

Mazanderani of Iran



The Mazanderani people, also sometimes called the Tabari, are one of the peoples whose homeland is the region around the Caspian Sea in the north of Iran. With their ancient homeland situated between the sea to the north and the Alborz Mountains to the south, the Mazanderani have a culture, language and identity distinct from the Persian groups on the Iranian plateau to the south. Among those distinctions is a rich musical heritage that includes "lagan navazi," a kind of tambourine playing.

The economy of Mazandaran Province is historically dependent on agriculture, animal husbandry and fishing. There is also a tradition of raising Arabian horses. More recently, the tourism industry has developed in this region. Iranians from all over the country come to this area for holiday.



As in most of Iran, the Mazanis (as they are sometimes called) are predominantly Shia Muslims. But they and the other peoples of the Caspian basin were among the last groups in the area to convert to Islam in the 8th century, and their relative isolation has meant that women experience more freedom than in other parts of Iran.

There is a small network of believers among the Mazanderani who are much in need of encouragement.



Quick Facts

Population = 4 million +

Progress: Engaged yet Unreached

Language: Mazanderani, Farsi

Gospel Resources: Scripture portion and Magdalena film available in both eastern and western dialects



Engage

There is a university in the city of Babol that welcomes international students from around the world to study in a variety of fields and at multiple academic levels (undergraduate, graduate). This would be an ideal entry strategy for those seeking to build relationships and establish a long-term presence beyond the 2-3 years of study. As the Mazanderani language is unwritten, the academic route might be a way in which the development of a written language could be explored.

The tourism industry provides a natural pathway for expatriates to visit the region in which the Mazanderanis live. Kingdom-minded tourists visited the region in the summer of 2023 and were warmly welcomed by local people, experiencing no difficulties with authorities. For people from some countries, opportunities might exist to develop business platforms connected to the tourism industry for long-term relationship building and impact.

Responsiveness among the Mazanderani in recent decades means that there are believers who need to be disciplined and leaders who need to be trained. By equipping Mazani believers, gospel influence could spread beyond the province so that multiplication happens through the Caspian basin. Some of that discipleship and equipping could be done in nearby countries, where Iranians - including those from Mazandaran Province - travel for holidays, short vacations and business. Likeminded friends who live in the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Georgia can help facilitate both short and longer term interaction with Iranians in those places, enabling teams to gain some exposure and learn language without immediately facing the scrutiny of the Iranian security services.



Pray...

- that the hearts of Mazanis would be receptive to the Gospel.
- for Scripture translation efforts into the Mazanderani language, and for villagers in the province to hear the work of the Lord in their own language.
- for creative access to the Mazanderani people through tourism, agriculture and academia.



Is God calling you to take the gospel to the Mazanderani of Iran?
Contact us. We would love to help you get there!