

CONNECTION, RECONNECTION AND DISCONNECTION Rabbi Gabriel Botnick

Despite the challenges and traumas of the past 18 months, one can't help but marvel at all we've accomplished, thanks to technology. We have FaceTime and Zoom for 'visiting' family and friends or 'attending' classes and services. We have Netflix, Spotify and Libby to enjoy TV, film, music and books. Podcasts and blogs make it simple to learn from people all over the world. And yet, our connectedness is both a blessing and a curse.

It is a blessing that my daughter can FaceTime with her grandparents and great-grandparents across the ocean. It is a blessing that my colleagues and I can correspond on WhatsApp, despite living on multiple continents. It is a blessing that we can learn with just a few taps of a screen.

But it is also a curse to be so dependent on technology to feel connected. We are drawn constantly towards our devices with each bleep - tearing us away from the present moment and turning our attention towards something happening elsewhere. With a 24/7 news cycle, it feels as if we are incapable of going even an hour without checking our screens. The greatest irony is that this connectedness has led to an increased sense of isolation from those around us. Not only that, but we also spend less time connecting with our own selves, as the gratification provided by our devices is far more immediate than the difficult work of introspection.



So how do we solve this dilemma?

The first step is to disconnect from technology. In recent years, a group called ReBoot has been promoting what they call a National Dav of Unplugging, running from sundown to sundown, on the first Friday in March. In other words, it's Shabbat, The fact is, every week, Shabbat offers us the opportunity to unplug and disconnect from technology without guilt. Family and friends are less likely to begrudge you for not answering their texts right away when you tell them you were following Jewish tradition. Better yet, the family and friends with whom you spend Shabbat will enjoy your physical and emotional presence that much more.

But if the idea of disconnecting every week feels a bit daunting, why not start with something easier? Try disconnecting from technology for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Sadly, due to the restrictions of social distancing, we still need to rely on technology to 'attend' services this year. But I want to encourage you to try shutting down your device the moment services end. Use the time to connect with the world around you – take a walk on the Heath, meditate in

> your garden or engage a loved one in meaningful conversation. If you're able to attend services in person this year, seize the opportunity to check in with those you care about – those you haven't been able to

see this past year – by moving past superficial greetings and asking how they're doing in a respectful and meaningful way.

Finally, after you've disconnected from technology and reconnected with old friends, you can take on the most important (and challenging) task: connecting with yourself. This is actually what the High Holydays are about. The word that best describes this time of year is 'Teshuvah', which literally means 'return'. Most commonly, this return refers to a reconnection with God. And as the way to God comes from within, the first step of Teshuvah is listening to and connecting with ourselves.

This is the holy work we must take on during the holidays. By disconnecting from the noise in our lives, we attain a silence and stillness that sets the stage for our work. By reconnecting with those we love, we establish for ourselves a loving and supportive environment in which to work. And finally, we engage in the holy work itself by connecting with the deepest parts of our souls, through the framework of our tradition. In this sense, the Machzor (prayer book) serves as a guidebook. One should not feel obligated to follow every page, prayer or even word at the frantic pace of the communal service. Rather, take your time and meditate on these ancient words at your own pace. Use the poetry of our liturgy as a mirror to gaze upon yourself searching within for any Divine attributes you recognise or wish were there.

Every year, we enter the High Holy Days with the intention of finding these connections – with others, with ourselves, with the Divine. This year, as we strive to move beyond the curses of our technological connectedness, the call of this holy work seems all the more important.

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SYNAGOGUE SNAPSHOTS



NAME: Penny Homer

JOB TITLE: Singer and Choir Leader, including BSS Youth Choir

What's your favourite thing about your work?

I love singing, and I feel privileged to be able to share that joy with so many other people, whether it be through singing myself, leading others in song or teaching others how to use their voices to their fullest. It's a great feeling to help people and choirs grow in ability and confidence, as well as watching them enjoy singing!

What is the hardest part of your job?

At the synagogue, I'd say it's getting everyone calm and ready to sing – the youngsters are quite lively and it can be a challenge to get them started! But once they do start, they sound absolutely fantastic! In general, although I get the opportunity to spend time with lots of people, it can be a very isolated profession, something the pandemic has really highlighted. It's been great to get back to in-person rehearsals and hearing people sing together again!

If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?

The only other job I've ever really wanted to do with my whole heart is to be an astronaut. I'm absolutely fascinated by space – I may be the only person who watched the film *Gravity* and wanted to go into space even more! I think my dream job would be being a singer at the world's first space hotel!

How did you come to be a connected with Belsize Square?

I was the Junior Conducting Fellow at Zemel Choir a few years ago, where I met Ben Wolf, the Director of Music at the shul. He then suggested I come to audition to lead the Youth Choir and the rest is history! I also conducted the Zemel Choir in concert at the synagogue while I was with them, so I had already visited the synagogue before.

What's your favourite festival?

I must admit my experience of festivals is unusual: I'm not Jewish, though I have attended services at other synagogues in the past due to personal connections. I'm really looking forward to leading the Youth Choir over the High Holydays and have found developing my understanding of the services a profound experience. Elsewhere, Purim always looks like a lot of fun!

Where will we usually see you sitting (or standing!) in synagogue?

Usually, I'm up in the gallery leading the Youth Choir. Sometimes I come to sing for other services too.



NAME: Joe Hacker JOB TITLE: Tutor and business consultant

What's your favourite thing about your work?

I am fortunate to have an unusual but very satisfying dual career. On the one hand I tutor maths up to GCSE level and also teach B'nei Mitzvah, occasionally to a single student! On the other hand, I work with senior management teams from a wide variety of businesses, to help them work more effectively together in crafting and executing their strategy. The best part of both jobs is witnessing the moments of clarity that release energy and enthusiasm; for my students it's when a maths skill suddenly clicks or the Hebrew and trope of their Maftir suddenly flow together; for a management

team it's the moment after the elephants in the room have been called out, when they realise that they all share a desire for their business to thrive.

What is the hardest part of your job?

The hardest part of my job tends to be logistics. Once people get together in a room and speak openly, things are usually resolved pretty quickly. Making that happen is the challenging bit.

If you could do any other job for one day, what would you choose?

Having two jobs means the grass is normally pretty green on one of them. At various times I've been told I should be a rabbi or open a restaurant, but I'm happy to keep my cooking and leyning in the realm of hobbies.

How did you come to be a member of Belsize Square?

Geography. I grew up on England's Lane. When I was 10 my parents finally discovered that there was a great synagogue just around the corner and we left West London to join Belsize.

What's your favourite festival?

On and off for the past 20 years I have been helping with the youth services on the High Holidays. I think the second day Rosh Hashanah youth service has been my favourite.

Where do you like to sit in shul?

Centre right if I'm on time, far back right if I'm late!

REMEMBERING LUDWIG BERLIN

Ludwig Berlin turned 100 in June this year. Like many other Belsize members of his generation, he arrived in the UK in 1939, having fled Nazi Germany. He had grown up in Nuremberg and had happy memories of his childhood, beautifully described in some passages of memoir he wrote in 1961. He recalled with insight how the atmosphere in the town changed in the interwar years, with the long shadow of the First World War further darkened by the crippling inflation of the late 1920s and early '30s and the rise of the Nazis. An anecdote about the reaction of his father. a decorated First World War veteran, to a boyish misdemeanour reflects this:

In 1934 I celebrated my Bar Mitzvah. The Nazis had then been in power for eighteen months. Insults and harassment had become part of our lives. However, on that Saturday morning in June, all this was put aside. I put on my dark suit, instead of the Tyrolean shorts and ornamented leather braces that I usually wore during the summer and, with my parents and sister, walked slowly through the streets of Nuremberg on one of my rare visits to the synagogue . . .

... In the afternoon, friends and relatives came to our house. Among the presents of books, watches, inkstands and tie pins were also a few that were more suited to my age, notably an airgun. I went into the garden and tried to shoot the chestnuts in their green capsules off the trees; however, they were unripe and would not fall.

Then I had a better idea. I fetched my father's spiked ceremonial helmet and put it on top of a small laundry pole in the garden. Taking careful aim, I emptied a whole box of the small lead bullets at the splendid target until it was torn to shreds. Suddenly I saw my father and my heart stopped. He had been watching for quite a while and his face was thoughtful. However, he said nothing, turned round and went back into the house. Not many years



before, had been wearing this helmet with pride.

In 1935, Ludwig won a school essay competition where each student had to describe the famous Nazi Party rally stadium built in his home town; he recalls it thus:

I inspected the dreary blocks and slabs, the stone steps, parapets and serried flagpoles. I paced out the distances and estimated the angles. The essay I handed in consisted of a precise physical description of what I had seen, in the simplest and clearest German I could muster. Nowhere did the words National Socialism. Party. Brown Shirts or Führer occur. The other boys took the essay as an occasion to regurgitate Nazi slogans and propaganda. They thought it a safe way to high marks. The form master indeed awarded top marks to an essay full of Nazi bombast. My essay came second. A few days later he had an announcement to make: 'The headmaster has read your essay and instructed me to reverse the first two places.' He then asked me to read mv essav to the class. The headmaster's name was Dr Staehlin. Honour to his memory.

Two years later, Ludwig was forced to leave school and could not attend university. He worked for a year for a publishing house run by some uncles until they were forced to sell, and the time came for him to leave Nuremberg.

Ludwig was interned on the Isle of Man soon after his arrival in England. He later worked for a demolition gang in the Blitz, making bombed buildings safe. In 1942, he enlisted in the British Army, initially in the Pioneer Corps, then in the Dorsets. He saw action in Greece and in Italy, being present at the liberation of both Athens and Rome, and ate ice cream in Venice's St Mark's Square on the day the war ended.

At the end of the war, he was transferred to X Troop of No. 10 Commando. This elite troop of German-speaking Jewish

refugees had members variously attached to the Special Operations Executive, Special Boat Services and Secret Intelligence Service. Ludwig was posted to Hamburg to supervise post-war reconstruction.

After the war, he studied Economics at LSE and then worked in advertising. With his late wife Carmen, he had three children, Carmen, Anita and Peter, and has two grandsons. Having been a keen sportsman all his life, he was the longest-standing member of West Heath Lawn Tennis Club (although he stopped playing at the age of 85 as he 'didn't want to play with old people'!).

Ludwig worked for many years in our library at Belsize Square, where he formed a firm friendship with Henry Kuttner. He also volunteered with the Anne Frank Trust, sharing his experiences with school students. He made several visits to his own old school, the Melanchthon Gymnasium, in Nuremberg, most recently when he was 94, where they were honoured and inspired to hear him speak.

Ludwig celebrated his 100th birthday at a party with his family, featuring live music and an ice-cream van, delighted to have reached this landmark. Sadly, he passed away two months later.



BRITISH EMPIRE MEDAL INVESTITURE

Richard Pollins was awarded for the British Empire Medal following his fundraising walk, completed on his prosthetic legs. He walked in support of the Motor Neurone Disease Association, which supports sufferers including Richard's mother Vera. His investiture took place in July 2021, performed by the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of London.



NEWS FROM ABERNEIN MANSIONS

Dear Fellow Members

Hear in Abernein Mansions many from us are sad to see the loss of our long-term gardener, Mr Hedges. He passed quietly following a good buy ceremony in his honour on the terrace. Although he didn't say much, we will miss his cherry smile, his greeting 'Hello, Guff' und the constant drip from the end of his nose. We hope he und Mrs Hedges will be happy in their retirement cottage in the Kotzwolds.

I very much enjoyed the inducking service of Rabbi Botnick in the last schabbas from July. With a nearly full sanitorium it was a great pleasure to re-experience our quire und Cantor Heller in full bloom. Especially hardwarming was to see Rabbi Mariner, who conducted the inducking, dressing us in his unmimicable style. He spoke about the impotence of maintaining tradition in our service. Another surprise was Rabbitsen Americus Sue Mariner who perfectly undertook a marathon Haftorah potion. How wonderful to have them both on the beemah on this special occasion. There were many contributions showing the variety und talent of all generations from our commune, including an introducktory address by our chairperson Jackie Alexander. Rabbi Botnick took time out to explain the liturgy of the day und some new inventions. The seem of his sermon was ownership. All

what we have is only burrowed. God owns everything, even Mrs Klopstick's BMX bike.

Unfortunately, my wive could not attend the service. She was lying in an ice bath, watching on Belsize Alive, vile recovering from a very stressful time in Dorset. She hat taken her Jewish ladies tuck-off-war team clamping in a field near the village of Tolpuddle, famous for its Martins. As a special final treat, she arranged for them to each paddle board up the river Piddle. Unfortunately, Miss Grossartig, who is both slightly short of hearing und also hard of seeing immediately paddled the wrong way. For half a day Mrs K tried to catch her. In the end up it was the Poole Harbour lifeboat who hat to made a rescue two miles into the Englisch Channel. My wive said, 'The paddle up the Piddle by Tolpuddle is not something to be repeated.'

You will know I am riding this in August as it is heavily raining here. Rosh Hashono will only be days from this arriving on your door mad. Maybe it will be nice und sonny then. The whether is often very lovely on Yom Kipper two. On behalve of myself und Mrs Klopstick, I wish to wish you all save und good High Hollydays.

With the best of intentions

Fritz Klopstick



I have received a request from a new member, a Mr H.G. from Belsize Lane. He asks if I could advice him on how to cope with very paneful goat in his right big toe und left angle. Goat comes from having too much urine in the blood. A very good aunty dote is the juice from sherries which should be drunk, or rubbed into the offended parts twice a day.



A CELEBRATION FOR US ALL Rob Nothman

'Today is not my induction, but the community's. I am merely an agent chosen by the community to lead and protect it.'

With these words, Rabbi Botnick addressed a 150-strong congregation on the last day of July at an uplifting service to mark the formal start of his Rabbinate at Belsize Square. It was the first time since the start of the pandemic 16 months ago that the sanctuary had held so many of our members, and the warm, shared feeling of being back together again in such numbers was palpable.

Chairman Jackie Alexander spoke of how excited she was by 'what our future may bring, and Rabbi Botnick is our future'. She welcomed his family – wife Rabbi Rose Prevezer, daughter Lev and in-laws Vivienne and Mark, and explained how Rabbi Botnick had touched many of our lives already. She said she was delighted he'd come to London, although she accepted that Belsize Square would be unable to match the way his previous community in Venice Beach, California welcomed the Shabbat bride during *Lecha Dodi*, by opening its doors to overlook the Pacific Ocean.

Before the symbolic passing of the Alexander Torah scroll from our third Rabbi to our fifth. Rabbi Mariner guipped that five rabbis in over 80 years was 'a good indication of employment prospects'. Outlining the relationship between a rabbi and their community, Rabbi Mariner said, 'In illuminating our past we can often assess how we've travelled, revisit the successes along the way that have given us pride, as well as our failures that have given us important insights. And this is not just a strategy for cyclists and hikers, it's also a strategy for rabbis and their communities who are sharing the same journey. Sue and I wish you and your family a long and dynamic stay with our beloved Belsize.'

After the induction ceremony, Rabbi

Botnick thanked his family and the community as a whole and promised Rabbi Mariner 'to cherish the community which you have loved and served so faithfully, and continue to do so'. He also pointed to that week's Parshah - Eikev - when Moses warns the Israelites not to be fooled into thinking that everything that they had gained was down to their efforts and skill. 'Rather, Moses reminds us it was God who did this for you – everything we have is not truly ours but God's.' Rabbi Botnick acknowledged his stewardship, recognising that 'every single person in this community is just as responsible for the care of this community as I am. And likewise, no single person has more ownership or say over the care and stewardship of Belsize because it belongs to no one but God. May we be blessed with the strength and energy to be the best custodians possible to ensure that we continue the holy work of bringing everyone closer to Torah and recognising all the gifts with which God has blessed us.'

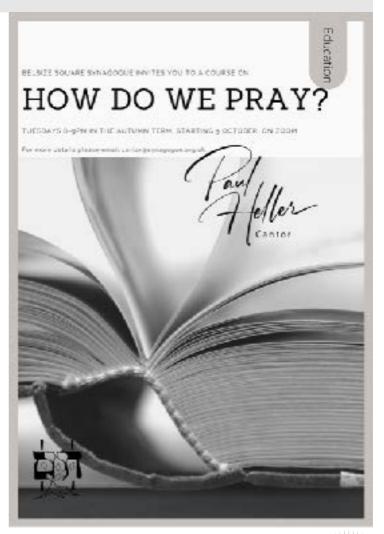
BELSIZELIVE ON YOUTUBE David Pollins

We launched BelsizeLIVE back in 2013 after the Synagogue was awarded a grant from the Six Point Foundation. The grant was to enable members of the community who found it difficult to attend the synagogue in person to access our services via the Belsize website on any device with an internet connection, such as a computer, smartphone, or tablet.

In 2013, a total of 50 users watched our services over Yom Kippur but since then we have made various improvements such as automating the start and end times of the streams as well as investing in our audio controls to enhance the sound quality. In 2019 we had 1,000 users watching our Yom Kippur service and last year (2020) we had over 3,000 watching from all over the world.

Over the last few months, we have continued to make improvements and our services can now be watched live on YouTube. You can of course also continue to watch directly on the Belsize website. If you have an internet-enabled TV or a TV subscription box such as Sky Q, you will most likely have the YouTube app installed. Just open YouTube on your TV and search for Belsize Square Synagogue and you should find our live services on the Belsize channel.

If you would like to know more about BelsizeLIVE or see how you can get involved to help, please contact the Synagogue office for more information.



Community News

NEW MEMBERS

We extend a cordial welcome to: Ben Bilefield

B'NEI MITZVAH

Mazal tov to: Reuben, son of Kat & Jake Polonsky, who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 18 September Gene, son of Jennifer & Martyn Fisher, who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 2 October Chaim, son of Judith & Patrick Sciamma, who celebrates his Bar Mitzvah on 9 October

DEATHS

We regret to announce the passing of: Renate Simion who died on 1 July Lore Simmonds who died on 6 July Cecilia Krasner who died on 20 July Reuben Dovar who died on 24 July Rolf (Werner) Mattes who died on 4 August Ludwig Berlin who died on 17 August Gerda Oblath who died on 19 August

EXAM RESULTS

Mazal tov to all of you who have received GCSE, A Level and university results this summer. We are always delighted to hear our members' news so, please, let us know how you've done. Whether you are still at school, taking a gap year, starting a career or going off to university, we wish you good luck for a sparkling future and **please keep in touch!**

SALVATION ARMY COLLECTION

This year we shall be collecting tinned and dried goods (vegetarian only please) for those in need in Camden, through the Salvation Army. If you would like to contribute please bring your gifts to the Synagogue during office hours or before or after Services until WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER

HIGH HOLYDAYS 5782 / 2021

ROSH HASHANAH

1st Eve: Monday 6 September - Service at 6.45pm 1st Day: Tuesday 7 September - Service at 9.30am 2nd Eve: Tuesday 7 September - Service at 6.45pm 2nd Day: Wednesday 8 September - Service at 9.30am

KOL NIDREI

Wednesday 15 September Service at 7.00pm (fast commences at 7.15pm)

YOM KIPPUR

Thursday 16 September Service at 9.30am (fast ends at 8.03pm)

Succot:19-21 SeptemberShemini Atzeret:26-27 SeptemberSimchat Torah:27-28 September

The Synagogue Office will be open for the collection of High Holyday Prayer Books on Sunday 5 September between 10am-12pm

KEVER AVOT SERVICE

Sunday 12 September at 12.00pm

Edgwarebury Lane Cemetery Service to remember our family and friends buried there

The copy deadline for the next issue of *Our Congregation* is 21 October 2021

SERVICE TIMES

Friday evenings at 6.45pm Saturday mornings at 10.00am

No longer any need to book in advance. Or watch online via BelsizeLive at synagogue.org.uk

Kikar Kids

Saturdays 4 September, 2 October, 6 November at 11am Under 5s service in the crèche

Often followed by potluck lunch – contact Richard Pollins for details on 020 8444 3074

B'nei Mitzvah Activity

Joe and the Jews Saturdays 4 September, 9 October, 13 November at 9.30am in the library

BRANCH LINE

If you are thinking of pruning your pine, laurel or cypress trees, the Synagogue would be grateful to receive branches for the Succah which will be erected on Sunday 19 September. Please contact the Synagogue office to make arrangements for delivery if you are able to help.



SUNDAY MORNING ADULT DISCUSSION

5 September

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Shofarot: the core section of Rosh Hashanah liturgy 11.30-12.45 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – An excursion from

11.30-12.45 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – An excursion from Bodenheim to Belsize Square: film and discussion

12 September

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Teshuvah: a chosen text from High Holyday liturgy 11.30-12.45 Andrew Levy, author of Love in the Time of Tyranny – A new perspective on the Song of Songs

19 September

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Sukkot Core Prayers and Texts 11.30-12.45 Jenny Nemko, founder of Effective Communications,

Trustee of Oasis of Peace (Neve Shalom) and founder of Talk Matters – 1 year of Talk Matters: Jews and Arabs Together (TBC)

26 September

10.00-11.15 Student Rabbi Dr Annette Boeckler – Selected passages from Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) 11.30-12.45 Speaker and Topic TBC

3 October

10.00 -11.15 Teacher and topic TBC 11.30-12.45 Philippe Sands QC, Author, Professor of Laws and Director of the Centre for International Courts and Tribunals, UCL - in conversation with Natasha Hausdorff, barrister and spokesperson for UK Lawyers for Israel

10 October

10.00-11.15 Teacher and topic TBC 11.30-12.45 Stephen Bush, Chair of the Board of Deputies Commission on Racial Inclusivity in the Jewish Community (TBC)

17 October

10.00-11.15 Teacher and topic TBC 11.30-12.45 Russell Shalev, attorney with the International Legal Forum and Editor at Large, J'accuse Coalition for Justice – Anti-Zionist Jews and Anti-Semitism Our Chatanim on Simchat Torah this year will be:Rabbi Gabriel BotnickRichard PollinsChatan TorahChatan Bereshit





Lulav & Etrog Ordering



The Sukkot harvest festival is full of beautiful and ancient symbolism of fertility and spirituality. It is a mitzvah to sit with friends in our Sukkah and to wave the Lulav and Etrog.

Join us for services on Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 September when you will be able to fulfil this mitzvah.

The Lulav (palm frond) is a wonderful reminder of ancient and happy times and we have negotiated a special price this year so that everyone can have one at home for Sukkot and come and wave it together with our friends at BSS.

The cost of a full Lulav and Etrog set is £36.00. Please contact the Synagogue office no later than Monday 13 September to place your order.



The Rabbi, Cantor, Emeritus Rabbi and their families, Honorary Officers, Members of the Board and Staff extend their best wishes to all our members for a healthy and peaceful New Year. We are ready to welcome you to our homes.

Our experienced and caring staff ensure our homes have the highest level of cleanliness, regular testing and ample amounts of PPE.

We also know how essential it is for you to stay in touch with your loved one. We have made sure that families stay connected through one on one visits, video calls, special visiting pods and garden visits.

Each of our homes is a very special community with daily activities promoting wellbeing and stimulating both body and mind. We proudly celebrate our Jewish life and enjoy delicious Kosher food.

For more information please call our team on 020 8922 2222 or email lwjc@jcare.org

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SYNAGOGUE HELP LINES

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

51 Belsize Square, London, NW3 4HX Tel: 020 7794 3949 Email: office@synagogue.org.uk Website: www.synagogue.org.uk

SYNAGOGUE OFFICE HOURS

9.00am - 5.30pm Fridays: 9.00am-2.00pm

The office will be closed:

12pm Monday 6 September - Thursday 9 September 12pm Wednesday 15 September - Friday 17 September 12pm Monday 20 September - Thursday 23 September 12pm Monday 27 September - Thursday 30 September

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Lee Taylor - 020 7794 3949

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FUNERALS

During Synagogue Office hours phone 020 7794 3949 Evenings/weekends phone Calo's (Undertakers) 020 8958 2112

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUR CONGREGATION

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