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# BRIDGES FOR PEACE

## *Israel Teaching Letter*

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# The Christian Stake in the Return to Zion

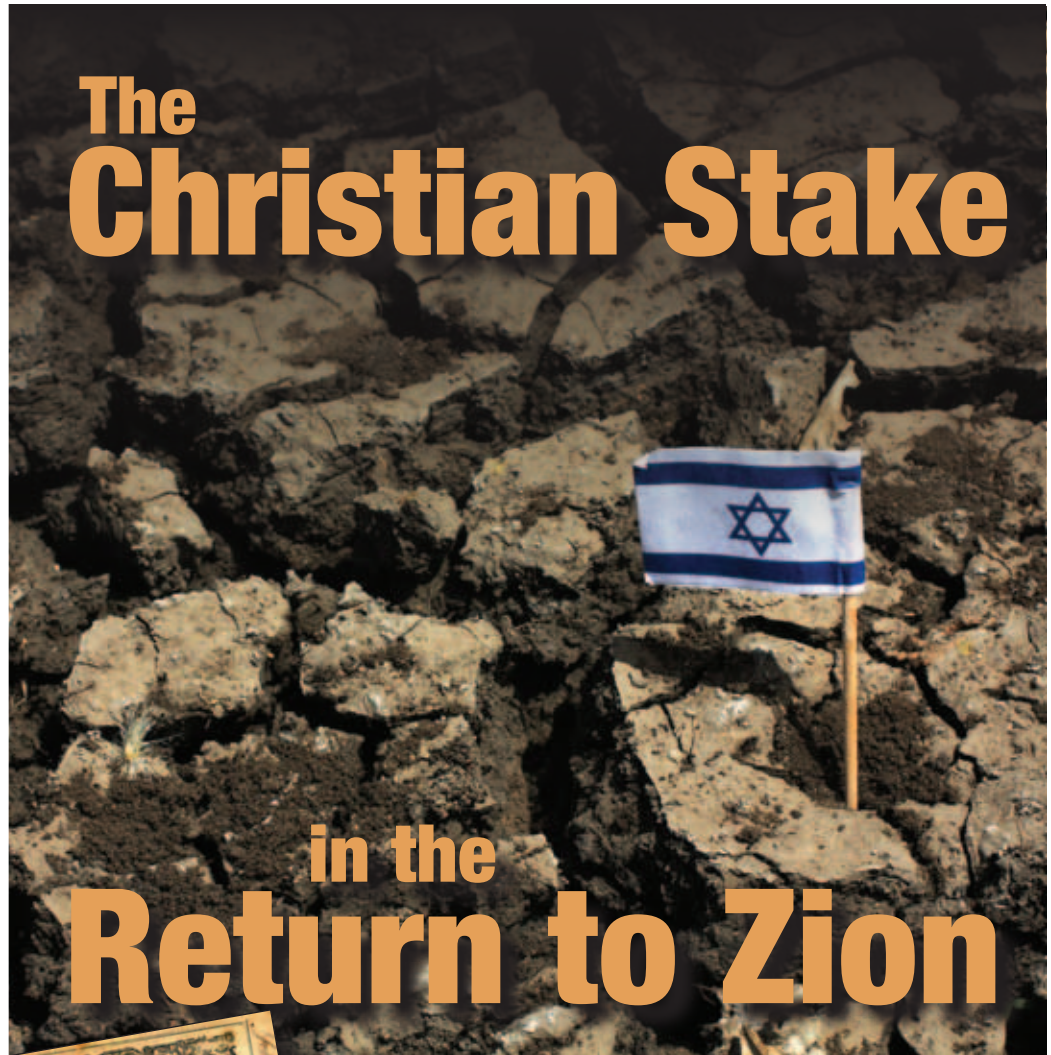


# The Christian Stake

## in the Return to Zion



Buchenwald survivors arrive in Haifa.



King James Bible, 1613

**DRIVE A STAKE INTO THE DIRT**, and you claim some right to that real estate. Beyond a splintered spike, your stake is an “interest or share in an undertaking or enterprise” (Merriam-Webster). The Jewish people have an eternal and irrevocable stake in the land of Israel. Christians who explore their heritage discover that they too have a share in, and responsibility for, Zion. Former Israeli diplomat Michael Pragai insists, “Christians *do* have a stake in the Return. The restoration of the Jewish People to their homeland *is* part of a Christian understanding of God’s purpose in the world.” What accounts for this common interest in the Promised Land shared by Jews and Christians?

We cannot underestimate the influence of the English Bible. Its spread across the globe, courtesy of the British Empire, ensured that many generations would discover that what God promised Israel He would accomplish. Three English translations—Wycliffe in 1382, Tyndale in 1526, and Coverdale in 1535—heralded a new possibility in Christian understanding of Zion.

Historian Paul Wilkinson explains, “A new era had dawned, the Bible having been ‘exhumed from the neglect of centuries’ and, through the printing revolution, made affordable and accessible to the common people.” Exactly 400 years ago, the publication of the 1611 *King James Version* cemented the bond between English-speaking peoples and the people of Israel. Matthew Arnold, British poet and critic, said of this: “The Bible linked the genius and history of us English to the genius and history of the Hebrew people.”

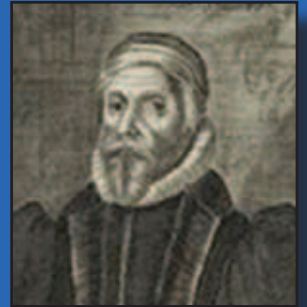
Today, our Jewish neighbors ask us, "Why, after so many centuries of despising us, do you Christians now love us so much?" That's a fair question. It points to motive: What is really motivating Christians to partner with the Jews in their return to Zion? The answer is not "what" but "who." It is the God of Israel who is moving the hearts of Christians to do the right thing regarding His ancient people. All end-times speculation aside, sincere concern for Jewish well-being has been increasing over recent centuries as Christians have been reading and believing their Bible. God's book is full of promises for Jewish restoration to their land and to their God. Throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament, Christians have come to know the God of Israel and to love His people, the family of our Savior, Yeshua (Jesus) of Nazareth.

Today, Christian Zionists err in thinking we are generating something new under the sun. Our Zionist forebears, previously divorced from the Holy Scriptures because they weren't available to the common people, discovered that God still had a plan for Israel and that Gentiles had a stake in it. We who stand today as watchmen on the walls of Zion balance on the broad shoulders of those who prayed, studied, showed mercy, spoke out, suffered ridicule, and died for the cause of Zion. Their centuries-long story must be told. The historical sampling of churchmen, statesmen, and soldiers that follows recalls some of the words and deeds of those "of whom the world was not worthy" (Heb. 11:38).

## Churchmen on the Walls of Zion

**Thomas Brightman** (1562–1607)—Much Zionist history centers on the British Empire and the Church of England. Brightman, a Puritan who was considered the father of the British effort to restore the Jews to their homeland, asked in 1611, "Shall they [the Jews] return to Jerusalem

**It is the God of Israel who is moving the hearts of Christians to do the right thing regarding His ancient people.**



Thomas Brightman



Pro-Israel rally



First Youth Aliyah group (c.1933)

### The Balfour Declaration

Foreign Office,  
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

*Yours sincerely,  
Arthur Balfour*



Richard Hurd



Robert Murray McCheyne



Charles H. Spurgeon



William Blackstone



Pope Benedict XV

again? There is nothing more certain: the prophets do everywhere confirm it and beat upon it." What an apt description of the prophets on the subject of Jewish return and restoration: They "beat upon it!" The heart of God beats on it too, and that is where the prophets got the idea.

**Johanna Cartwright**—In 1649, Cartwright, another Puritan, called for a repeal of the act of Parliament that banished the Jews from England. She was a pioneer in Jewish-Christian relations, for she reached out to actually get to know some Jewish people. From that, came a heart cry: "By discourse with them [Jewish friends], and serious perusal of the Prophets, both they and we find that the time of her call draweth nigh, and that this Nation of England shall be the first and readiest to transport Israel's sons and daughters in their ships to the land promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for an everlasting inheritance."

**Joseph Eyre**—Mainstream Christian theology of the day denied future Jewish restoration, preferring an allegorical treatment of Israel in Scripture. This approach, long applied to the disciples' question in Acts 1:6 regarding Yeshua restoring the kingdom to Israel, needed a courageous response. One voice "crying in the wilderness" was clergyman Joseph Eyre who declared in 1771, "If therefore the kingdom is never to be restored to Israel, our Lord here informed his Apostles that God had put in His own power the times and seasons of that which was never to happen; but this manner of speaking is inconsistent with common sense: how much more so with divine wisdom!"

**Richard Hurd** (1720–1808), an Anglican bishop, marveled at the very existence of the Jews after centuries of persecution and endless attempts at their annihilation. He concluded this was no accident or circumstance of fate. In 1772, he said, "All this hath something prodigious about it which could be none other but what He has spoken through his prophets of their destiny in the Latter Days when He would gather them to their ancient land and to himself in true faith."

**Robert Murray McCheyne** (1813–1843)—After visiting the land of Israel in the early 19th century, this Scottish Presbyterian clergyman returned home to preach a message that launched a revival. His message declared a priority that came with conviction for the ancient people of God: "To care first for the Jews is to glorify God. The whole Bible shows that God has a special affection for Israel. Some, of course, would say God is finished with Israel. But the whole Bible contradicts such an idea. Did God reject His people? By no means. They will give life to a dead world."

**Charles H. Spurgeon** (1834–1892)—England's premier preacher of the mid-19th century looked into the future and spoke with certainty of the Return: "We do not think enough of it, but certainly if anything is promised in the Bible then it is this. I imagine it is impossible for you to read the Bible without seeing clearly that there is an actual restoration of the Children of Israel. Thither shall they go up. They shall come with weeping unto Zion, and with supplications unto Jerusalem. May that happy day come soon."

**William Blackstone**—In 1891, this evangelist collected over 400 signatures of influential Americans on a petition to US President Harrison. It called on him to convene a conference to examine the struggle of the Jews in the Return. Blackstone offered this interpretation of the Jewish peoples' survival: "Their wonderful preservation, as a distinct people, through all the persecutions, vicissitudes and wanderings of the past eighteen centuries down to the present moment, is a standing miracle, attesting the truth of God's word, and assuring us of His purposes in their future history."

**Pope Benedict XV** (1854–1922)—Most of the Zionist heritage we are tracking is Protestant. What of the Catholics? Lest we think the Roman Church was completely silent, consider this pope's words to Dr. Nahum Sokolow at his 1917 audience: "The revival of Israel through the people of Israel...1,900 years ago Rome destroyed your homeland, and today, when you seek to rebuild it, you have chosen a path which leads via Rome! Yes, this is the will of Divine Providence, this is what the Almighty desires...this is a great idea."

Fourteen Anglican and three Catholic bishops wrote of their support for the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The Bishop of Lincoln expressed their collective sentiment: "What lover of Scripture and what friend of freedom can help rejoicing at the prospect of the Hebrew people returning to their own land again? God speed them. They have long been divorced from their land; once more they will become a nation of yeoman farmers and make the Holy Land fruitful and prosperous and the home of a free and happy people." They were right, but even they could not imagine how spiritually and naturally fruitful the people, sown back in the Land, would be.

## Statesmen for Zion

**Sir Henry Finch** (1558–1625)—Go back to 1621 and you will find a jurist, Member of Parliament, and Hebrew scholar speaking out for Zion. Catch a vision of what this biblically informed statesman saw as he spoke to the Jews’ future: “Out of all the places of thy dispersion, East, West, North and South, His purpose is to bring thee home again and to marry thee to Himself by faith for evermore.”

**Lord Shaftesbury** (1801–1885) was an aristocrat who believed the Bible from cover to cover. Guided by the great commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, he cared for the poor and underprivileged and served as president of the British and Foreign Bible Society. He always referred to the Jews as “God’s ancient people” and wore a ring engraved with the words “Oh, pray for the peace of Jerusalem!” Shaftesbury wrote in his 1838 diary: “The ancient city of the people of God is about to resume a place among the nations, and England is the first of the Gentile kingdoms that ceases to tread her down!” He was making reference to Yeshua’s (Jesus’) prophecy of the limited “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24).

**James Finn** was British consul in Jerusalem 1845–1862. Anglicans with deep scriptural roots, Finn and his wife trained people for the literal building up of Zion. Finding that the Jews had no masonry skills, Elizabeth Finn employed an Arab from Bethlehem to train them, but only on the condition that he promised to treat the Jews well. The Finns also promoted agricultural development, land reclamation, and development of acreage they purchased near Jerusalem that thrives to this day as Kerem Avraham (Abraham’s Vineyard).

**William Hechler** (1845–1931), of English–German descent, grew up devoted to the restoration of the Jews. As British chaplain to the embassy in Vienna, he met and befriended Theodor Herzl. Confidant and trusted advisor to Herzl, Hechler came to be known as the “foreign minister” of the Zionists’ cause. His actions sprang from a heart of devotion to the Jewish people; he assisted pogrom victims in Russia, participated in the Zionist Congress, wrote *The Restoration of the Jews to Palestine According to the Prophets*, and arranged Herzl’s meeting European royalty. This man of state and faith knew back in 1896 that the Jewish state would be reborn. “For come it must according to the Prophets and most certainly it will become a great blessing to the whole world.”

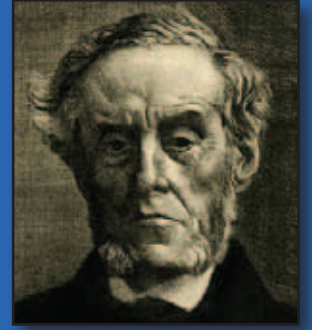
As Theodor Herzl lay dying in 1904, he asked that his friend Hechler not be forgotten for all he did for Zionism. Sadly, Hechler was forgotten and buried in the unmarked grave of a London pauper. But he is forgotten no longer as his grave recently bears a tombstone with this eulogy from the Jewish people: A Lover of God, His Word, and His Ancient People, Tireless Adversary of Anti-Semitism, Friend and Counselor of Theodor Herzl. Jerry Klinger of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation paid profound tribute: “Without Hechler’s intercession and support, Herzl may have simply remained an obscure, eccentric Viennese journalist. The course of Zionism, and possibly the very founding of the modern State of Israel, may not have been successful.”

**Lord Arthur James Balfour** (1848–1930)—When the fullness of time came for Zion’s gates to swing wide for Zion’s people, God raised up British Foreign Minister Balfour (later prime minister). Famed for his 1917 declaration of Britain’s intent to establish a “national home for the Jewish people,” Balfour had nurtured a Hebraic-root faith since childhood. His biographer noted, “As he grew up his intellectual admiration and sympathy for certain aspects of Jewish philosophy and culture grew also and the problem of the Jew in the modern world seemed to him of immense importance. He always talked eagerly on this and I remember in childhood imbibing from him the idea that Christian religion and civilization owes to Judaism an immeasurable debt, shamefully ill repaid.”

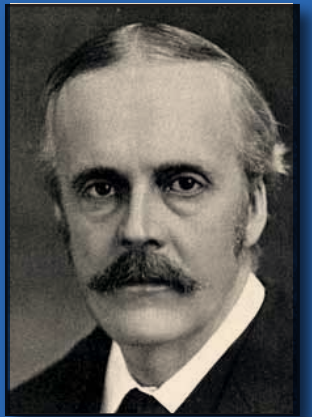
**Winston Churchill** (1874–1965)—We cannot imagine England saved from the Nazi onslaught without the leadership of this great statesman. Also hard to imagine is the existence of the Jewish state without this lifelong Zionist. He drove his personal and political stake in the ground of Zion. Demonstrating over a long career his true sympathies for the Jewish people, Churchill declared in 1920, “Some like Jews and some do not, but no thoughtful man can doubt the fact that they are beyond all question the most remarkable race which has ever appeared in the world.”

**US President Harry S. Truman** (1884–1972)—Statehood arrived for Israel on May 14, 1948. The first among the nations to give the reborn Jewish sovereignty de facto recognition was Truman. His swift action was predicated on his lifelong exposure to the Bible with its many

All pictures by www.wikipedia.org



Lord Shaftesbury



Lord Arthur James Balfour



Winston Churchill



US President Harry S. Truman

promises for Jewish restoration. Truman saw himself as a modern “Cyrus,” king of ancient Persia who restored the Jews from the Babylonian captivity.

**Dr. Jorge Garcia-Granados** (1900–1961), the Guatemalan ambassador to the UN, was the second head of state to recognize the nascent Jewish state. He was “a stout Catholic, brought up on Scripture, to whom faith and tradition were integral” writes Michael Pragai, and he was God’s man for the hour. An unswerving vocal ally of the Jewish cause, Granados was the first to proclaim the state of Israel before the General Assembly of the United Nations.

## Soldiers Standing with Zion

Many know of Jewish philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore who founded the first settlement in Jerusalem outside the city walls. The stately windmill of Yemin Moshe graces the community to this day. But who knows of the British Army officer, a senior commander at Waterloo, who accompanied Montefiore on his first visit to Jerusalem?

**Colonel George Gawler** (1795–1869) was a committed Christian who, in 1845, assessed the desperate need for agricultural settlement in the Land. The Ottoman Turks who ruled the region had forbidden Jewish ownership of land, as had most societies for centuries, thus rendering the Jews nearly void of agricultural skills. Gawler organized agricultural training for Jerusalem’s residents and advocated agriculture for societal and military strength: “I should be truly rejoiced to see in Palestine [the name for Israel at the time] a strong guard of Jews established and flourishing agricultural settlements and ready to hold their own upon the mountains of Israel against all aggressors. I can wish for nothing more glorious in this life than to have my share in helping them do so.”

**Major General Sir Charles Wilson** (1836–1905) was another army man who claimed his share of responsibility for restoration; he was the topographer who discovered the Temple Mount supporting structure known today as “Wilson’s Arch.” Guided by Scripture, Wilson prayerfully walked every inch of Jerusalem to produce the first accurate map of the Holy City in 1866. Pragai said of him, “Wilson had the foresight to begin a modern study of the Bible land, and its geography and people. The Jews were rediscovered as a people and as a nation.”

**Lieutenant Colonel John Henry Patterson** (1867–1947) grew up in Ireland and in the Bible. In 1917, he took command of the Jewish Legion, the first Jewish fighting unit since Bar Kochba fought the Romans in the first century AD. Of their fight, Patterson mused, “The part played by such a unique unit is assured a niche in history owing to the fact that it fought in Palestine, not only for the British cause, but also for the Restoration of the Jewish people to the Promised Land.”

**General Edmund Allenby** (1861–1936) was God’s man for the hour when the time came for the forces of Islam to deliver the land of Israel over to its people. Amazingly, the agency of that transfer was the Christian world, most influenced by Great Britain’s military might in the Great War. Marshaled from the ends of the earth, 17,000 brave sons of “Christian” nations died to reopen the Jewish homeland for its native sons and daughters. Unlike conquerors before him, Allenby dismounted his horse and walked through the Jaffa Gate in 1917, careful to be less in stature than his Lord, who had ridden in on a donkey.

**Captain Charles Orde Wingate** (1903–1944)—If only a movie like *Lawrence of Arabia* was made of “Wingate of Judea”! Wingate is a name integral to the Israeli culture. In 1936, he organized Jewish resistance against growing Arab terror that was trying to force them off the land. A soldier of strong biblical faith, Wingate expressed his view on the source of Zionism’s authority: “There is only one important book on the subject, the Bible, and I have read it thoroughly.”

This hero of modern Jewish warriors exhorted his brothers in arms: “I believe that the very existence of mankind is justified when it is based on the moral foundation of the Bible. Whoever dares lift a hand against you and your enterprise here should be fought against. Whether it is jealousy, ignorance, or perverted doctrine such as have made your neighbors rise against you, or ‘politics’ which make some of my countrymen support them, I shall fight with you against any of these influences.”

Such men of conviction were God’s grafted-in agents to facilitate the Return to Zion of His covenanted people Israel. All the glory is His.



Colonel George Gawler



Major General Sir Charles Wilson



General Edmund Allenby



Captain Charles Orde Wingate



Unlike conquerors before him, Allenby dismounted his horse and walked through the Jaffa Gate in 1917, careful to be less in stature than his Lord, who had ridden in on a donkey.

## Pillars of Zion

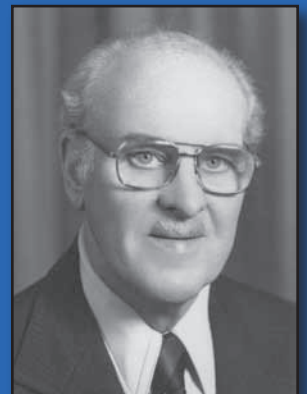
There are those of more recent history who staked their lives, their families, and their ministries on assisting the Jewish people in the rebuilding of Zion. Two are due special recognition as pillars on which Bridges for Peace rests:

**Dr. G. Douglas Young** (1910–1980)—Canadian theologian, educator, Semitic scholar, and “Worthy of Jerusalem” recipient, Young made himself and his wife permanent residents of Israel. In 1958, he founded the Institute of Holy Land Studies on Mount Zion (today known as Jerusalem University College) to bring Bible students from around the globe to study Israel in context.

Ridiculed by those who failed to see Israel’s place today, Young responded, “I have been accused of being a Zionist, a Christian Zionist, by some of my co-religionists in Israel...I would like to take this means of thanking them for this compliment. In spite of being a Christian, my Jewish friends in Israel and elsewhere have labeled me a Christian Zionist, and for this, I want to thank them, too, and to let them know what a warm feeling this gives me. I feel sorry for my Christian friends and apologize for some of them, who are silent and have not identified publicly with Zionism.”

In 1976, Dr. Young founded Bridges for Peace which has grown to be a worldwide organization that teaches Christians to identify with Israel while extending tangible gifts of love to the needy ones of the Return.

**Dr. David Allen Lewis** (1932–2007)—Prolific author, prophecy scholar and unflinching Israel proponent, Lewis worked tirelessly to build God-honoring relationships between Christians and Jews. Moshe Aumann—minister-counselor for Relations with the Churches at the US Israeli



Dr. G. Douglas Young



Dr. David Allen Lewis

Let us make sure  
the stake that  
Christian Zionists  
so firmly planted  
before us is not  
uprooted in our  
generation.

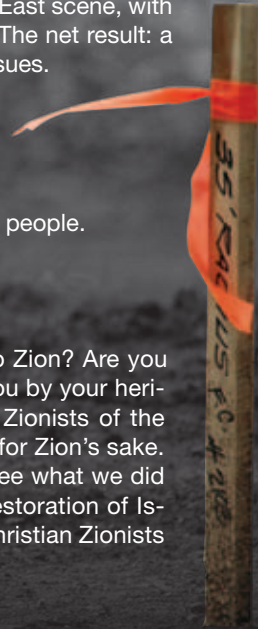
embassy at the time—attested that “Dr. Lewis was a genuine friend to the people of Israel. Beyond that, he was an astute observer of the Middle East scene, with a remarkable ability to size up the situation at any given time. The net result: a better exposure of the truth and a wider understanding of the issues. David Lewis was a blessing to many; he will be sorely missed by many. But his blessed work goes on.”

Indeed Dr. Lewis’s work goes on. It is his daughter, Rebecca Brimmer, who leads the work of Bridges for Peace in showing unconditional love and mercy to Israel and the Jewish people.

## Conclusion

Christian, are you convinced of *your* stake in the return to Zion? Are you willing to step up to the privilege *and* responsibility handed you by your heritage? If so, then stand on the broad shoulders of Christian Zionists of the last several centuries as you pray, give, serve, and speak out for Zion’s sake. Should Messiah tarry, generations after us will look back to see what we did to cooperate with God’s magnificent plan for the complete restoration of Israel and the Jewish people. Let us make sure the stake that Christian Zionists so firmly planted before us is not uprooted in our generation.

Rev. Bill Adams  
US Deputy National Director



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All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.