



Day 17

About 50% of the Mazandarani retain the traditional lifestyle of farming, raising cattle and breeding horses, with some carpet weaving being done by the women. The others are engaged in various manufacturing and commercial enterprises. The Mazandarani are among the more highly educated and progressive peoples of Iran. In the 1970's, reforms brought in large-scale processing and distribution of agricultural products, manufacturing and investment. An oil boom brought new businesses in cement, cotton and textile industries. Fisheries developed on the coast.



The Mazandarani speakers of Iran number between three and 4.5 million people who live mainly in the Mazandaran province and neighboring provinces bordering the Caspian Sea, in northern Iran. (The Caspian Sea is actually called the Khazar Sea or Mazandaran Sea in Persian.) Mazandaran province is divided into beautiful natural landscapes: the coastal plain and the Alborz Mountain Range. The highest mountain in Iran called Damavand (18,000 feet) is located in the province. The Mazandarani language is related to the neighbouring Gilaki language and also to Persian (Farsi), which is the official language of Iran. The more educated Mazandarani can read Farsi well. This people group is almost 100% Shi'a Muslim, and Islam has been present in this province for about 1,300 years. In Iran it is a capital offence to convert from Islam to another religion. The full weight of this law is seldom applied, but a Muslim convert can certainly expect persecution from family and the local community, as well as economic hardships as a result of exclusion from certain occupations, business options, and government benefits.

Followers of Jesus: There are a number of small cell churches and scattered believers throughout the region. In addition there are individual Mazandarani believers in many places around the world among the four million Iranians who have sought refuge in other countries. Most Mazandarani believers readily recognize the benefits of audio materials in their language and are eager to promote Scripture

Iran

The Mazandarani people



translation activity. This work is in the early stages and most of the four gospels are in first draft. It may be possible to use a computer adaptation to make a Mazandarani translation from Scriptures in a related language. Radio and satellite broadcasts are being planned. Training and discipleship of believers is being done discretely with small numbers of people in Iran.w

PRAYER REQUESTS

- ▶ *Pray for receptive hearts towards the Gospel.*
- ▶ *Pray for the few Mazandarani believers to grow in faith and develop ministry skills, becoming active and effective in witnessing discretely within their hostile environment.*
- ▶ *Pray for spiritual and physical protection of the believers (several have endured persecution).*
- ▶ *Pray for the Mazandarani Scripture translation team and their work.*