



June 2017

where transformation happens

Middle East North Africa— New Frontiers for CBSI

If you are even remotely up to date on current events, you know that the Middle East and North Africa have a huge impact on the rest of the world. But what you may not know is that God has opened doors for Community Bible Study International to focus on this region.

CBS has already had a presence in Africa and, to a much lesser extent, the Middle East. But God has recently arranged people and events to create an unprecedented opportunity for CBS to work in this part of the world.

This opportunity is so strategic that CBS is creating a whole new region to coordinate the work. From a cultural, societal, political, and spiritual perspective, it makes more sense for North Africa to be aligned with the Middle East than it does for it to be connected to sub-Saharan Africa. This new CBS region is called “Middle East North Africa,” or “MENA.”

There are different configurations of the region, depending on who is doing the configuring. Some have defined the region broadly, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, and more countries in North Africa. In time, we hope to expand CBSI into all of these countries.



Countries located within the Middle East North Africa Region.

High Risk, Huge Opportunity

There's so much I wish I could tell you about the MENA Region. But I can't. As you know, MENA is a highly volatile area of the world—especially as it relates to religious streams. The three largest are Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. There are serious conflicts between the faithful of these three religions, but even within the religions themselves, there are factions. Within Islam, for example, Shia and Sunni Muslims often experience tensions and friction.

The bottom line is that this is a very challenging environment for CBS to operate in—as well as potentially dangerous. This explains why I cannot get too specific with details. I can't tell you who is doing what. And I can't say exactly where things are being done or how.

What I can say is we believe *CBS must be deeply invested in the MENA Region*. Here's why.

Historically—MENA was the birthplace of humanity. It has always been the crossroads of civilization. Major movements—both constructive and destructive—have flowed in all directions through the region.

Culturally—MENA continues to be a fount and fulcrum of national, social, racial, religious, and artistic significance. Much of Western society has been influenced by this region.

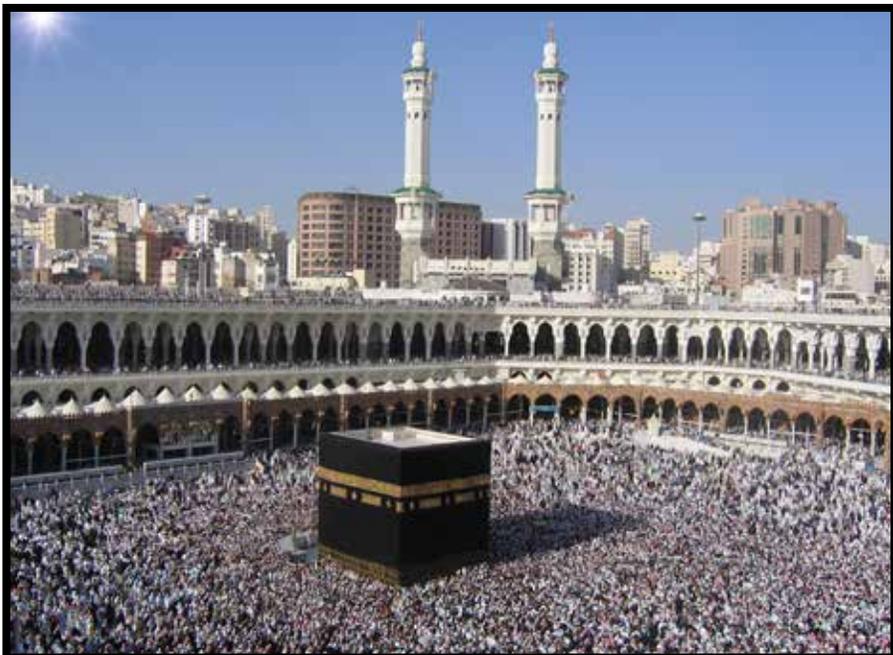
Politically—Past and present world and religious leaders have invested huge amounts of time, energy, and money in MENA.

Biblically—The Garden of Eden was in MENA. God called Abram in MENA. Jesus was born in MENA and will return to MENA. The early church started in MENA. The MENA Region has been and will be at the epicenter of biblical history, current affairs, and future events.

How We Are Investing

- We have a new Regional Director for MENA. He is ethnically tied to the region and is deeply invested in reaching people in and from the MENA Region.
- We are making a serious commitment to the translation of CBSI materials into the Arabic and Hebrew languages.
- We are looking for ways to offer CBS community to people who live in countries closed to or restricted from conventional Christian activity.
- We are currently developing and praying for ways to fund this new region.

I hope that you will be as excited about all God is doing in the MENA Region as I am. Please ... *Give your attention* to what is happening in the Middle East and North Africa. *Give space* for the Holy Spirit to lead your response. *Give prayer time* to ask God to provide the resources needed to match these extraordinary opportunities. *Give financially* as God leads you to support our new initiatives in the region. *Give thanks* for the privilege we have to bring God's hope and peace to the precious people of this region.



More than a million Muslims make a yearly pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. They come to the Grand Mosque that surrounds Islam's holiest place, the Kaaba (black building). Islam is the second-largest world religion with 1.8 billion followers (Pew Research Center).



With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith".

Keith Spartzak
International Director

