regard Kurmanji, and not Turkish, as the ‘language of the heart’, have the joyful experience of hearing the wonders of God in their own tongue!

There is another door that God has sovereignly chosen to open: here in the UK. Whereas Turkish Kurds came in 1988-9 and formed a huge ghetto centred on Haringey, Iraqi Kurds started coming ten years later and settled in towns across the UK, thanks to the Home Office’s dispersal policy. Many ordinary

Christians now find they have Kurds in their neighbourhoods. Let’s pray that many lights would shine at Kebab Houses and school gates. When Christians have made the effort to understand the sufferings the Kurds have been through, deep friendships can be struck. Here are some resources for further reading:

Christiane Bird: *A Thousand Sighs, A Thousand Revolts*.

Blincoe, Robert. *Ethnic Realities and the Church: Lessons from Kurdistan. A History of Mission work, 1668-1990*.

Word of Life Scripture Calendars in many languages.

Other resources listed at: <http://go2melik.org/KurdishResources.lsp>



The NT, shown above is now available in the Northern dialect, which is spoken across 5 countries, from Syria as far as Armenia. From outlaws to online icons: those labouring to make teach Kurmanji and make it a vehicle for the discussion of serious matters are making full use of satellite TV and the internet.

