

The Scrolls

Helping CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N17

April 24, 2022

WAY OUT

"The Lord will Fight for You" Exodus 13:17-14:31

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1-2





God was involved in and cared about the daily lives of the descendants of Abraham through Jacob, his people. The evidence for this is overwhelming. In the first place, God made a promise to Abraham. He called him from Ur and promised to make him into a great nation, to bless him, to make his name great, and to make him a blessing to everyone on earth (Ge 12:1-3; ca. 2091 B.C.). Later, he formalized his promise in a covenant, about which the Bible says, "On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, 'To your descendants I give this land, from the Wadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates'" (15:18). The Patriarchs took the covenant seriously. Before moving to Egypt, God promised to make Jacob a great nation there and bring him back to the land following his death (46:3-4; ca. 1876 B.C.), so two decades later (ca. 1859 B.C.) his dying wish was to be buried in Canaan (49:29-30). Fifty years later (ca. 1805 B.C.), Joseph followed in his father's footsteps, demanding that his bones also be carried to Canaan when God came to rescue his people (50:24-25).

God's commitment to his promise and ongoing involvement in the lives of his covenant people is manifest clearly in the events recorded in the book of Exodus. The Israelites' escape from Egypt was not their own doing. They didn't devise and then execute a cunning scheme to outsmart Pharaoh. They didn't concoct and then put in place a failsafe plan to emancipate themselves. Their deliverance was wholly Yahweh's doing. He was the one who providentially spared the life of baby Moses (Ex 2), whom he later sent to Pharaoh to bring the sons of Jacob out of Egypt (3:10). And knowing that hard-hearted Pharaoh would not let them go unless "a mighty hand" compelled him to do so, God said, "I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go" (v. 20). So after orchestrating political changes in Egypt (2:23-25) that prepared the way for Moses' return and set the stage for a contest with the gods of Egypt, Yahweh displayed his power to Pharaoh, performing miracles and bringing one plague after another on the Egyptians, while making a distinction between them and the Israelites. Was Yahweh not directly involved in and did he not care about the Israelites' lives? After all, did he not say this to Pharaoh? "If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on

you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies; even the ground will be covered with them. But on that day, *I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live*; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that *I*, the LORD, am in this land. *I will make a distinction between my people and your people"* (8:21-23).

That said, God's commitment to his promise and ongoing involvement in the lives of his covenant people is manifest *most* clearly in the crossing of the Red Sea. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites camped in Sukkoth on the edge of the Desert of Shur, being led by a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (13:20-21). Afterward, instead of continuing eastward, the LORD directed the people to backtrack as if they either intended to return to Egypt or had lost their way. One commentator explains the method behind the LORD's madness. "Yahweh's first intention was to give the appearance that Israel, fearful of the main road, then fearful of the wilderness, was starting first one way and then another, not knowing where to turn and so a ready prey for recapture or destruction. Yahweh's second intention was to lure the Egyptians into a trap, first by making Pharaoh's mind obstinate once again, and then by defeating Pharaoh and his forces, who were certain to come down in vengeance upon an apparently helpless and muddled Israel" (John I. Durham, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3, Exodus, 187). To these two, a third might be added. Yahweh's third intention was to instill confidence in the Israelites. They needed to put their trust in him and in his servant Moses in preparation for their journey through the wilderness to Canaan (14:31). In no time, God had them, both the Egyptians and the Israelites, right where he wanted them, that is, where they would both see the "deliverance" he intended to bring (v. 13), a deliverance that would bring very different outcomes for the two. With their backs to the sea and the Egyptians bearing down on them, the Israelites were terrified, expecting to die (vv. 10-13). But the LORD drove back the sea, allowing them to cross over on dry ground, and then caused it to flow back over the Egyptian army (see 15:1 -11; cf. Ps 77:15-20). "When the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (v. 31).

EXAMINE GOD'S WORD



Read Exodus 13:17-14:31 Consider these selected portions

20-22 After leaving Sukkoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. 21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. 22 Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

14:1-4 Then the LORD said to Moses, 2 "Tell the Israelites to turn back and encamp near Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. They are to encamp by the sea, directly opposite Baal Zephon. 3 Pharaoh will think, 'The Israelites are wandering around the land in confusion, hemmed in by the desert.' 4 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD." So the Israelites did this.

10-14 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. 11 They said to Moses, "Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? 12 Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"

13 Moses answered the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. 14 The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still."

19-31 Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, 20 coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

23 The Egyptians pursued them, and all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen followed them into the sea. 24 During the last watch of the night the LORD looked down from the pillar of fire and cloud at the Egyptian army and threw it into confusion. 25 He jammed the wheels of their chariots so that they had difficulty driving. And the Egyptians said, "Let's get away from the Israelites! The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt."

26 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may flow back over the Egyptians and their chariots and horsemen." 27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at daybreak the sea went back to its place. The Egyptians were fleeing toward it, and the LORD swept them into the sea. 28 The water flowed back and covered the chariots and horsemen — the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed the Israelites into the sea. Not one of them survived.

29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. 30 That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. 31 And when the Israelites saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "pillar of cloud" and "pillar of fire" in 13:21, 22.
- Circle "turn back" in 14:1.
- Circle "harden" in v. 4.
- Number the three *rhetorical* questions in vv. 11, 12.
- Underline "no graves" in v. 11.
- Highlight v. 14.
- Underline "be still" in v. 14.
- Circle "sea" in vv. 21, 22.
- Circle "last watch" in v. 24.
- Highlight v. 25.
- Circle "trust" in v. 31.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What is one thing you do not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about ______"

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. After the Israelites left Egypt, God led them <i>southeast</i> by the desert toward the Red Sea (13:17) rather than <i>northeast</i> along the Mediterranean coastline (13:17). Why take the longer route to Canaan?
2. Regarding the pillar of cloud and fire (vv. 21-22), what did it represent and how did it function?
3. When the Israelites left Sukkoth, the LORD told them to "turn back" in the general direction from which they came (14:1). What was the LORD up to?
4. Verse 8 reads, "The LORD <i>hardened</i> the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt <i>so that</i> the pursued the Israelites." How did Yahweh do that?
5. What do verses 11-12 tell you about the Israelites and about yourself?
6. Put what verse 14 means in your own words.
7. What do you make of the <i>movement</i> of the angel of God?
8. The LORD didn't repeal the laws of nature but used them to accomplish his purpose. How so?
9. The people needed to <i>see</i> what they <i>saw</i> when they crossed the Red Sea (v. 31). Why?
10. Discussion: The LORD fought for his people then (14:14). Talk about the extent to which the same is true today.

EXPLORE RESOURCES



Commentary On The Text

Exodus 13:17-14:31 describes how the LORD fought for his people at the outset of their journey from Egypt to Canaan, parting the Red Sea, so that the Israelites might cross and the Egyptians might drown—portions of which are discussed below.

13:17-19 sets the stage for that climactic event. Rather than lead the Israelites toward Canaan along the most direct route, the LORD led them "around by the desert road toward the Red Sea" (13:18), not along the road "through the Philistine country." One commentator explains why: "'The way of the land of the Philistines' refers to the most northern of three routes travelers normally took from Egypt to Canaan (v. 17). The others lay farther south. The Egyptians had heavily fortified this caravan route, also called the Via Maris (the way of the sea). The Egyptians would have engaged Israel in battle had the chosen people gone that way" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Exodus," 2022 ed., 129, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/exodus. pdf), no doubt causing the Israelites to return to Egypt (cf. 14:11-12). What's more, the LORD planned to use the longer route taken as part of a ruse intended to harden Pharaoh's heart and ultimately defeat his army. Verse 19 anticipates Israel's deliverance and the fulfillment of God's promise to Jacob (Ge 50:25; cf. 15:13-18).

In 13:20-14:4 the LORD reveals the ruse to Moses. After leaving Sukkoth, where the Israelites camped first on their journey and Etham where they camped next (13:20), they reversed direction and headed back toward Egypt. Led by the presence of the LORD manifested in the pillar of cloud and fire (13:21-22), they encamped a third time by the sea (14:2). The circuitous route taken by them convinced Pharaoh that his runaway slaves had lost their way, making them easy prey for his army—just as the LORD had told Moses (v. 3). Having second thoughts regarding the loss of their services (v. 5), hard-hearted Pharaoh resolved to retrieve his runaways and return them to Egypt, so he mustered his army and set out in hot pursuit (vv. 6-9).

14:10-14 describes the response of the Israelites to seeing the Egyptians marching toward them. Pinned between the devil and the deep blue sea, the same people who boldly marched out of Egypt (v. 8) were now terrified, convinced they were about to die (v. 10). One commentator writes: "The reaction of Israel to the appearance of so formidable a force is understandable in view of their apparent assumption that they were rid of Pharaoh (v 8) and the entirely reasonable judgment that they have no chance of defending themselves (vv 11-12) against such a massive onslaught. They are frightened into a panic, and they cry out to Yahweh and protest to Moses. What they said to Yahweh (as also what Moses said to Yahweh, v 15) is not recorded, but their protest

to Moses is both poignant and humorous, and an anticipation of the murmuring and rebellion motif to come in the narrative of the wilderness journey, in both Exodus and Numbers" (John I. Durham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 3, *Exodus*, 191). Moses was unfazed by their sarcasm, assuring them they would soon see the last of these Egyptians. The Israelites could not defend themselves, but the LORD would fight for them. They simply need to stop grumbling.

14:19-31 describes the actual crossing of the sea, which would bring glory to Yahweh "through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen" (v. 18). First, the angel of God took up a defensive position, moving from in front of the Israelites to behind them, "coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel" (v. 20). "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left" (vv. 21-22). Two things are worth noting. First, the body of water they crossed was not the Gulf of Suez, the western arm of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Agaba being the eastern arm (see Leon Wood, A Survey of Israel's History, 130). The crossing was to the north somewhere between Lake Balah and the Bitter Lakes (see note). "This identification in no way militates against the miraculous character of the crossing, for the water here too is deep" (Wood, 130). Second, God didn't rescind the laws of nature in order to divide the waters of the Yam Suph, namely, the Sea of Reeds; rather, he employed the forces of nature to accomplish his purpose. The description of what God did is phenomenological. He used a strong east wind to drive back the water and dry the seabed, so the Israelites could cross (v. 21), and according to the psalmist, used other elements of nature to disable the Egyptians' chariots (v. 24-25). Psalm 77:16 -18 gives the more poetic description of what happened: "The waters saw you, God, the waters saw you and writhed; the very depths were convulsed. The clouds poured down water, the heavens resounded with thunder; your arrows flashed back and forth. Your thunder was heard in the whirlwind, your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked," - suggesting that God employed seismic forces as well. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea again, so that the waters flowed back over the Egyptians, who had rushed headlong into the sea after the Israelites (vv. 26-28). When God's people "saw the mighty hand of the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant" (v. 31) - something they desperately needed to do before continuing on their journey to Canaan.

Word Studies/Notes

vv. 21, 22 pillar of cloud, fire Cf. 3:2-6; 19:16-25. "The Hebrew means properly 'something standing', and therefore is more 'column' than 'pillar'. It is arguable that a continual presence of God is intended by the 'standing' concept. This symbol of God's presence may either guide and illuminate the way (as here) or protect from enemies (Ex. 14:19, 20)" (R. Alan Cole, Exodus, TOTC, 118). "Besides guiding them, the cloud, symbolizing God's presence, assured them of His goodness and faithfulness. (There was one cloud, not two; cf. Ex. 14:24)" (John D. Hannah, "Exodus," in The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament, 131). "What Moses had experienced at the thornbush aflame but unconsumed (3:2-3) Israel now experienced in exodus. Both experiences stand as an augury of what is to come in the great theophany of Exod. 19-20" (John I. Durham, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 3, Exodus, 186).

14:1 turn back "Turn back should mean a swing to the south, instead of a direct march eastwards. In any case, the Egyptians would interpret it as failure to find the direct route to Canaan" (Cole, 119), or a swing "northward in the general direction from which they had come" (The NIV Study Bible, note on Ex 14:2). In either case, the Egyptians would assume they were lost. "Yahweh guided his people away from the shortest and most logical route and into an eccentric series of turns designed to depict confusion, first of all because of an intention to trick and then to defeat Pharaoh . . . He set a puzzling route no man would have thought of, to confuse Pharaoh by an appearance of confusion and to win further and final glory for himself at Pharaoh's expense" (Durham, 187).

- v. 4 *harden* Baiting him was the means God used to harden Pharaoh, that is, to entice him to resolutely pursue the Israelites. Like a master chess player, God induces Pharaoh to move his king into checkmate without realizing it!
- v. 11 *no graves* "No graves: a bitter irony, in view of the abnormal preoccupation of the Egyptians with tombs (compare the similar obsession of the Nabataeans of Petra, and the Etruscans of Italy) but it is not likely that Israel meant it so. The situation was too tense for that" (Cole, 120).
- v. 14 *be still* Cf. "GoD will fight the battle for you. And you? You keep your mouths shut!" (MSG). Given their outburst at the sight of the Egyptians (vv. 11-12), this is not a word of comfort—"There, there. Don't worry. God will protect you"—intended to calm the Israelites, but a word of anger intended to denounce them.

See "Red Sea" (13:18; cf. vv. 21, 22 sea 14:2, 9, 16, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29). "The sea is called the Red Sea in 10:19; 13:18; 15:4, 22. 'Red Sea' (yam sup) is literally, 'Sea of [Papyrus] Reeds.' Several reasons indicate that this is farther north than the northern tip of the Gulf of Suez (the northwestern 'finger' of the Red Sea between Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula): (1) The Gulf of Suez has no reeds. (2) The northern tip of the Gulf of Suez is much farther south than Pi Hariroth and Migdol. (3) The area where the Israelites camped was marshy, but this is not true of the land west of the Gulf of Suez. (4) From 'the sea' the Israelites went east or southeast into the Desert of Shur (15:22), also called the Desert of Etham (Num. 33:8), in the northwestern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Possibly, then, the sea that the Lord dried up for the Israelites was Lake Balah (see the map 'Possible Route of the Exodus,' near Num. 33:1-5)" (Hannah, 131; see also Leon Wood, A Survey of Israel's History, 130) i.e., either the southern end of Lake Balah or the northern end of Lake Timsah, but not as far south as the Bitter Lakes region.

- v. 24 *last watch* "I Samuel 11:11 also mentions this, the last of the three watches, from 2 a.m. to dawn, about 6 a.m. This, the darkest hour before the dawn, was traditionally the time for attack, when men's spirits are at their lowest" (Cole, 122).
- v. 31 *trust* The people were redeemed on Passover night when by faith they placed the blood of the lamb on their doorposts. Here they put aside their doubts (vv. 11-12) and place their confidence in the Lord and in Moses. "The people needed to see for themselves God's power, and here they did. They saw most vividly what their God could do in controlling and redirecting forces of nature, and then employ them in turn to overthrow the world-renowned, mighty Egyptian army. The memory would have fortified the Israelites for meeting days of trial that lay ahead during the forty years of wilderness travel" (Leon Wood, A Survey of Israel's History, 135). "The people often fluctuated between trust and complaining, between belief and unbelief (4:31; 5:21; 14:10-12, 31; 15:24; 16:2-4; 17:2-3)" (Hannah, 132).

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Don't lose heart when you feel threatened because the LORD is with you and will fight to accomplish his plan for you.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The "Living Questions" are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Several years ago, I went to an aquarium with a huge glass tunnel where you could watch the sea creatures swim around. I remember being awed and amazed and then thinking, there's a quarter of an inch of glass separating me from a kazillion pounds of water and death (I may have watched too many action movies). Can you imagine what it would have been like to walk through the Red Sea? My vision of this historic event used to be a little two-foot-high wading pool with happy Israelites skipping along maybe taunting the Egyptians a bit. Sounds more like a Taylor Swift album cover, huh? Thankfully, a careful study of God's Word has changed my perspective and I pray that the magnitude of the miracles in the parting of the Red Sea never fails to overwhelm me—God appearing as fire and a cloud, Moses driving the water back with his staff, the dry land, walking on dry ground with walls of rushing water on both sides, God confusing the Egyptian army. Parents, this is amazing! We have the right and responsibility to share these incredible miracles with our kids, but we won't do it justice if we aren't carefully reading and studying God's Word. It's no secret that kids do as they see. Your model of awe and respect for the Bible is integral to your parenting and planting a seed of love for God's Word. Let your kids see you reading the Bible. Walk them through your questions and struggles. God wants you to invite your kids on your spiritual journey. We're praying for your family!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Exodus 13:17-14:31.

- 1. Why did God lead the people around the desert to the Red Sea?
- 2. How did God lead his people?
- 3. How did God make a way through the Red Sea?

What Do You Think?

What do you think it was like walking through a wall of rushing water?

What Do You Do?

Name five things you learn about God because of this story.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Romans 5:8

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

KidPIXCOUPON Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week. Questions: kids@wearecentral.org I completed my Bible Study I memorized this week's verse I brought my Bible to church I brought a friend CHILD'S NAME GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17) *I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15) *I choose to do the right things in my relation-ships with others*

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gosnel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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