

A photograph of an olive grove with a stone path leading through the trees. The text is overlaid on this image.

# OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

monthly newsletter of Outreach Israel Ministries  
and MESSIANIC APOLOGETICS

A close-up, slightly blurred image of the Israeli flag, showing the blue and white stripes and the Star of David.

APRIL 2025

ISAIAH 66:8

AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

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## STATEMENT OF BELIEF

*Outreach Israel Ministries  
and Messianic Apologetics*

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts

All Believers in Israel's Messiah are to be regarded as a part of the Commonwealth of Israel. Jewish and non-Jewish Believers are to respect one another in mutual love as brothers and sisters, and are to work together for the salvation of the Jewish people and return of Israel's Messiah.

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be studied and heeded by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the Believers after the Tribulation period.

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# OIM UPDATE

April 2025

J.K. McKee

I have encountered some teachings, that Isaiah 66:8 is not about the rebirth of the State of Israel in 1948.

## ISAIAH 66:8 and THE STATE OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 66:8 is a passage which all Messianic people have heard, at some point another in their Messianic experience—and too many of us have admittedly taken it for granted:

**“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Can a land be born in one day? Can a nation be brought forth at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children”** (Isaiah 66:8, TLV).

Probably too many of today’s Messianic people are completely unaware of how some others—in not just past, but even current religious history—have approached and interpreted Isaiah 66:8.<sup>1</sup> For people within today’s Messianic movement, and various sectors of evangelical Protestantism, the word of Isaiah 66:8, was a future prophecy of the rebirth of the State of Israel on 14 May, 1948. The specific vocabulary used by the Prophet Isaiah, “Who ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Is a country born in one day?” (CJSB), is often taken to represent the sheer historical impossibility, of the creation of an independent Jewish nation-state in the modern age.<sup>2</sup> Yet, it should be immediately noted that if Isaiah 66:8 foretold the founding of the State of Israel, that the emergence of such a *Medinat Yisrael*, is not the full on arrival of the Messianic Kingdom. The creation of the State of Israel would be viewed as an important step toward that,

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<sup>1</sup> For a useful review, consult “Does the Modern State of Israel Represent a Fulfillment of Prophecy?”; “What Is Christian Zionism?”, in Eckhard Schnabel, *40 Questions About The End Times* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), pp 129-142.

<sup>2</sup> “1948: Isra’el Is Reborn in a Day,” in Barry Rubin, gen. ed., *The Complete Jewish Study Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2016), 604.

though.

When reviewing the content of Isaiah 66, those of multiple interpretive traditions, can recognize that the language was based in an ancient period (whether one dates this material to the Eighth or Sixth Centuries B.C.E. or later), speaking to some kind of restoration, to then moving all the way to a final or eternal state. *What is seen?* The eternity of God (Isaiah 66:1-2) is extolled, hypocrisy of false worship is condemned (Isaiah 66:2-5), a quick restoration of Zion is anticipated (Isaiah 66:6-9). The future of Jerusalem is anticipated (Isaiah 66:10-14), involving the coming of the Lord (Isaiah 66:15) and judgment of those in idolatry (Isaiah 66:16-17).

A great gathering of scattered Israel will take place (Isaiah 66:18), involving those from many distant places (Isaiah 66:19), with those from the nations assisting (Isaiah 66:20). The Lord promises to make some of them Levites and priests (Isaiah 66:21). God's fidelity to the offspring of Israel will be just as sure as the New Heavens and New Earth which are coming (Isaiah 66:22). In the future, there will be a worldwide recognition of the New Moon and Sabbath (Isaiah 66:23). Those who rebelled against the Lord will have their burnt, decaying corpses looked on with disdain (Isaiah 66:24).

There is certainly a huge amount of material, and details to be reviewed from Isaiah ch. 66. Some of this has to be read in concert with other expectations seen of the end-times elsewhere in Holy Scripture. While it is common in today's Messianic movement, as well as various (dispensational) pre-millennial circles, to conclude that Isaiah 66:8 involves the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948—there are certainly other views to be weighed. Critical commentators have associated Isaiah 66:8 with the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon, and the rebuilding which took place with Zerubabel and Joshua.<sup>3</sup> A number of evangelical interpreters, have associated Isaiah 66:8 with the Acts 2 Day of Pentecost and birth of the Christian Church (discussed further).

Isaiah decreed how "Before she was in labor, she gave birth. Before her pain came, she delivered a male child" (Isaiah 66:7, TLV). The birth, which Mother Zion experienced, was not without some degree of pain (cf. Genesis 3:16), with it sometimes thought that what is seen is a return to Paradise (Isaiah 51:3; 65:20-24). It might also be appropriate to remember the word given to King Hezekiah, previously in Isaiah 37:3: "This day is a day of distress, rebuke and contempt. For children have come to the point of birth, and there is no strength for giving birth" (TLV).<sup>4</sup> The suddenness of the event, has been indicated as being along the lines of 1 Corinthians 15:51 and

<sup>3</sup> John D.W. Watts, *Word Biblical Commentary: Isaiah 34-66*, Vol 25 (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2005), 938.

<sup>4</sup> Derek Kidner "Isaiah," in D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 625.

the resurrection. With no clear commitment to what Isaiah 66:7-8 specifically may involve in history, both conservative and liberal examiners recognize the unique and sudden work detailed.

J. Alec Motyer, an evangelical commentator, describes how this is

“the instantaneous springing into being of a whole new society by supernatural birth.’ For the actuality of it is Zion and her sons. They are her children, by their birth is by the unique, humanly unheard-of processes of verse 7, a work of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Brevard S. Childs, supporting a critical composition of the Book of Isaiah, similarly observes,

“Whoever heard of such a thing? Then the solution is immediately revealed. God has accomplished the totally unexpected. He has brought forth the children of Zion when a birth seemed impossible.”<sup>6</sup>

There is little doubting how the language of Isaiah 66, is rooted within the experience of the Prophet’s time. But, would Isaiah just see Jerusalem (Isaiah 66:10, 20) as solely a metaphorical symbol for the people of God? What is an interpreter to do, when seeing a conclusion such as, “Here miraculously easy childbirth symbolizes the downfall of the old world and the rise of the new” (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible*)?<sup>7</sup> What is witnessed in the setting of Isaiah 66:12-17, 18? Does this depict something which occurred in association with the return of the Southern Kingdom exiles from Babylon? Or, is this to be taken as some metaphor of “the Church” as a New Israel?

One important, ancient interpretation to be aware of, is how the Targum Jonathan on Isaiah 66:7, associates this birth with the King to be revealed. This seems to indicate that this is something which has Messianic significance:

“Before distress cometh upon her, she shall be redeemed; and before trembling cometh upon her, like the pains upon a woman in child-bearing, her King shall be revealed” (Targum Jonathan on Isaiah 66:7).<sup>8</sup>

If this has some relevance to the statement, “Can a land be born in one

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<sup>5</sup> Derek Kidner “Isaiah,” in D. Guthrie and J.A. Motyer, eds., *The New Bible Commentary Revised* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 625.

<sup>6</sup> Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 541.

<sup>7</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, “Isaiah,” in Michael D. Coogan, ed. et. al., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: Fully Revised Fourth Edition*, NRSV (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1055.

<sup>8</sup> Targum Jonathan. Accessible online at <[sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh/Targum](http://sefaria.org/texts/Tanakh/Targum)>.

day? Can a nation be brought forth all at once?" (Isaiah 66:7, NASU), then it could place its timing as something which would have to occur, subsequent to the arrival of the Messiah on the scene of history. This would then exclude the return of the Southern Kingdom exiles from Babylon in the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.E. Instead, the timing of Isaiah 66:7-8 would need to be attached to the venue of the First Century C.E., or sometime afterward. If one follows the text of Isaiah 66, and its references to both Zion and Jerusalem, then a future period of regathering, excellence, and restoration is noted to occur. In the estimation of Edouard Kitoko Nsiku in the *Africa Bible Commentary*, following a fairly literal reading of these expectations,

"The prophet. . . [speaks] to the theme of a new glory for Jerusalem. . . . The Jews will suddenly be allowed to return to Jerusalem, and even that will mark the end of misery and the beginning of rejoicing and prosperity (66:10-13; see 62:5, 10; 65:18-19)."<sup>9</sup>

Many Bible readers naturally take the expectation of Isaiah 66:10-13, as involving a special, future place for Jerusalem in God's plan:

"Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her all you who mourned over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied from her comforting breast. You will drink deeply and delight from her glorious abundance. For thus says *ADONAI*: 'Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream. You will be nursed, carried on the hip, and bounced on her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you, so you will be comforted in Jerusalem'" (Isaiah 66:10-13, TLV).

God's future plans for Zion and Jerusalem and the people of Israel, are hardly isolated from His plans for the wider world:

"For I know their works and their thoughts. It will come about that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see My glory. Then I will set up a sign among them, and I will send survivors from them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul and Lud (who pull the bow), to Tubal and Javan, to distant islands that have not heard My fame or seen My glory. Then they will declare My glory among the nations. Then they will bring all your kinsmen from all the nations, as an offering to *ADONAI*, on horses and in chariots, and on litters, mules and camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,' says *ADONAI*, 'just as *Bnei-Yisrael* bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the House of *ADONAI*. I will also take some of them as priests and for Le-

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<sup>9</sup> Edouard Kitoko Nsiku, "Isaiah," in Tokunboh Adeyemo, gen. ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 852.

vites,' says *ADONAI*. . . 'And it will come to pass, that from one New Moon to another, and from one *Shabbat* to another, all flesh will come to bow down before Me,' says *ADONAI*" (Isaiah 66:18-21, 23, TLV).

Yet, while many see in these prophecies a sudden restoration of Israel's hegemony, and return of Jewish people and scattered exiles to the Promised Land, this is not the only approach one will encounter. There are those who we would regard as being relatively conservative evangelicals, who specifically associate the expectation of Isaiah 66:8 with the supposed birth of "the Church" on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. In the view of Barry G. Webb, in *The Message of Isaiah*,

"There is a profound prophetic insight here, for in the fullness of time the new age came to birth just as Isaiah predicted. Out of the Israel of the old covenant, judged and rejected by God, emerged the church of Jesus Christ. It was already 'born', as it were, before Jerusalem's destruction; that was simply the severing of the umbilical cord. Zion had given birth to a movement that could not be contained within ethnic, territorial, or political boundaries. It would spread to the ends of the earth, but always owe a debt to the mother who gave it birth."<sup>10</sup>

Here, in no uncertain terms, does Webb say that Israel has been "judged and rejected by God."<sup>11</sup> But to be fair to him, he does indicate in a footnote how the Jewish heritage of Christianity is to be acknowledged.

John N. Oswalt, an otherwise reliable and relatively trustworthy evangelical Old Testament theologian, associates the scene surrounding Isaiah 66:8 with events seen in salvation history, leading up to the return of the Messiah. While the apparent birth of "the Church" at Pentecost is mentioned, it is detectable enough, here at least, that he is operating from a supersessionist hermeneutic, where references to Jerusalem and Zion become abstracted symbols for the people of God—rather than God's salvation historical activity centered around Israel proper, the city of Jerusalem, and literal Mount Zion:

"This imagery certainly applies to a number of events in redemption history. For instance, it describes the release from captivity, which suddenly became a reality with Cyrus's conquest of Babylon. It also describes the rise of the Hasmonean kingdom, with Mattathias Maccabeus's dramatic refusal to desecrate the Torah (1 Macc. 2:15-27). It describes the birth of the church at Pentecost, and it describes the outburst of the Reformation.

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<sup>10</sup> Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 248.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, fn#146.

Nor is the end yet. The day will come when Christ, Isaiah's Servant/Messiah, will break through the skies, and in a single moment Zion will give birth to a brand-new people, a people forever set free from the curse of sin."<sup>12</sup>

Recognizing some of these challenging approaches witnessed—not among critical interpreters, who would limit Isaiah 66:8 to the return of the Southern Kingdom exiles from Babylon, but conservatives to abstract it to speak of the apparent birth of “the Church” as the new people of God—how are today's Messianic people to best approach Isaiah 66:6-24? **We have to go to the text**, and follow what is seen in Isaiah 66:8, within the larger series of events detailed, leading all the way to the future eschaton:

**There will be a sudden coming forth from Zion, described as a birth followed by, rather than preceded by, labor pains:**

“A voice of tumult from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that repays his enemies what they deserve. ‘Before she travailed, she gave birth. Before her pain came, she delivered a son. Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travailed, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to be delivered?’ says the LORD. ‘Shall I who cause to give birth shut the womb?’ says your God” (Isaiah 66:6-9, WMB).

**God's people are to rejoice in, and be comforted by, the city of Jerusalem:**

“Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her. Rejoice for joy with her, all you who mourn over her; that you may nurse and be satisfied at the comforting breasts; that you may drink deeply, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory.’ For the LORD says, ‘Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream, and you will nurse. You will be carried on her side, and will be dandled on her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you. You will be comforted in Jerusalem.’ You will see it, and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones will flourish like the tender grass. The LORD's hand will be known among his servants; and he will have indignation against his enemies” (Isaiah 66:10-14, WMB).

**The coming judgment of the Lord, on those who commit acts of idolatry, is certain:**

“For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and his chariots will be like the whirlwind; to render his anger with fierceness, and his rebuke

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<sup>12</sup> John N. Oswalt, *New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 675.

with flames of fire. For the LORD will execute judgment by fire and by his sword on all flesh; and those slain by the LORD will be many. Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go to the gardens, following one in the middle, eating pig's meat, abominable things, and the mouse, they shall come to an end together,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:15-17, WMB).

**A specific number, of the regathered people of Israel, will be sent out into the nations, to hear about the God of Israel. Those from the nations who have heard about the God of Israel, will aid in seeing the final exiles of Israel and the Jewish people return home. Some of those, from the nations, will actually be made priests of the God of Israel:**

"For I know their works and their thoughts. The time comes that I will gather all nations and languages, and they will come, and will see my glory. I will set a sign among them, and I will send those who escape of them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to far-away islands, who have not heard my fame, nor have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. They shall bring all your brothers out of all the nations for an offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, and on camels, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, as the children of Israel bring their offering in a clean vessel into the LORD's house. Of them I will also select priests and Levites,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:18-21, WMB).

**The Lord decrees that the offspring and fame of Israel, will last as long as the New Heavens and New Earth:**

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me,' says the LORD, 'so your offspring and your name shall remain'" (Isaiah 66:22, WMB).

**All flesh will come and worship the Lord, in worldwide observance of the New Moon and Sabbath:**

"It shall happen that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh will come to worship before me,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:23, WMB).

**There will be a reminder of some rebellion, committed against the God of Israel:**

"They will go out, and look at the dead bodies of the men who have transgressed against me; for their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind" (Isaiah 66:24, WMB).

Why have there been those, quick to associate the oracle of Isaiah 66:6-24, with something other than a literal restoration of Israel's Kingdom, leading all the way to the Eternal State? For certain, when the State of Israel was founded in 1948, many expositors were forced to reevaluate their positions regarding the future of Israel, the Jewish people, and the like. Many came to the conclusion that an autonomous Jewish nation-state was a necessary element of future prophecy—although it could only be regarded as an installment toward the ultimate restoration of the Messianic Kingdom, anticipated by the Apostles (cf. Acts 1:6).

The sudden arrival of the modern State of Israel, was like a quick birth, with the labor pain actually having come afterward, not before (Isaiah 66:6-9). Given the evitable fight modern Israel has had, for its ongoing security and very survival, this is hardly a surprise. God's intention for Jerusalem is for it to be a beacon of rejoicing and comfort (Isaiah 66:10-14). Yet, also within God's intention, is for a final regathering of His people to the Holy Land to occur—something which involves the participation of both returned exiles *and* those from the nations, who have acknowledged Him (Isaiah 66:18-21). Since the State of Israel was founded, not only has there been a steady rise in the native population, but also mass immigration from the Jewish Diaspora. A great deal of this has taken place with the assistance of Christian persons, who love Israel and the Jewish people, and acknowledge that God has a unique place for them within His plans for human history.

It is extremely difficult to simply allegorize an expectation like Isaiah 66:20—"Then they will bring all your kinsmen from all the nations, as an offering to *ADONAI*, on horses and in chariots, and on litters, mules and camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem" (TLV)—as solely representing a massive number of generic people turning to faith in the Lord. Yet, this kind of approach has doubtlessly been seen by those supporting supersessionism or replacement theology. Why have there continued to be thousands of theologians, pastors, and lay readers of Isaiah 66:6-24, who refuse to associate it—in any way—with what has been seen regarding modern Israel, the return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land, and its **continued survival** in a world extremely hostile to it?

Many contemporary Protestants are continuing in a denominational tradition of supersessionism or replacement theology. The most common way you will see it expressed, is when someone says that “Why should I care about what is happening with Israel in the Middle East?”, or perhaps more provocatively, “I don’t believe that the State of Israel has any Biblical right to exist.” This does not mean that such people are necessarily opposed to the existence of the State of Israel, on the grounds of Jewish self-determination, though. But any kind of future expectation in God’s supernatural plan, regarding an autonomous Jewish nation-state, is not anticipated.

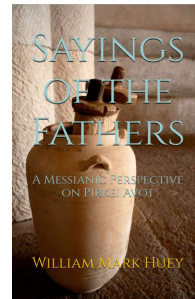
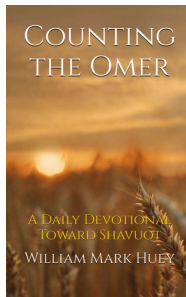
Many others, who would be regarded as relatively conservative evangelicals, are seen to have once supported the State of Israel, perhaps on the grounds of a prophecy such as Isaiah 66:8. But, they have now been seen to retract such support, and adhere to more supersessionist approaches. A great deal of this has occurred in response to the abuses of dispensational theology and false pre-tribulation rapture predictions—but most of all, thinking that when Believers support the State of Israel, it means that no criticism can ever be offered of Israel. Perhaps most disturbing, though, there is a growing number of Christian people, who once supported the State of Israel on Biblical grounds, who have now been caught up in various anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist conspiracy theories.

As obvious as it may be, the only valid answer anyone can provide for what is coming, **is by appealing to what is seen in the Biblical text.** On what Biblical basis, can an interpreter justifiably allegorize appeals made to Jerusalem, Zion, and the return of physical Israelites and Jews, from the far reaches of Planet Earth, to the Land of Israel?

When contemplating what is likely to be seen in the future—with more and more conservative evangelicals going through some kind of deconstruction, and with it abandoning their once strong support for the State of Israel on Biblical grounds—what should today’s Messianic movement be focused on? Messianic congregations and synagogues, in the Diaspora, need to possibly make more effort to stress how while they surely stand in support of the State of Israel, that the State of Israel is not at all the restored Messianic Kingdom. The State of Israel is a *first installment* toward that, a definite player in the end-times, but is not the end-all of what the Apostles would have anticipated (cf. Acts 1:6). That can only come about by today’s Believers in Israel’s Messiah aligning themselves with the Romans 11:25-26ff trajectory of salvation history: “all Israel will be saved.” Such a goal will not be realized until Yeshua Himself returns to Planet Earth, defeats His enemies, and reigns from Jerusalem.

Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are on the rise, and with this, **Israel and the Jewish people need as many friends and allies as they can get.** This prophecy anticipates the legitimate involvement of non-Jewish people as co-laborers in the restoration of Israel (Isaiah 66:20), who play a direct role in seeing the final exiles of Israel and the Jewish people return home to the Holy Land. But these people are not simply those who are going to be used for their labor and economic resources; it is asserted how some of them are actually going to be made into priests and Levites to the God of Israel (Isaiah 66:21). While some of the specifics of what this means, may only be known subsequent to Yeshua's return—consider all of the non-Jewish Believers who make up a huge part of today's Diaspora Messianic movement. Consider the people who have been genuinely called by the Lord, into this faith community, in spite of some of the external *and* internal difficulties they have faced.

Many non-Jewish people, who once strongly supported the Jewish community and State of Israel—and then reneged on it, in some significant way—often did so because of some incident they had. While circumstances vary, today's Messianic Jewish movement has seen many non-Jewish people leave—and either return to their previous Christian settings, or more likely, enter into the Hebrew Roots movement—often because they were treated as inferior or second class to Messianic Jewish Believers. *This is greatly unfortunate.* The Lord's intention, even if it just ends up being a kind of titular honor akin to a knighthood—is to see those from the nations, who co-labor in the restoration of Israel—as being regarded as some kind of priests or Levites. Is it even possible, for this kind of welcome, to be implemented in today's Diaspora Messianic congregations and synagogues? There should be little doubt that in some, this level of honor is being demonstrated to the true friends and allies of Israel. And in others, this level of honor is being dismissed, with differences and distinctions among God's people overplayed.



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