

Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Terumah 5770

D'ei Chochmah L'nafshechah

“Let your soul know wisdom”

Parshas Terumah

From the discourses of Moreinu v'Rabeinu
the Gaon and Tzaddik Shlit'a

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"YAM HACHOCHMAH"
PUBLISHING INSTITUTE
P.O BOX 5245 JERUSALEM
TEL: 057-3153884 FAX: 15325388242
E-MAIL: tc7@neto.bezeqint.net

Shalosh Seudos¹ of Parshas Terumah 5768

”דַּבֵּר אֶל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְיִקְחוּ-לִי תְרוּמָה. מֵאֵת כָּל-אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִדְבְּנוּ לְבוֹ תִקְחוּ אֶת תְּרוּמָתִי.”

“Speak unto the children of Yisrael, that they take for Me an offering. Of every man whose heart makes him willing you shall take My offering.”²

Rashi explains: “**For Me**”—For My Name. The sages taught that there were three separate offerings referred to here: half a silver shekel per person from which the sockets were made, another half-shekel that went toward the purchase of animals for the public sacrifices, and the individual offerings of the thirteen different materials required for the *Mishkan* or the garments of the *kohanim* that each person was inspired to bring.

The *Mishkan* of the True *Tzaddik*

After the Jewish people sinned with the golden calf, Moshe Rabbeinu ascended to heaven to advocate on our behalf so that we would be forgiven. His appeal was what led to the command that we build the *Mishkan* toward which the Jewish people would have to contribute. The fundamental offering, however, is each person’s willingness to participate in the construction of Hashem’s dwelling place, a place for the honor of the *tzaddik* where Hashem’s presence will be revealed in the world. This is a fitting response to the sin that prompted the command for its construction, since the golden calf came about because the *erev rav* planted a seed of doubt among the Jewish people about Moshe’s return to them. “For the man Moshe who brought us up from Egypt, we know not what has become of him.”³ The *yetzer hara* misled them so that they would assume that the *tzaddik* had died, but their reaction should have been to redouble their faith and

¹ The lesson was delivered at the third meal of Shabbos.

² *Shemos* 25:2

³ *Ibid.*, 32:1

seek out the Torah of the *tzaddik* that must have forever remained with his brother Aharon HaKohein and with his student Yehoshua. The hidden agenda of the *erev rav* was to convince the Jewish people that, after the true *tzaddik* leaves this world, he does not leave anything of himself behind. And the Jewish people fell into their trap.

Yet Moshe Rabbeinu worked to reveal that which rectifies this failing down through all the generations to come—the *tikkun* of the *Mishkan*. The *Mishkan* embodies the principle that even after the true and original revelation of the *tzaddik* is gone, his *Mishkan* remains to be discovered in the *batei medrash* of his followers and students throughout future ages. Even in the exile, the *batei medrash* that are miniature sanctuaries remain, and through them we can experience the fullest connection with the *tzaddikim* of previous generations. “Make Me a sanctuary and I will dwell within them”—not within it, but within them. Hashem’s light which is revealed by the true *tzaddik* will be revealed within each and every one of us.⁴

No one should make the mistake of thinking that if he lived in a prior age or was somehow a different person his spiritual task or situation would be significantly altered. “I am Hashem, I have not changed.” There is no difference between then and now; Hashem dwells within each and every one of us at every time, in every place. At every moment we have the ability to connect with the point of the *tzaddik* and the ultimate truth. We see this from the narrative of what precipitated the sin of the golden calf itself; there was a brief period when it seemed as though Moshe Rabbeinu’s light had gone out, and the Jewish people were tested. Would they seek out his light among Aharon and Yehoshua even though it didn’t seem to be of the same quality or magnitude? Yet every person at any time can tap into the light of the *tzaddik* if he only seeks it out, if he believes that all of the holy efforts that the true *tzaddikim* made have not gone lost, G-d forbid. He must trust that they can still help him to rectify himself and build the holiness of the *Mishkan* and reveal that Hashem does indeed dwell within him.

⁴ See the commentary of the Alshich on *Shemos* 25:5.

The Three Offerings

We see in Rashi's commentary that there were three offerings, three *terumos*, because when a person wants to uplift his mind and soul [תרומה = הרמה] he must be worthy of the תורה מ'י, the Torah that was given in forty days [מ = 40] which is associated with *Binah*.⁵ [In *Avos* we find that, "One attains *Binah* at the age of forty," and the word *Binah* itself shares the root of *b'niyah* / building. In the Torah, all fundamental spiritual constructions take place through the medium of forty: forty days of rain to rebuild the world, forty days for the basic formation of the fetus, forty days to receive the Torah, etc.] Raising up the aspect of *Binah* means focusing on the contemplation of G-dliness. Like the *terumah*, this has three levels: that of the "beginning, middle, and end."

We find in the *Sefer Yetzirah*: "There are three 'mothers or building blocks'—*alef, mem, shin*—within the soul. They are the 'head, belly, and torso.' The head relates to the *alef* of *aish*-fire. The belly relates to the *mem* of *mayim*-water. And the torso is associated with the spirit that joins them."⁶ [The aspect of spirit-*ruach* is associated with *shin-shomayim*-heavens, just as the *shomayim* is a conjunction of *aish* and *mayim*.]

The head encompasses the mental faculties, the torso is the area of the chest, and the belly is from the chest downward. Every person has to focus on drawing down Hashem's greatness into these three areas of himself, and this is the real meaning of the verse, "Make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell within them." One's limbs must be a vessel upon which the *Shechinah* can rest, and then one becomes worthy of receiving the Torah that was given in forty days. The Jewish body has the potential holiness of the *Mishkan*, and its three parts exactly parallel the three parts of the sanctuary: the head and its *mochin* of *CHaBaD* is the *kodesh hakodashim* with its ark and *keruvim*; the torso which houses the spiritual and physical limbs of heart and lungs that embody the *sefiros* of *CHaGaT* is the *kodesh* with its menorah, incense altar and table; and the belly

⁵ *Zohar* III:179a

⁶ *Sefer Yetzirah* 3:5

embodies the area of *Netzah-Hod-Yesod*, which correspond to the laver with its stand and the outside altar, respectively.

The Voice from between the Keruvim

The true *tzaddikim* make their bodies into vehicles for the *Shechinah* in just this way, they “raise up the three offerings,” and this allows them to hear the heavenly voice that emerges from the two *keruvim*—they merit to receive new Torah insights as a kind of prophecy.⁷ This is what is known as the spark of Moshe that exists within each and every *tzaddik*.⁸

Whenever any person uplifts himself in this way he also receives a flow of a kind of prophecy so that he too can receive the light of the Torah from this high place. It is said that the Torah’s light enables his heart to be subsumed within *Elokus*, and this dynamic is embodied by the relative positions of the various holy vessels in the *Mishkan*. The menorah represents the *mochin* of *Abba-Chochmah* [and Torah itself], which corresponds to the lung [which has five lobes, just as the Torah comprises five books]. The table and the incense altar are associated with the *mochin* of *Imma-Binah* and the heart, respectively. “Oil and incense gladden the heart.”⁹

This flow of Torah then influences the lower aspect of the laver and its stand, *Netzach* and *Hod*, to subdue and overcome [*netzach - nitzachon*] all of the negative and improper desires so that a person can be pure for the sake of Hashem. This makes him worthy of the fullness of the sanctity of the outer altar, which is *Yesod*, and which serves as a channel to receive all spiritual abundance. This purity then leads to a profound clarity of mind—“A *maskil* of Eitan HaEzrachi”—when one is strong [איתן] in purity, he becomes a true *maskil*, possessed of clear and pure intelligence. In the language of Kabbalah this is called, “*Yesod* which rises to the light of *Da’as*.”

⁷ *Degel Machaneh Efraim*

⁸ *Likutei Moharan* II:72

⁹ *Mishlei* 27:9

Then: **“And they shall make an ark of acacia-wood: two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth, and a cubit and a half its height. And you shall overlay it [צפית איתן] with pure gold, within and without shall you overlay it; and you shall make upon it a crown of gold round about.”**¹⁰ When a person meditates on the fact that all of the vessels of the *Mishkan* are really a part of him, he feels inspired to transform himself into a vehicle for the *Shechinah* and gradually rise from level to level in his *avodah*. This is really what Hashem desires in His command to make Him a sanctuary; He wants to dwell within us. It is as though He waits with anxious anticipation—He is *metzapeh* just as the *aron* is *metzapeh*—for each of us to clear space for Him in our hearts. To do this, we must seek out *dveikus* with Him, especially as we study Torah and pray.

The Right and Left Pathways of *Dveikus*

In general, there are two pathways to achieve *dveikus* with Hashem. There is the “left-side” path, which means fighting with *gevuros* against evil and the *klippos* that surround a person, fired by longing for the Creator. This also relates to that which is known as *תפילה בבחינת דין*—“prayer in the aspect of judgment”—engaging in mortal struggle against all barriers during prayer like Pinchas who prayed, but whose prayer was a kind of argument with his Creator. Instead of the verse saying that Pinchas was *mispallel*, it says *vayipallel*—implying that he was engaged in judgment or *p'lilus*. This does not mean that the *tzaddik* suffers from these *dinim*; quite the contrary, he derives great pleasure from going into battle against the forces of negativity.

When the *tzaddik* sees that the world is afflicted by judgments and darkness, or when he feels that he is himself in a state of *mochin d'katnus* at the moment that he needs to engage in prayer and *yichudim*, then it is as though he has donned sackcloth and he must, at that moment, take up the “sword and spear” to fight. In the deeper works, this state of mind is associated with the *mochin* that are drawn down during the

¹⁰ *Shemos* 25:10-11

recitation of *Keriyas Shema*, which are not of the higher mentalities but are rather an expression of the six lower *sefiros* of *Ze'ir Anpin*. [This is the state of *mochin d'katnus*.] Like Pinchas, the *tzaddik* must take up the “spear”—רמח—which are the 248 words of *Keriyas Shema*, to fight Hashem's battle. Even though this is a lower state when compared with the delights of *yichud* at the higher levels of the *mochin*, nevertheless there is a great deal of pleasure and joy to be discovered when one brings Hashem the sweet gift of battling, and destroying, the forces of Amalek.

This is the *avodah* of the *tzaddikim* throughout the exile, and this is also the *avodah* of each and every one of us—not to be thrown by whatever besets us spiritually. Even if we find ourselves in the dark and asleep as we pray, confused and overwhelmed by distractions, nevertheless we can accomplish great things if we hold strong to the knowledge that this is exactly how we can magnify Hashem's glory—by starting again and not being thrown by the challenge. We overcome our obstacles by binding ourselves to the true *tzaddikim* who are able to fight this battle of “prayer in an aspect of judgment.” A person must hold strong and continue to say one word after the other even as the *sitra achra* seems to swallow them whole. He must know that Hashem awaits his efforts to fight against the *sitra achra* and the force of Amalek that seeks his ruin by convincing him that his prayer is worthless and that Hashem doesn't care for him. He must bind himself to the *tzaddikim* who, like Dovid HaMelech, know how to throw the five stones [of the words of the first verse of *Shema*, and of the Torah and *Tehillim*] to destroy Goliath the Pelishti. In their great yearning for Hashem, they jump right into the fray without any hesitation.

The second, “right-hand” pathway of *dveikus* is to reveal the light of Hashem's oneness throughout all of creation. One connects with the essence of Hashem's existence that animates everything. Through this awareness, the *tzaddikim* rise from level to level through the light of *bitul*—they reveal the light of the living G-d.

The Human Mind is a Vehicle of Mercy

The Arizal teaches that *Arich Anpin* is the highest level in the world of *Atzilus*, and it is also called *Adam d'Atzilus*. The human being here in this world is called Adam because he is the counterpart of this lofty level in the upper worlds. In the holy *Idra*, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai revealed that the Divine attributes of mercy are sourced in this level of *Adam d'Atzilus*, and that it has three levels: that of the *galgalta* which surrounds from outside, the “hidden mind” of *Mocha Sesima'ah* within, and the *avirah* or airspace between them.

The human being also has physical counterparts to these spiritual levels, and the fiery energy of his own *neshamah* is seated upon the “membrane of airspace” within his cranium. This is a reflection of the concept that the *Da'as* of *Atik* is hidden within the *avirah*. It is there that the soul “sits upon the throne” as seen in the vision of Yechezkel—it “sits upon” the membrane of the *avirah*, and we know that the souls of the Jewish people are part and parcel of the *Shechinah* itself, which is also called the “throne of Hashem’s glory.”

The Faculties of Decision and Will

This is the inner meaning of the form of the *aron* and the *keruvim*. Betzalel actually built three boxes, one inside the other: an outer one of gold, a middlemost one of wood, and an inner one of gold. The outermost box of gold represents *Binah*; the wooden one represents *Chochmah*, the life-giving wisdom of the Tree of Life; and the innermost one of gold represents *Kesser*. Since *Binah* and *Kesser* are from the same root, they are both of gold. This relationship between the three levels also exists within the realm of the *mochin*, since the *galgalta* completely encloses *Mocha Sesima'ah* just as the wood is surrounded completely by gold. The two *keruvim* above the *aron* parallel the *chassadim* and *gevuros* within *Atik*, which is hidden within the *avirah*.

Although we might think that the level of *avirah-keruvim* should be inside the box rather than above it, just as the *avirah* is between the *galgalta* and *Mocha Sesima'ah* in the symbolism of the human frame, nevertheless it is right that the *keruvim*

sit above because they express a higher aspect of the will [*Kesser*]*—*the faculty of decision. It is significant that the flow of prophecy is through the channel of these two *keruvim*. While it is true that the faculty of will, *ratzon*, is the highest part of a person, there really is something higher: deciding what it is that you want. This is called the *Da'as d'Atik*. This level of *Da'as* is the source of the flow of prophetic insight at the level of *neshamah* that “sits upon the throne” within the mind of the person, and it is from there that the decision emerges as to what the person really wants. This decision then impacts his faculty of will which is associated with the forehead [just as negative willfulness is called *עזות מצח*], the outer “golden box” of the *galgulta*, one of the golden boxes of *Kesser*. Within it is the wooden box of *Chochmah*, followed by the golden box of *Binah*.¹¹ This faculty of decision, the two *keruvim*, hover over the three arks of the *mochin**—*will, self-surrender, and contemplation*—*gold, wood, and gold.

This is the real way in which we experience prophecy and the presence of the *Shechinah* within ourselves; to have, as the Baal Shem Tov taught, “one’s soul teach him.”¹² He will then know what to decide, how to choose, and this is the light of Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohein*—*the aspect of the true *tzaddik* that enters into the innermost sanctum and receives the flow of prophecy that emerges from between the two *keruvim*.

The Two Children*—*Bitachon and Hishtadlus

The two *keruvim* had the appearance of two young children just as their name suggests: *keruvim*, *k'ravyah**—*“like children.” They transcend the level of *Arich Anpin* which is the place of the thirteen rectifications of the beard*—*the thirteen attributes of mercy*—*which is associated with the long and aged countenance. [Age and the presence of the beard are parallel terms*—**zakein* / *zakan*.] The level of *Atik*, ancient as it is, nevertheless is not the place of the “beard” because it embodies the mystery of agedness that is in the state of complete freshness of the newly born.

¹¹ *Kehillas Yaakov*, “*Eitz*”; *Eitz Chaim* III:2

¹² *Kesser Shem Tov* #223

The true *tzaddikim* are at the level of *Atik*—not like most people, who are in the state of *Arich* where they are locked into their past habits, where they feel old, in a rut, and indecisive in terms of *avodas Hashem*. They feel paralyzed by past failures, and this is the way in which the *sitra achra* destroys a person's *avodah*. In contrast, the *tzaddikim* are forever fresh and new, like little children, and they receive the flow of prophecy and the presence of the *Shechinah* that only rests in the place of youthful enthusiasm—the space between the two little children. They know that everything is completely in Hashem's hands and that everything can change in an instant for the better. This is the point of the “foundation stone” in the *kodesh hakodashim*—it is completely beyond space and time. [The closer the Jewish people were to the *even hashesiyah*, the less space affected them. And we know that the entire Jewish people were able to fit between the two poles of the *aron*.] Nothing is written in stone; everything is always in flux, is always new. Like little children, the *tzaddikim* know that anything is possible and that they can achieve anything they want.

This is how the *tzaddikim* are able to pray in a state of complete *bitul*. Like little children, they abandon themselves before Hashem because they know that He does everything for the best and everything is possible. This brings them to a state of total dependence on the Creator—utter self-surrender and self-forgetting. And this is the way that all of us should be—completely without worry or anxiety about anything spiritual or physical, because we are absolutely certain, “like a young child upon his mother,” that we are in Hashem's hands. We can then hear the voice that emerges from between the *keruvim*—this is the voice that laughs “from one end of the world to the other”¹³—it laughs over the foolishness of this world, because its temptations and losses are all an illusion.

This is the final and highest *terumah*—the *terumah* of the mind—of the three that parallel the parts of the *Mishkan*. And whenever we see any lack or aspect of *katnus* in the world, we must know that it is only set before us so that we will pray with greater

¹³ See Rebbe Nachman's story, “The Exchanged Children.”

freshness and energy. By engaging in prayer and *yichudim*, the aspect of *katnus* is immediately nullified. When we are in this state of mind, we are able to see how Hashem is constantly bestowing good upon us. We are able to experience the presence of the *Shechinah* in the lower worlds, and that it is to be found among the Jewish people.

The Aron and its Poles

“And you shall make staves of acacia-wood and overlay them with gold. And you shall put the staves into the rings on the sides of the ark, with which to bear the ark. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark, they shall not be taken from it. And you shall put into the ark the testimony which I shall give you.”¹⁴

When we examine the verses, we find that although all of the rest of the vessels of the *Mishkan* that were of gold had to be made of pure gold, the word “pure” does not appear in connection with the staves.¹⁵

The inner meaning of this discrepancy has bearing on the relationship of the *tzaddikim* to other Jews. The *avodah* of the *tzaddik*, as we have mentioned, is in the realm of the purity of the vessels of the *Mishkan*—and it has both its external and internal aspect, just as the *Mishkan* contained areas and vessels that were public, and that which was utterly private. The *tzaddik* has his menorah—his Torah that sheds light for others—his aspect of golden table and altar, and so on. However, he also engages in a higher and more subtle aspect of Torah which is on the level of the *kodesh hakodashim*, this level of *Da'as d'Atik* and newborn freshness, which is a private and hidden matter between himself and Hashem alone.

Even though the *aron* was made of pure gold, its staves were not [so commanded in the Torah]. Even though the *tzaddik* is absolutely pure and connected with Hashem at all times, nevertheless the staves, those Jews who are not necessarily pure and who are in the throes of *gevuros* that are associated with gold [which is reddish], never leave his side. He is always bound to them as well, and all of his private

¹⁴ *Shemos* 25:13-16

¹⁵ However, the *Yerushalmi* does say that they did have to be made of pure gold.

avodah is all directed toward the purpose of uplifting these souls, so that they too will see the face of the living G-d. Truly, “the *aron* bears those who bear it.” This is not true of those *tzaddikim* who do not reach the ultimate level of *Da'as d'Atik* and who do not really grasp the root of the holiness of the soul of every single Jew. Their *avodah* is more external, like that of the table and altar. Since they cannot uplift even the impure, their staves must be “pure gold.” And they do not have to be bound to them at all times.

This is the main distinguishing characteristic of the true *tzaddikim* like Moshe Rabbeinu and Adam HaRishon prior to the sin—they have the power to descend to impure places and uplift those who dwell there as well. They know that, although one must certainly repent of all his sins, nevertheless the impure place was never really devoid of Hashem's presence at all. Because they can awaken the innermost point of Hashem's presence in every situation and every place, they have the ability to rectify everything with a single word. This is what it means to be like a little child—to know that everything can turn around in an instant and one can return to the state of innocence.

Lower down, at the level of the second *terumah*—that of the heart and lungs, of the menorah/Torah and the incense—we have the reality of *avodah*. This means that one works to maintain the state of *bitul* and joy, “Oil and incense gladden the heart.” But at the higher place of pure innocence and freshness, in the place of the *aron*, there are no longer “*Toros* and *avodos*”—just the pure basking in Hashem's presence.

Torah from the Mouth of Hashem

The Baal Shem Tov taught that every person must learn Torah “from the mouth of Hashem.” This means ascending through the three *terumos* that we have already discussed, with the final destination of childlike innocence and dependence Hashem at its end. This is called learning Torah from the mouth of Hashem, just as a baby basks in the presence of its mother and receives life-giving nourishment. Some *tzaddikim* only enter into this state once a year, like the *kohein gadol* who entered only on Yom HaKippurim, while others are there most of the time. Even so, this is the goal so that we

can come to hear Torah directly from Hashem. “And Hashem’s glory filled the *Mishkan*.”

The Tree of Life

This childlike state of the *Da'as d'Atik* is the source of the holiness of the Torah, which is embodied in the wooden box—the Tree of Life of the *aron*. The main way in which one comes to receive the Torah’s wisdom is through developing absolute trust in Hashem, like a child that turns to its mother for every single thing that it needs. This Torah then influences the more external *avodos* of the table, menorah, and the altar with which one fights the battle for holiness. He must do it with fervent longing, just as the showbread on the table remained forever hot and fresh, as though it had just come from the oven. And all of the other external aspects are likewise galvanized by this flow of pure Torah so that the person has the power to raise up the lower two *terumos*, as we have mentioned. One must realize, though, that for the true *tzaddikim*, even as they appear to expend prodigious efforts in *avodah*, in their innermost selves they are completely still and at peace, because they are receiving Torah from the mouth of Hashem, like a young child in the bosom of its mother.

This is why Mordechai HaTzaddik went to study Torah with the *tinokos shel beis rabban*—the littlest children. He sought out the state of *Da'as d'Atik* which is all childlike innocence and freshness, so that he could bind himself to the “man/Man who sits upon the throne.” And this is the best preparation for Purim, when Esther HaMalkah sought to enter into the “throne room”—to enter into the state of total trust and abandonment of the self that draws down prophecy and the Torah of the ultimate future, the Torah of *Atikah Sesima'ah* and the “head that is not known.”

Based on all that we have learned, we can now better understand the opinion of the Rambam regarding the destruction of Amalek. He holds that even though we are commanded to utterly destroy Amalek and those of the seven Canaanite nations that

refused to make peace, nevertheless we still offer them a truce before we go to war.¹⁶ He even holds that it is possible for them to convert and fulfill the seven *mitzvos* of the Bnei Noach. This opinion is a reflection of a deep spiritual truth. All of creation is encompassed by the Torah's light, and when one merits to ascend to the root of everything, there is power there that is sufficient to destroy all of the *klippos*.

“Let Your Soul Know Wisdom”

This is the meaning of: “דעה חכמה לנפשך והיא כתר לראשך”—“Let your soul (*nefesh*) know (*d'ei*) wisdom (*Chochmah*) and it will be a crown (*Kesser*) for your head.”¹⁷ The source of the level of *nefesh* is all the way up in the heights of *Da'as d'Atik*, but even Esther HaMalkah feared to enter into that place because, “one may not enter there dressed in sackcloth.” Sackcloth represents the efforts of external *avodah*, but the innermost place is one of complete confidence and trust in Hashem's goodness and care—sackcloth is inappropriate in that state of loving trust in the King's presence. One must take care not to enter there wrongfully as Hevel did, but rather only to do so tightly bound to the true *tzaddikim* like Moshe Rabbeinu and Aharon HaKohein, because only they draw down the influence of the *keruvim* to the staves that are not pure, and bear them upward.

“And it will be a crown to your head”—we will then reach the truth of *Kesser*, propelled by powerful *chizuk*, never to be derailed by minor distractions and setbacks. When we have that childlike trust, we will see the lights of Hashem's presence throughout all of creation, yet we will still be bound up on high. Just as the incense that was brought in the *kodesh hakodashim* was grounded in the lower elements, but its smoke of *dveikus* rose all the way to the heavens.

May Hashem help us during these holy days of Adar, when “joy increases,” to feel the deep and simple happiness of the child that trusts its parent absolutely. To know that after all of the three *terumos*, the highest goal is to achieve this state so that the light

¹⁶ *Mishneh Torah, Hilchod Melachim* 6:4

¹⁷ From the *Shabbos zemer* “*D'ror Yikrah*,” based on *Mishlei* 24:14.

of Hashem's presence can shine upon us and His endless mercy will be revealed with the arrival of our righteous redeemer. Amen.

Translated and Adapted by Rav Micha Golshevsky.

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