



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

HOSEA,
JOEL, AMOS

Week 4

DAY 22

The Painful Truth!

Amos 2

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been “blind” to character flaws that others could see?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What crime did Moab commit against Edom (v. 1)?
2. Judah had become involved in certain practices that greatly offended God. She had demonstrated over time that she wouldn't repent. What were these three sins (v. 4)?
3. How had Israel (vs. 6-8) offended God? How many of these activities involved sins against vulnerable people?
4. What sin had Israel committed against the Nazirites and the prophets (v. 12) that weakened their faith?
5. In verses 14-16, count the number of military references used. What was Israel counting on to save her from destruction?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Has anyone ever had to point out the “painful truth” to you about a sin in your life?
2. What makes these truths so painful?

WINDOW
on the Word

*“Burned the bones...of Edom's king”(v. 1). In ancient times, a dead body was honored, so to desecrate a tomb or body in any way was a terrible offense. Many surviving tomb inscriptions give violent warnings to any who would try. **“They sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals”** (v. 6). The honest poor, who were willing to try to pay off their debts to the rich, were sold into slavery for the silver they owed. The poor were enslaved over debts as small as the price of sandals. These were sins Israel was committing against her own people in her times of greatest prosperity.*

An Inevitable Conclusion

DAY 23

Amos 3

Make a list of at least five great advantages you were born with. How have you honored God with these blessings?

1. What was the main reason Israel's judgment would be so severe (v. 2)?
2. What are the answers to the questions in verses 3-6? What point was God trying to press home?
3. Who did God send to warn his people of what was to come (vs. 7-8)?
4. From verse 15, would you describe Israel as a poor country, or a rich one? How might an obsession with wealth have helped speed Israel's end as a nation?

1. Do you believe you were born with more advantages or disadvantages than the average person in the world?
2. Have you ever benefitted from what you would consider a "prophetic message" you received?

"Have I chosen" (v. 2). *The word chosen was used in ancient treaties to describe a king's relationship with his subjects. By sinful exploitation, the rich had created great wealth for themselves. The words **plunder and loot** (v. 10) refer to violent criminal acts against people and property. This had become such a part of their lives that they no longer knew "how to do right." "As a shepherd saves from the lion's mouth" (v.12). When a wild beast killed an animal under a shepherd's care, pieces of that animal needed to be presented to show the animal had not been stolen (Ex 22:10-13). Those in Samaria and Israel should not believe that they would escape the coming judgment of God. They would be like ravaged prey—totally destroyed, with little evidence left of their former glory.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Prone to Wander

Amos 4

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever gone through a set of experiences that seemed designed by God to get your attention?

DIGGING
into the Word

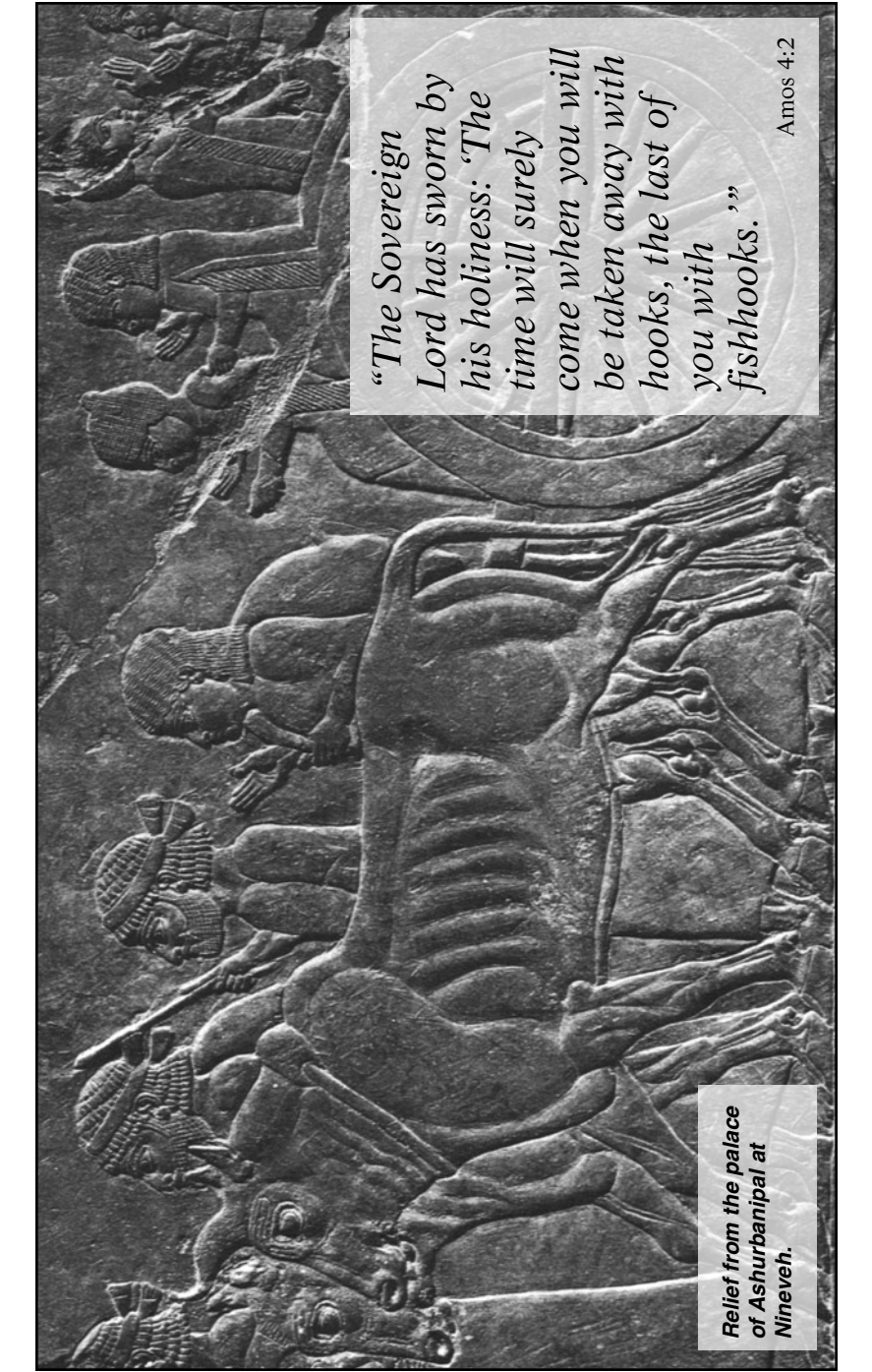
1. The women of Israel were guilty of three disgraceful and offensive sins against God, for which he would judge them (v. 1). What are these three sins, and why do you think God particularly targeted women here?
2. Israel was still faithful about bringing offerings to God, but their attitude offended him. What did they love to do (v. 5) that God hated?
3. In verses 6-10 God details what he had done to try to get Israel to repent and turn back to him. How could the Israelites have missed what God was saying to them?
4. What phrase is repeated in verses 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11? What is God trying to emphasize to Israel by repeating this phrase over and over again?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Identify and ponder times of “wandering” in your life.
2. How has God helped you stop your past spiritual wanderings?
3. How can a Christ-centered path help ensure (and assure) us that we will not spiritually wander?

WINDOW
on the Word

The region of Bashan (v. 1) was known for its excellent cattle. Amos is comparing the women of Samaria to pampered and overfed “cows of Bashan.” While providing themselves with luxuries, they oppressed the poor and needy. “Taken away with hooks” (v. 2). These proud society ladies would be led away to captivity or death fastened to ropes with hooks. Those who resisted would be snagged with large fishhooks.



*“The Sovereign
Lord has sworn by
his holiness: ‘The
time will surely
come when you will
be taken away with
hooks, the last of
you with
fishhooks.’”*

Amos 4:2

**Relief from the palace
of Ashurbanipal at
Nineveh.**

The Justice of a Nation

Amos 5:1-17

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever been deprived of justice or cheated by someone? Have you ever had to go to court and sit through a trial? Did you feel justice was done?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How severe was the death rate going to be in the coming military conflict to which Amos has reference (v. 3)?
2. What specific charges did God level against the house of Israel in his lawsuit against them (vs. 7, 10, 11, 12)?
3. Was Israel a poor, destitute people or a wealthy people? Was God angry at their wealth or at how they acquired it (v. 11)?
4. What were the poor in Israel being deprived of in court (v. 12)?
5. What mistaken impression of God did the Israelites have (v. 14) that would cost them dearly?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Have you ever been involved in any kind of business activity in which you profited by taking unfair advantage of others?
2. Is it a sin to be wealthy (Ecc 5:19; Pr 10:22)? What warnings concerning wealth are found in Scripture (Pr 11; 13; 28:8; 1Ti 6:9-10; Heb 13:5)?
3. Is your reputation with money and business practices (a) generous and fair, (b) tight but fair, (c) selfish and slightly dishonest, (d) greedy and dishonest?

WINDOW
on the Word

A **lament** was a poem of grief usually sung at a funeral of a beloved person. Though at this time Israel was enjoying unparalleled prosperity under Jeroboam II, Amos mourns for her as if the judgment had already occurred. To the wealthy, secure and self-confident, Amos' message would seem almost comical. They could not foresee anything happening to destroy their prosperity and security.

A Nasty Surprise

DAY 26

Amos 5:18-27

Have you ever looked forward to something with great eagerness, only to discover later that it would become one of the worst experiences of your life?

1. What did Amos mean by *the Day of the Lord* and why were the people of Israel longing for it (v. 18)?
2. What did God say would characterize the Day of the Lord (v. 20)?
3. How was God responding to Israel's religious activity (vs. 21-25)? (a) with joy, (b) with little joy, (c) with anger, (d) with no feeling at all.
4. What did God want to see more than anything else in Israel (vs. 21-24)? (a) more religious feasts, ceremonies and rituals, (b) more burnt offerings, (c) more justice and righteousness, and (d) more music and worship.
5. Although Israel was fulfilling the letter of the law in observing the external religious activity God had commanded, what else were they doing that offended God (v. 26)?

1. Have you ever felt that religious activities, programs and involvement can lead a person away from God?
2. True or false—as long as you go to church, pay your tithes, memorize creeds and prayers and do what your congregation/denomination requires, God will be pleased with you.

*Israel believed that the prophesied **Day of the Lord** would usher in a time when God would conquer all of her enemies (Isa 34:1-3, 10; Jer 46:10), so they prayed for that day to come. But they didn't realize that God was no longer with them, since they had been unfaithful to him. In fact, Israel had chosen to live a wicked life and it is the consequences of wickedness Amos describes.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

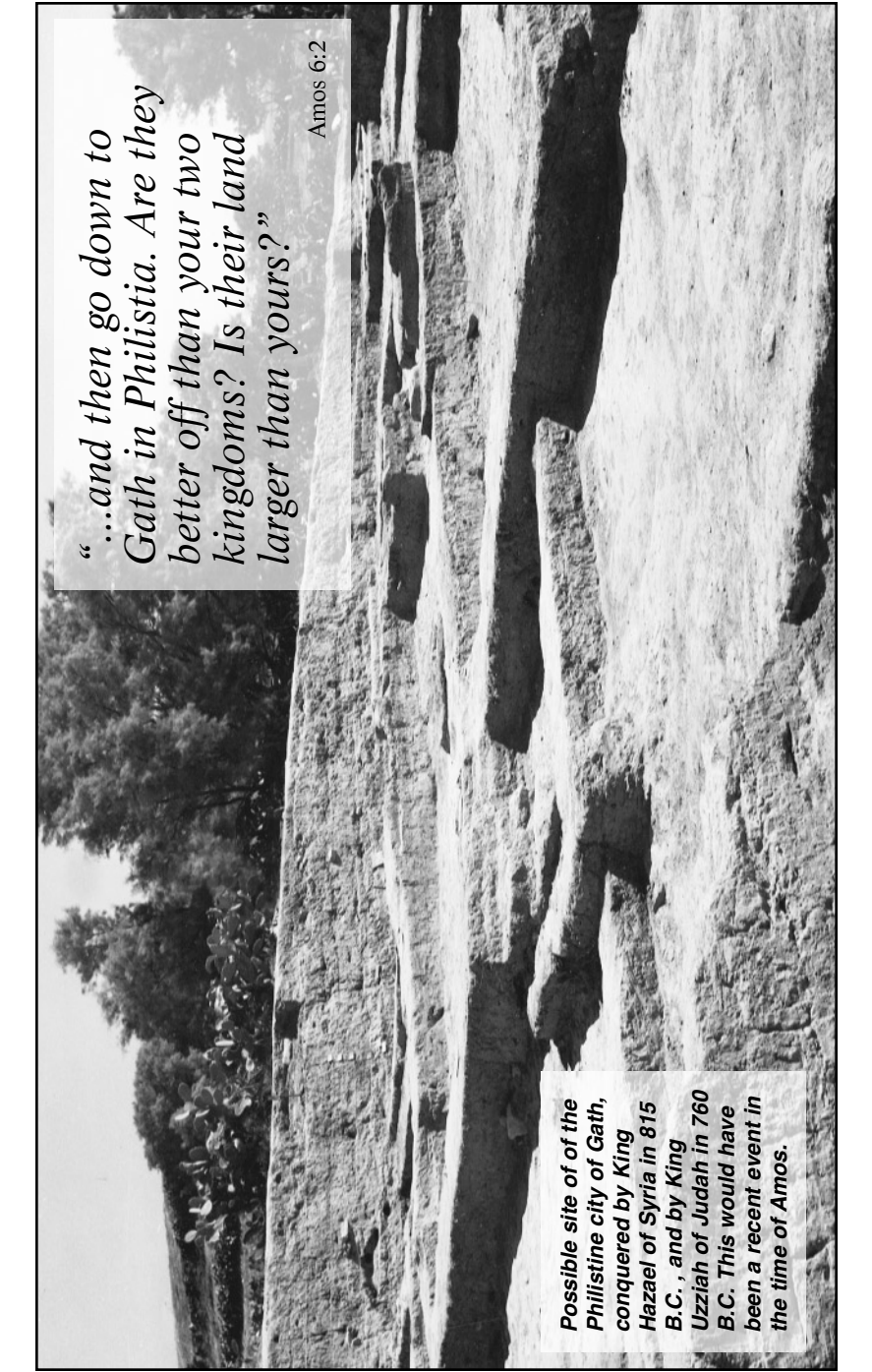
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



“...and then go down to Gath in Philistia. Are they better off than your two kingdoms? Is their land larger than yours?”

Amos 6:2

Possible site of the Philistine city of Gath, conquered by King Hazael of Syria in 815 B.C., and by King Uzziah of Judah in 760 B.C. This would have been a recent event in the time of Amos.

The Death of the Good Life

DAY 27

Amos 6

If someone were to ask you to describe your version of the “good life,” what would you include?

1. What two attitudes does God warn Israel of in verse 1?
2. Why did God want them to look at Calneh, Hamath and Gath (v. 2)?
3. Read verses 4-6 and try to create a mental picture of what life was like in those days when Israel was being warned of great disaster. Why might it have been hard for them to take warnings of judgment seriously?
4. Who would be among the first to go into exile (v. 7)?
5. Why would someone fear to mention the name of the Lord (vs. 9-10)?

1. Do you think material prosperity, or the lack thereof, helps or hinders our relationship with God?

2. How would you feel toward God if you suddenly experienced a downturn in your lifestyle and income? Would you blame Him? Would you see it as a blessing or a curse?

“Calneh, Hamath, Gath” (v. 2). The citizens of Samaria considered themselves the notable men of the nation. Since they were superior economically and militarily, they were among the most distinguished citizens. They boasted of their national security and power. Amos warned them that Calneh and Hamath (city-states in northern Syria) also once considered themselves great. But they had been overrun by Assyria during Shalmaneser III’s campaign in 854-846 B.C. Gath, in Philistia, had succumbed to the same fate in 815 B.C. by Hazael, king of Syria, and again in 760 B.C. by Uzziah (2Ki 12:17; 2 Ch 26:6).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

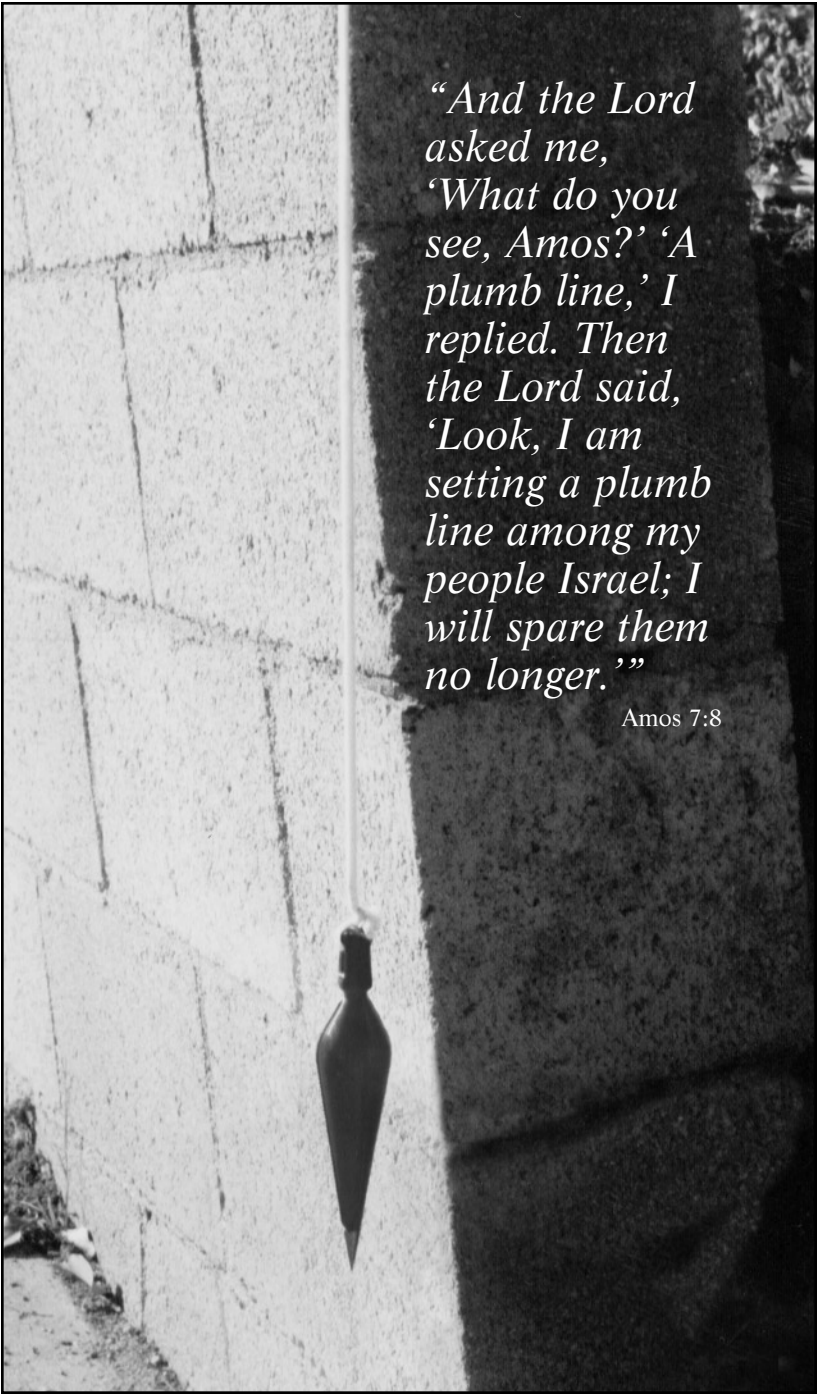
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



“And the Lord asked me, ‘What do you see, Amos?’ ‘A plumb line,’ I replied. Then the Lord said, ‘Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer.’”

Amos 7:8

Three Strikes— You're Out!

DAY 28

Amos 7

Have you ever had to hear something painful or unpleasant from someone you really disliked? Did that make it more difficult to accept what they said?

1. Why did God relent on two judgments against Israel (vs. 1-6)?
2. What aspect of God's nature did Amos appeal to in order to avert judgment (vs. 2, 4)?
3. What is the significance of a plumb line (v. 7), and what did this judgment mean?
4. Who complained to King Jeroboam about Amos' prophetic messages (v. 10)?
5. What judgment would befall Amaziah's family as a result of his rejecting the Lord's message (v. 17)?

1. If God were to "measure your life" how do you feel you would fare? (a) much better than average, (b) a little better than average, (c) average, (d) below average.
2. What do you depend on for God's favor? (a) your faithful church attendance, (b) your generous donations, (c) your Bible study, (d) your evangelistic efforts, (e) your good deeds helping the young, the poor and the elderly, (f) God's grace and mercy in Christ.
3. At the end of our earthly lives, against what standard do you think God will measure our lives (Col 3:1-4)?

*"The king's share" (v. 1). Kings claimed a right to the first crop of grain, since the needs of the government and military had to be met first. A **plumb line** (vs. 7-8) was a cord attached to a lead weight used to test whether a wall was vertical. It could also be used to test whether existing walls had tilted and needed to be torn down. This was the idea God was conveying. His judgment on Israel was not arbitrary but based on the standard, or covenant, Israel had failed to keep. Israel was no longer "plumb," or straight, and needed to be torn down.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

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WINDOW

on the Word

Ripe for the Picking

Amos 8

OPENING
up to the Word

What does it take to completely exhaust your patience towards someone? How many chances do you usually give someone before you do something?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the significance of Amos' vision of a basket of ripe fruit (vs. 1-2)? How did this resemble Israel's present predicament? What were the specific issues that "ripened" Israel's sin before God (vs. 4-6)?

2. What did the dishonest and corrupt practices of the people of Israel include (vs. 5-6)?

3. What promise did the Lord make to Israel (v. 7)?

4. Another famine was prophesied against Israel, but a famine of a unique kind. What would there be a famine of in the future (v. 11)?

LIVING
out the Word

Have you ever experienced a "spiritual famine," when it seemed as if God was not communicating with you? What do you think caused it?

WINDOW
on the Word

Ripe fruit (vs. 1-2) was harvested late in the summer, the last fruit of the season. It could not be kept long before spoiling. What would normally be seen as a sign of good times and abundance was actually the final ripening of the penalties and pain the people of Israel brought on themselves. Israel was consumed by their **greedy pursuit of wealth**.

You Can Run, but You Can't Hide

DAY 30

Amos 9

Have you ever tried to find a way to escape an unpleasant situation or task you know you needed to perform? What was the result of your attempt?

1. Where was the Lord standing, and what did this represent to Israel (v. 1)?
2. Compare verses 2-4 with Psalm 139:7-12 and contrast the assurance of an obedient heart with the destruction of a disobedient heart.
3. Despite Israel's sin and her impending judgment, what promise did God make (vs. 11-12)?
4. When would these idyllic days for Israel (vs. 13-15) be realized?

1. When faced with an impending negative situation of your own making, is your tendency to: (a) run away, (b) try to avoid it and hope it goes away, (c) face the problem and the consequences?
2. God is always willing to forgive us. What does the Bible teach that Jesus' death on the cross accomplished for you (1Pe 3:18; 2Co 5:18-21; Ro 5:8-10)?
3. What does the New Testament teach you about God's eternal attitude towards those who trust in him (Ro 8:35-39)? Make a list of those things that can never separate you from the love of Christ.

Cushites (v. 7) lived in Ethiopia and Nubia and were considered so far away as to be insignificant to Israel. Now Israel was no different to God than any other nation. James cites Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:15-18 to show that **gentiles did not need to become circumcised** and live as Jews in order to be saved. Edom was a gentile nation hostile to Israel, yet gentiles would find a place in the coming "Kingdom of David" when many Israelites would not. In Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female..." (Gal 3:28).

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