

Day 1
The Mahras – A people in three countries

MAHRAS

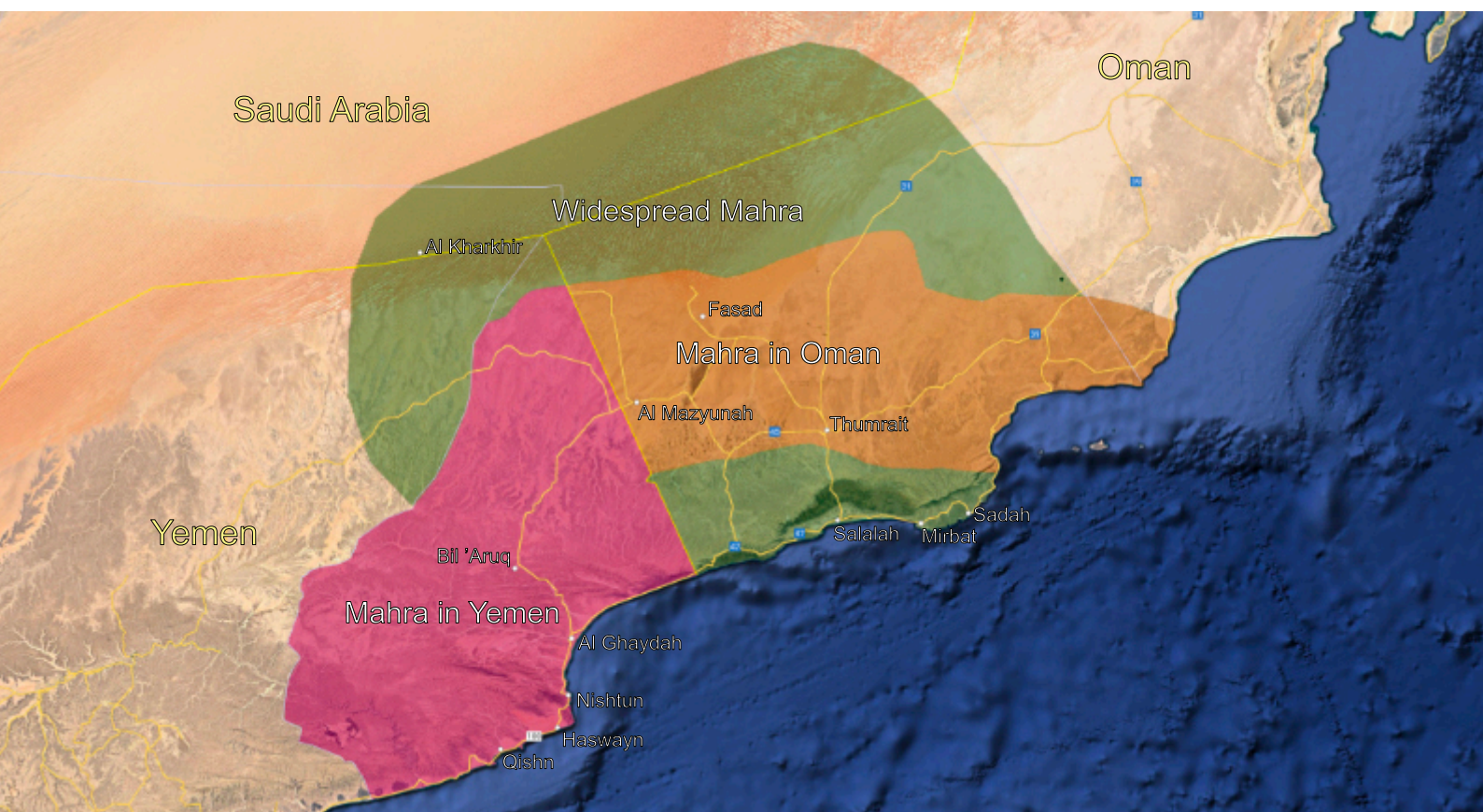
Before there were borders drawn in the sand through the southern Arabian Peninsula there were the Mahra peoples. Their territory is divided between the countries of Oman, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. They have their own unique language, an old Semitic language called Mehri. It is only a spoken language and is different from Arabic.

Their lands include the harsh and beautiful desert known as the Rub Al Khali desert, the Empty Quarter, where temperatures can reach peaks of 51°C (124°F) in the summer. There are mountains, and the many wadis (valleys) flow down to the waters of the Arabian Sea.

Historically, frankincense was extremely valuable and the frankincense road started in their territory. They were a semi-nomadic people, pursuing a pastoral lifestyle in the inhospitable interior of the southern Arabian Peninsula. Today they are becoming much more settled. They are raising goats and high-quality camels, and fishing and trading along the coast.

Nomadic Arab and Berber peoples, including those who live in the Sahara Desert, consider the Mahra camel the most prized of riding camels. Even the French carmaker Citroën named one of their four-wheel drive vehicles Méhari after the celebrated camels.

Until 1985, the nomadic Mahra people used to travel without restrictions across Saudi Arabia, Oman and Yemen. Today travel is restricted between these countries. Now some of the Mahras are not living in their native land anymore; they have moved to other places in the world. Their homeland extends from the Yemeni governorate of Al Mahra in the west to the coastal plain of Dhofar in Oman in the east. There are also Mahras who came to this area before 1967 as slaves from East Africa. Some of these Afro-Mahras have been able to do well economically and politically within society.



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The most eastern governorate of Yemen is called Al Mahrah (or Mahra) and has the largest population of Mahras. They say that Al-Kharkhir, a desert village in Saudi Arabia, is the capital for the Mahra people. This is a place where their language is preserved. Oman has the second largest number of Mahras.

The Mahras all speak a similar language, but there are around 25 distinct tribes of Mahras and each have its own Mehri dialect. The exact number of Mehri speakers is not known, but it probably numbers around 200,000 people. The tribal Mahras normally marry other tribal Mahras and the Afro-Mahras marry Afro-Mahras. It is uncommon for Mahras to marry outsiders.

*You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land where there is no water.*

Psalm 63:1

Prayer Points

1. The Mahras live in a dry and parched land; they have adapted well to this harsh environment. Pray that they would come to know the one true God; may they thirst for Him.
2. The Mahras are caught in the middle of the war between Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has closed the Yemeni border to Oman; the Omani government does not want Saudi intervention. Pray for an end to this war. Pray that the Mahras may lead in bringing peace to these three nations.
3. Pray for the more than 25 different Mahra tribes and family clans to hear the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and to call on Him as Lord.

To learn more about the Mahras in Yemen please follow this link:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6wdzCQ_hPM



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Day 2
Mehri – A Unique Language

MAHRAS

Outsiders use different names for the Mahras, but this is probably because even among themselves they use different names depending on their location: Mehriyet (western Mahras, Yemen), Mehri yot (eastern Mahras, Yemen), and Mehráyyet (Omani Mahras).

For this prayer guide we have chosen to use the following:

Al Mahrah = the land where they live

Mahras = the people who comprise at least 25 different tribes

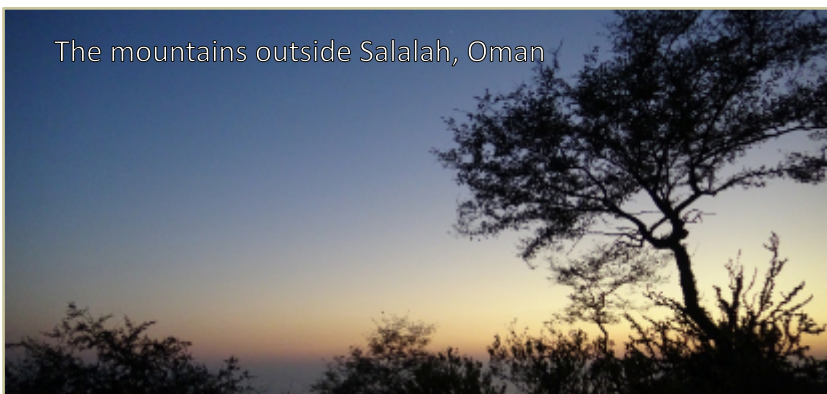
Mehri = the language of the Mahras

The Mahra people speak their own unique Mehri language, an ancient Semitic language that pre-dates Arabic in the region. Arabic speakers cannot understand it. It is amazing to think that their language is an unwritten language that has existed for thousands of years. Mehri poetry and songs are part of their rich oral tradition. Their history is recorded through spoken poetry.

Mehri is spoken by approximately 200,000 people and has no written tradition. Today most education for the Mahras is in Arabic. Some scholars classify Mehri as an endangered language. But for the Mahra it is vibrant; they are very proud of their language and heritage. The educational level and literacy rate can vary greatly from rural Mahras to city Mahras.

If the language is waning, should there be a Bible translation for the Mahras? This is a key prayer point. Arabic will continue to become more widely spoken and understood; it is currently the main trade language of the Mahras who interact with the outside world.

Mehri poetry and song continues to be important to the Mahras which they pass on orally. The Mahras who recite poetry with style are honored. Some of the poetry included a man proclaiming his love for a beautiful woman. But what if the parables of Jesus would be told and retold like Mehri poetry?



The mountains outside Salalah, Oman



MAHRAS

*Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
proclaim his salvation day after day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
For great is the Lord
and most worthy of praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.*
Psalm 96:1-4

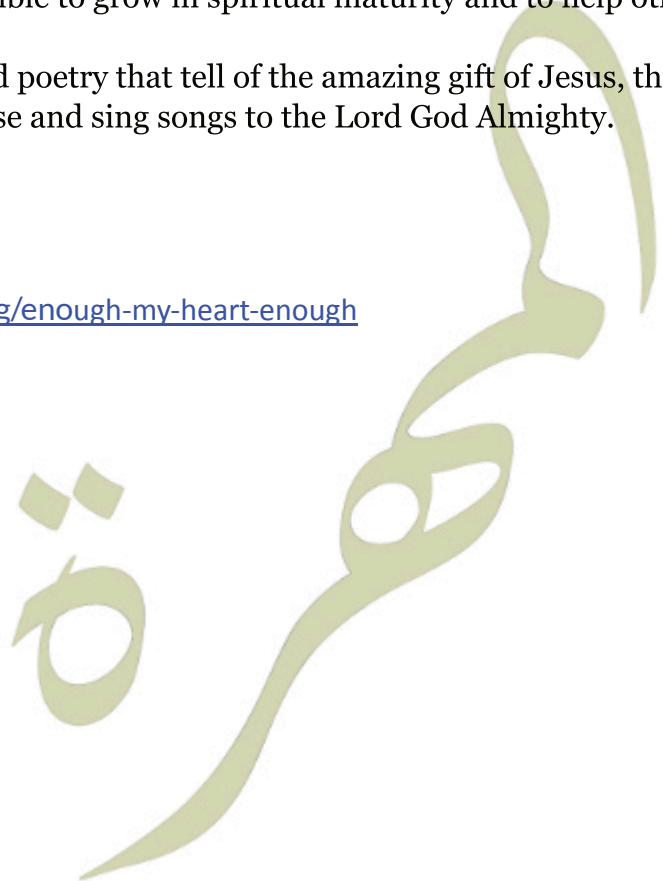


Prayer Points

1. Pray for wisdom to know if a whole Bible translation is needed for the Mahra people and, if so, for the work to begin immediately. Very little is written in Mehri. Therefore, the people might not accept a Mehri Bible. Pray for wide acceptance of God's Word in their lives. Pray that His word will speak to them in their heart language.
2. Pray that the Mahras will praise and honor the Lord as He deserves in their native language.
3. Pray for literate Mahras to use the Arabic Bible to grow in spiritual maturity and to help others grow in the Lord Jesus.
4. Pray for an increase of Mehri oral songs and poetry that tell of the amazing gift of Jesus, the Son of God. Pray that the Mahras would compose and sing songs to the Lord God Almighty.

A Mehri Poem: Enough, My Heart, Enough!

<https://whemelodiesgather.supdigital.org/wmg/enough-my-heart-enough>



Day 3
Mahras – Code of Conduct

MAHRAS

The Mahras are a tribal people made up of around 25 larger tribes and many smaller tribes. They do not have a written language, but they have an amazing tribal code of conduct. This is an unwritten code of conduct, but it governs tribal interactions and conflict management.

The Mahra Code of Conduct rests on five principles:

- Tribal conflicts will arise. When an outsider comes with any conflict against a Mahra tribe/person, the Mahras will side with the Mahras, not the outsider.
- Blood is thicker than water. Strife and violence with one Mahra against another Mahra does happen but is considered taboo. Violence between Mahra clans is almost inconceivable.
- Bearing arms does not mean they will use them. The display of arms is a sign that the tribe is able to cause a heavy toll on another tribe or outsider. It is good to count the costs of conflict and to understand the wisdom of compromise.
- When armed conflict between Mahra tribes does occur, the spoils of victory do not go to the victor. The victorious party is obliged to financially compensate its adversary for its losses. Victory can be very burdensome.
- There are very active mediations between the Mahras. When there is conflict, the Mahra tribes try to resolve it as soon as possible before things become too severe.



Yemeni fishing boats

MAHRAS

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:17-21

Prayer Points

1. Currently, the biggest issues facing the Mahras are:

- Saudi religious influence in the Mahra schools in Yemen.
- Saudi troops in eastern Yemen closing borders with Oman.
- Saudis have alliances with some Yemeni Mahra tribes, thus causing division between the Mahras.
- There are 250,000 internally displaced Yemeni in eastern Yemen seeking a place of peace. The Mahra area remains relatively peaceful and economically stable compared to the rest of Yemen.

Pray that the Mahra Code of Conduct will guide them with these outside challenges and help bring peace to all of Yemen and an end to the war.

2. Praise God that the Mahra Code of Conduct is designed to keep and maintain peace. Pray that the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ would be seen by the Mahras to line up with their Code of Conduct and bring even greater peace.



We do not know how many Mahra believers there are. There are stories of God leading Christians to meet a few Mahra believers in Al Mahra. By faith we believe that more Mahras are coming to know Him. The main reason for this prayer guide is because God is starting to bring worshipers to Himself among the Mahras. We ask the Father that more Mahras come to know Jesus Christ.

Some Mahras have been able to leave their homeland and travel to larger cities for education and work. Some of these Mahras came to know the Lord Jesus, but in going back to their homes they faced persecution. The Mahra tribes are 100% Sunni Muslim. As soon as Mahras profess their faith in Jesus Christ, they may face persecution. They could lose their jobs, their families and even their lives. Because of this, Mahra believers will probably be secret believers, not even letting the family know of their love for Jesus. If they have a Bible it would be in Arabic, which is not their mother tongue. They do not have a Bible or scripture portion in Mehri. We know of no Christian radio or TV program in their language.

For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you [every Mahra believer] with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you [every Mahra believer], being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you [every Mahra believer] may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21



Prayer Points

1. Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 over Mahra believers in Jesus.
2. Pray for Mahra believers in Jesus to be able to stand strong in their faith, to find fellowship with other believers, and that their lives in Jesus would grow deeper.
3. Pray for any Mahra believers who are facing persecution right now. May they feel the presence and power of the Lord Jesus in their life and may the Lord wrap His arms around them. Take some time to read and pray through these verses: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, 1 Thessalonians 3:3-4
4. Pray for Mahra believers to boldly share their faith with their family and friends. Matthew 10:16-18
5. Ask the Lord to call committed servant believers, even Arab believers, to share the love of Christ with the Mahras in Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Lord, send out laborers.
6. Pray for the traditional Muslim culture among the Mahras to be softened and doors to open up for the Gospel. Pray for families to come to know the Lord Jesus together. Pray for clans and tribes to hear of Him and come to Him.
7. Pray for the more than 25 different tribes and families and clans to hear the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and to call on Him as Lord.
8. Pray for the Father's kingdom to come and His will be done among the Mahra tribes.



There are only a few secret believers in Al Mahrah. It is hard for them to get to know each other because they are very fearful to meet together. Many of them are afraid to tell others about their newfound faith. Many feel lonely and isolated. Some are illiterate, but if they can read and have an Arabic Bible, it is hard for them to grow in their faith because Arabic is not their mother tongue.

There is currently no Mehri church in Al Mahrah.

For the Mahras, sitting together over a cup of coffee is very important and brings much joy; this is part of their daily life. Perhaps a few believers could meet over a cup of coffee and enjoy newfound life together. May they find community in meeting together. Maybe this group could read a little of His Word in Arabic and then translate it into Mehri, enjoying fellowship in their mother tongue.

Let us pray for a church to be established among the Mahras.

Simon Peter answered,

“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church [among the Mahra], and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:16-18

*To the church of God in Corinth [Al Mahrah],
to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all
those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and
ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 Corinthians 1:2-3



The Empty Quarter – Saudi Arabia

Prayer Points

1. Pray for His grace and peace to rest on the Mahra believers.
2. Pray that Mahra believers would be strong and bold witnesses. May they enjoy fellowship with other believers, praying together and encouraging one another.
3. Pray that Mahra believers would translate and speak Bible verses in Mehri to one another and bring the Gospel in the Mehri language into the Mahra community. Pray that God's word would move forward powerfully among them.
4. Pray that God would reveal Himself to the sheiks (the leaders of the tribes) through visions and dreams or by sending believers into their lives.
5. Pray that Mahra families and tribes would come to Christ together!
6. Pray for good teachers of His Word to be trained up among the Mahras.
7. Take time to pray the following Scriptures over the Mahras.



Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—and all the brothers and sisters with me, to the churches in Galatia [Mahra]: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Galatians 1:1-5

Paul, Silas and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians [Mahra] in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. We always thank God for all of you [Mahra] and continually mention you in our prayers. We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-6