

## *The Bakhtiari people*

The colorful Bakhtiari people number between 750,000 – 1,000,000 and live in southwestern Iran in the clean and beautiful highlands of the Zagros Mountains. The Chahar Mahal Province has plains, snow-capped mountains, valleys, rivers and dense forests. It is the habitat of leopards, sheep and bears, and grows wild pistachio, almond, walnut, plum and ash trees. The Bakhtiari are divided into tribes, sub-tribes and clans. About half of the people retain their traditional lifestyle of shepherding for the men, and carpet-weaving and home making for the women. The rest are settled and involved in agriculture and a variety of commercial activities.

Bakhtiari women enjoy a high degree of freedom in this patrilineal culture. They traditionally wear beautiful, bright colored long skirts, blouses and headscarves. For thousands of years the Bakhtiari have undertaken a 4-6 week annual migration in the spring, moving from their winter quarters in Khuzistan to summer pastures in the Chahar Mahal region southwest of Esfahan. Men, women, children and animals – thousands of them – travel across some of the most difficult mountain country in Iran in their search for grass.

The Bakhtiari language is used across generations at home and in commerce, but many Bakhtiari also speak Persian. There are about 350,000 monolingual Bakhtiari speakers, especially among older people and women.



Like the majority of Iranians the Bakhtiari are Shi'a Muslims. There are just a few very small cell churches and scattered believers throughout the region. In addition there are very small numbers of Bakhtiari believers in other places around the world. Some initial Bible translation work has begun in the United Kingdom.

### **PRAYER REQUESTS**

- ▶ *May God soften the hearts of the Bakhtiari people towards believers so that they will be receptive to the Gospel.*
- ▶ *Pray for the development of suitable ministry materials and means in the Bakhtiari language including: scripture translations, radio broadcasts and the "Jesus Film".*
- ▶ *Pray that Bakhtiari speakers who are already believers will develop strong ministry skills and become effective in reaching out to their people.*

## Day 3

Jesus has told us that the Gospel will be preached to all the nations before the end of this present age (Mt. 24:14). In Greek the word nations in the text is "ethnos," which is related to the English word ethnic, as in "ethnic group." These groups have common ancestors, history, language, customs and practices.

### **Religious Affiliations: World Ethnic Groups**

Christianity	5,923	37%
Muslim	3,109	20%
Ethnic Religions	2,963	19%
Hinduism	2,324	15%
Buddhism	481	3%
Other / Undefined	887	6%
Total	15,687	99%

*Mission Frontiers Magazine, March / April 2007*

There are over 245 Muslim people groups of over 100,000 which are completely unreached and for whom no one is actually engaged in proclaiming the Gospel.