

Mashhad in Iran

The Gospel is largely unknown

In AD 818 Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (Ali Reza), the seventh descendant of the Islamic prophet Mohammed, was poisoned and buried in the small town which later became the city of Mashhad in Northeastern Iran. Ali Reza was known for his piety, and he is now revered by Iranian Shi'a Muslims. He was the eighth Imam (head spiritual leader) of Shi'a Islam. Some considered him leader of all Muslims. His life and position made his tomb a sacred place for pilgrims. Over ten million people (mostly Iranians) visit his tomb each year.

Mashhad has grown significantly during recent years. Large malls and super markets as well as department stores, parks and other attractions have popped up in the city. Agricultural and industrial activity has boomed during the past decades in suburban areas. Mashhad has become the second largest city in Iran with a population of about 2.5 million people.

No one really knows how many people in Mashhad believe in Jesus as their saving king. All of them are under the threat of government persecution. One of Iran's leading Protestant pastors from Mashhad was executed



by hanging in December 1990 after a sharia court (an Islamic Court) condemned him. Even now many other believers from Mashhad have suffered for their faith. The vast majority of people in the city have very little understanding of the Gospel. Happily, the number of Iranian believers continues to grow even during persecution.

Prayer Requests:

- ▶ *(Scriptures to meditate on and to proclaim in prayer: Acts 7:55-60, Luke 23:34, Luke 11:4).*
- ▶ *Pray for the millions of people in this city who do not know the living God. Even if they have heard much about the God of Abraham through Islamic traditions and the Qur'an, most of them still know very little of the true God by personal experience. They are far from receiving forgiveness and new life through the Messiah.*

The Khorasani Turks

No one to proclaim the Gospel to them

More than 830,000 Khorasani Turks live in the northern part of the Khorasan province in Iran (northwest of Mashhad). Khorasan is an important agricultural area and most Khorasani Turks are farmers. They use both traditional and modern irrigation methods to grow wheat, barley, rice, cotton, sugar beets, potatoes, alfalfa, melons, and caraway. Sheep, goats, and cows provide Khorasani Turk families with milk, butter, oil, and meat. They are skillful craftsmen of jewelry, dolls and glassware. They also weave beautiful rugs, cloth, and carpets known for their exquisite designs. The Khorasani Turks are 100 percent Muslim, and their society is organized around traditional Muslim rules. At the present time, there are no known Khorasani Turk believers. Living in a very remote corner of the world, they are currently without Gospel resources in their own language, and there is no specific effort to implant believing congregations among them.

Prayer Requests:

- ▶ *Pray that God will open doors for Christian businessmen and others to share Christ with the Khorasani Turks.*
- ▶ *Ask God to raise up qualified linguists to translate the Bible into the Khorasani language.*