



Children's National®

# Chaplaincy Services

## *Holy Days, Celebrations and Observances of October 2020*

**October 3 – 9 Sukkot Jewish** Many Jewish communities in the United States celebrate the first day of Sukkot (Succot, Succoth, Sukkoth), which is the start of the Sukkot period. This period, also known as the Feast of Tabernacles, lasts for about seven days. It is observed during the week starting on 15th day of Tishri (or Tishrei), which is the first month of the year in the Jewish calendar. Even though First Day of Sukkot falls on Saturday, October 3, 2020, it is a working day. Most businesses follow regular opening hours in the United States. Many Jewish Americans build a temporary booth known as the sukkah, which is where they eat, sleep and use for the Sukkot period, which lasts for about seven days. The first day of Sukkot is kept like the Sabbath so many Jewish people do not engage in certain work activities on this day. The rest of the days during the Sukkot period are days when work is permitted.

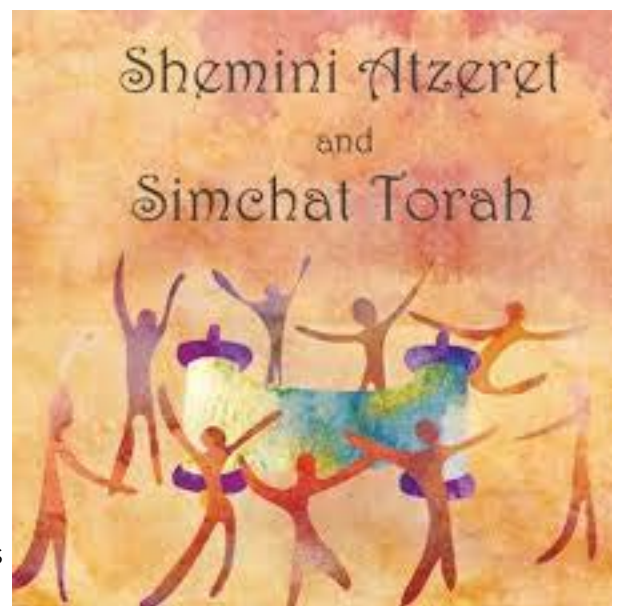


Many Jewish people in the northeast United States hang dry squash and corn in the sukkah to decorate it. These vegetables are sometimes used for Halloween and Thanksgiving afterwards. Building and decorating a sukkah prior to Sukkot is a fun project for many Jewish Americans, in a similar fashion to decorating the Christmas tree prior to Christmas Day. Many also observe a religious duty, or mitzvah, known as waving the four species (of plants) and reciting a blessing. This deed is usually performed each day during Sukkot (except for the Sabbath). The first day of Sukkot is not a nationwide public holiday in the United States. However, many Jewish businesses, schools and organizations may be closed or offer a reduced level of service. The Sukkot period is a time to remember the Jewish people's wandering in the desert for 40 years following their exodus from Egypt, according to Jewish teachings. It is also a time to celebrate the grape harvest. Some sources claim that Sukkot lasts for about seven days while others state that it is an eight-day festival. The seventh day of Sukkot is known as Hoshana Rabbah while the eighth day is known as Shmini Atzeret and the day after is called Simchat Torah. An important Sukkot symbol is the sukkah. This is a temporary structure with a roof made of sechach or s'chach, which is raw, unfinished plant material, such as palm branches, bamboo poles, reeds or even corn stalks. The "four species" are also important symbols of Sukkot and represent the blessings of nature. These are lulav (a green, closed frond of a date palm tree), hadass (twigs and leaves from a myrtle tree), aravah (twigs and leaves from a willow tree) and etrog (a lemon-like fruit of the citron tree).

Coming at the conclusion of Sukkot are the two holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah. In Israel and among liberal Jews they are combined into one holiday on the day after the conclusion of Sukkot. Among more traditional Jews outside of Israel, they are observed separately from one another on two consecutive days. Shemini Atzeret means the "Eighth Day of Assembly," while Simchat Torah means "Rejoicing in Torah." (Photo: Chabad.org)

**October 10 Shemini Atezeret Jewish** Shemini Atzeret is mentioned in the Bible, but its exact function is unclear. In Second Temple times, it appears to have been a day devoted to the ritual cleansing of the altar in the Temple. With the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, this function of the day became obsolete. Although it marks the beginning of the rainy season in Israel and, therefore includes the year's first prayer for rain, its lack of clear definition may have provided the impetus to celebrate it in conjunction with Simchat Torah, a celebration of the conclusion of one and the beginning of another annual cycle of readings from the Torah. This latter holiday probably originated during the medieval period. Unlike many other holidays, the observance of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are centered in the synagogue and community. On Shemini Atzeret, some still eat in the sukkah (the traditional hut associated with the festival of Sukkot), but in contrast to Sukkot no blessings are associated with that activity. Beginning on Shemini Atzeret and lasting until Pesach (Passover), a short prayer for rain is inserted into the second blessing of the Amidah Prayer. It is tradition to include the Yizkor, or memorial service, as part of the liturgy for this day. Simchat Torah is characterized by joyful dancing with the Torah. The final portion of the Book of Deuteronomy is read in the synagogue followed by the beginning of the Book of Genesis. In this manner, the annual cycle of Torah readings continues unbroken. While Shemini Atzeret's significance is somewhat unclear, Simchat Torah conveys a clear message about the centrality of the Torah in Jewish life. It is both a source of Jewish identity and a precious gift from God. Simchat Torah is the day on which the whole community gathers to come into direct contact with the Torah and to express our joy in having received it. Simchat Torah means "Rejoicing in the Torah." This holiday marks the completion of the annual cycle of weekly Torah readings. Each week in synagogue we publicly read a few chapters from the Torah, starting with Genesis Ch. 1 and working our way around to Deuteronomy 34. On Simchat Torah, we read the last Torah portion, then proceed immediately to the first chapter of Genesis, reminding us that the Torah is a circle and never ends. (Photo: rpjc.org)

**October 11 Simchat Torah Jewish** This completion of the readings is a time of great celebration. There are processions around the synagogue carrying Torah scrolls and plenty of high-spirited singing and dancing in the synagogue with the Torahs. Drinking is also common during this time; in fact, a traditional source recommends performing the priestly blessing earlier than usual in the service, to make sure the kohanim are not drunk when the time comes! As many people as possible are given the honor of an aliyah (reciting a blessing over the Torah reading); in fact, even children are called for an aliyah blessing on Simchat Torah. In addition, as many people as possible are given the honor of carrying a Torah scroll in these processions. Children do not carry the scrolls (they are much too heavy!), but often follow the procession around the synagogue, sometimes carrying small toy Torahs (stuffed plush toys or paper scrolls). In some synagogues, confirmation ceremonies or ceremonies marking the beginning of a child's Jewish education are held at this time. Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are holidays on which work is not permitted.



**October 12 Indigenous Peoples' Day** The first documented observance of Columbus Day in the United States took place in New York City in 1792, on the 300th anniversary of Columbus's landfall in the Western Hemisphere. The holiday originated as an annual celebration of Italian-American heritage in San Francisco in 1869. In 1934, at the request of the Knights of Columbus and New York City's Italian community, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared the first national observance of Columbus Day. President Roosevelt and the U.S. Congress made October 12 a national holiday three years later. In 1972 President Richard Nixon signed a proclamation making the official date of the holiday the second Monday in October.

Generations of Native people, however, throughout the Western Hemisphere have protested Columbus Day. In the forefront of their minds is the fact the colonial takeovers of the Americas, starting with Columbus, led to the deaths of millions of Native people and the forced assimilation of survivors. In 1977 participants at the United Nations International Conference on Discrimination against Indigenous Populations in the Americas proposed that Indigenous Peoples' Day replace Columbus Day. Indigenous Peoples' Day recognizes that Native people are the first inhabitants of the Americas, including the lands that later became the United States of America. And it urges Americans to rethink history.



The movement to replace Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day or Native American Day has gained momentum and spread to states, cities and towns across the United States. The first state to rename Columbus Day was South Dakota in 1990. Hawai'i has also changed the name of its October 12 holiday to Discoverers' Day, in honor of the Polynesian navigators who peopled the islands. Berkeley, California, became the first city to make the change in 1992, when the city council renamed Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples' Day.

In 2015 an estimated 6,000 Native people and their supporters gathered at Randall's Island, New York, to recognize the survival of the Indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. The demonstration's success and the worldwide media attention it attracted planted the seeds for creating an Indigenous Peoples' Day in New York City. [In 2019] the nation's capital passed a resolution to change the holiday to Indigenous Peoples' Day. Universities and schools across the country are also observing the new commemoration. (Photo: quuf.org)

**October 17 Navaratri Hindu** Navaratri (nine nights) is one of the greatest Hindu festivals. It symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. Navratri takes place at the beginning of October around harvest time and, as the name implies, this festival is celebrated for nine days. Navratri is also known as Durga Puja. During this period, Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati are worshiped as three different manifestations of Shakti, or cosmic energy. The festival is dedicated to Durga, the mother goddess who also represents power. Durga annihilated the demon Mahishasura after a relentless battle lasting nine days and nights.

Navaratri is a festival in which God is adored as Mother. It is said that Shiva gave permission to Durga to see her mother for nine days in the year and this festival also remembers this visit. Families make an attempt to return home on these days, and leave on the tenth. Hinduism is the only religion in the world which has emphasized to such an extent the motherhood of God.

To celebrate a good harvest and to propitiate the nine planets, women also plant nine different kinds of food grain seeds in small containers during these nine days and then offer the young saplings to the goddess. During Navaratri, some devotees of Durga observe a fast and prayers are offered for the protection of health and property. A period of introspection and purification, Navaratri is traditionally an auspicious time for starting new ventures. Navaratri is celebrated by communities getting together for dances and nightly feasts. In India, the most colorful and elaborate celebrations take part in Bengal, where huge idols of the goddess are worshiped. In Gujarat painted earthen pots with water or a lamp inside symbolize the power of the goddess. The flame symbolizes everlasting divine power whilst the fluid water is transitory. Feasts of great variety and delicacy are offered to guests and family during the nine days. For women, Navaratri is a time for shopping for new clothes and new pots. It is an auspicious time to buy gold or jewelery and the gold markets are open late each night. Women dress elaborately each day for the puja or rituals and nightly dances.

Another part of the puja may involve designing puja-thalis or aartis which are decorated plates in honor of the mother goddess, Amba (Ambika). The tenth day of the festival is called Dasera, and marks the triumph of good over evil, and also the motherhood of God. Durga Puja is particularly important for Hindus in Bengal. After having worshiped her for nine days, her image is taken to the streets in a procession and there is much celebration and dancing. To mark Durga leaving her mother after the nine day visit, her image is cast into water. In northern parts of India, Hindus also celebrate Rama's victory over Ravana during this time. This festival is called Dussera. The ten days represent the ten heads of Ravana, and each day is used by Hindus to get rid of bad characteristics, such as lust and jealousy. The tenth day is known as the Day of Victory. (Photo: telugabasha.com)



**October 18 Saint Luke, Apostle and Evangelist Christian** On October 18, Catholics and other Christians around the world will celebrate the feast of St. Luke, the physician and companion of St. Paul whose gospel preserved the most extensive biography of Jesus Christ. St. Luke wrote a greater volume of the New Testament than any other single author, including the earliest history of the Church. Ancient traditions also acknowledge Luke as the founder of Christian iconography, making him a patron of artists as well as doctors and other medical caregivers. Luke came from the large metropolitan city of Antioch, a part of modern-day Turkey. In Luke's lifetime, his native city emerged as an important center of early Christianity. During the future saint's early years, the city's port had already become a cultural center, renowned for arts and sciences. Historians do not know whether Luke came to Christianity from Judaism or paganism, although there are strong suggestions that Luke was a gentile convert.

Educated as a physician in the Greek-speaking city, Luke was among the most cultured and cosmopolitan members of the early Church. Scholars of archeology and ancient literature have ranked him among the top historians of his time period, besides noting the outstanding Greek prose style and technical accuracy of his accounts of Christ's life and the apostles' missionary journeys.

Other students of biblical history adduce from Luke's writings that he was the only evangelist to incorporate the personal testimony of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose role in Christ's life emerges most clearly in his gospel. Tradition credits him with painting several icons of Christ's mother, and one of the sacred portraits ascribed to him – known by the title "Salvation of the Roman People" – survives to this day in the Basilica of St. Mary Major. Some traditions hold that Luke became a direct disciple of Jesus before his ascension, while others hold that he became a believer only afterward. After St. Paul's conversion, Luke accompanied him as his personal physician – and, in effect, as a kind of biographer, since the journeys of Paul on which Luke accompanied him occupy a large portion of the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke probably wrote this text, the final narrative portion of the New Testament, in the city of Rome where the account ends. Luke was also among the only companions of Paul who did not abandon him during his final imprisonment and death in Rome. After the martyrdom of St. Paul in the year 67, St. Luke is said to have preached elsewhere throughout the Mediterranean, and possibly died as a martyr. However, even tradition is unclear on this point. Fittingly, the evangelist whose travels and erudition could have filled volumes, wrote just enough to proclaim the gospel and apostolic preaching to the world.

Patronage: artists, bachelors, bookbinders, brewers, butchers, doctors, glass makers, glassworkers, gold workers, goldsmiths, lacemakers, lace workers, notaries, painters, physicians, sculptors, stained glass workers, surgeons. (Photo" spiritualdirection.com)



**October 20 Birth of the Báb Baha'i** Thousands of Bahá'í followers around the world celebrate the birth of the Báb on 20th October. Báb, which literally translates as 'the gate', was a prophet and forerunner of the Bahá'í revelation. Likened to John the Baptist some two thousand years before, the Báb called on people to purify themselves for the coming of the messenger of God. This is asserted to be Bahá'u'lláh, who was initially a follower of Báb and through whom the Bahá'í faith was



founded. Although there are many stories of the Báb's childhood and his many good qualities, very little is known of his birth. He was born on 20th October 1819 in Shiraz, Persia (now Iran) as Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad. He was the son of a mercer of Shiraz, Siyyid Muhammad-Ridá, and his wife Fátimih-Bagum who were both descended of the Prophet Muhammad. The Báb's father died when he was very young (when, exactly, is debated) and he was put into the care of his uncle, Hájí Mírzá 'Alí. There is no established tradition in which his birth is celebrated except that this is one of the nine Holy Days on which work is to be suspended. The day is a simple and joyous event that will begin with prayers and devotional readings and develop into some kind of festive social gathering either at home or in a place of worship. The festival is celebrated, in the spirit of the Bahá'í, to be open to all. (Photo: pinterest.com)

**October 20 Installation of the Guru Granth Sahib Sikh** Among sacred texts around the world, the Adi Granth is unique in several ways: It contains wisdom from esteemed members of other religions, was compiled by multiple faith leaders and now is seen as the head of Sikhism itself—the faith’s central guru or teacher. Today, Sikhs honor the Installation of the Scriptures as Guru Granth. On this day in 1708, the ninth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, announced that he would be the last in a line of living Sikh Gurus. Today, the sacred collection known as the Adi Granth was officially installed as the 10th and everlasting Guru, named Guru Granth Sahib. (Learn more at Sikhs.org.)

Sikhs do not worship the Guru Granth Sahib, but they do reverently respect its wisdom as their spiritual guide. Many Sikh practices reflect this reverence: the Granth Sahib is opened in the Gurdwara (house of worship) every day, in the center of the Gurdwara and on a raised platform known as a throne; the book is always opened, read and closed ceremonially, with an awning placed above it; and whenever the Guru Granth Sahib is brought into a room, Sikhs stand up to honor its presence. Many Sikhs even choose to learn Gurmukhi, the language designed and used by the Sikh Gurus, so that they can fully comprehend the meaning of all writings in the sacred book. Just what does Guru Granth Sahib contain? The book is divided into poems, with messages such as: all people of the world are equal; women are equal to men; there is one God for all; one should speak and live truthfully; and all should live in God’s will/order. As a fairly young religion, Sikhism is not as widely understood as more ancient faiths. Many Sikhs spend time raising awareness, particularly since some of their customs (ex: covering the head) can be misunderstood by the unaware. The 8th Annual Sikh International Film Festival recently raised awareness in New York, as tens of thousands gathered to get an inside peek at this lesser-known body of faith. (Photo: [bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk))



**October 25 Reformation Sunday Protestant Christian** Every year on the last Sunday in October, many churches set aside the day as "Reformation Sunday." If you didn't grow up with this practice, you may wonder where this tradition comes from, and why some congregations continue to practice it. The story begins in the 16th century – 1517, to be exact. Bear with us here – what follows is a very simplified explanation of complex theological, political and economic events that all coincided. Across Europe, the Roman Catholic Church was engaged in one of the greatest fundraisers in all of history. If a person – out of contrition for their sins and as a sign of repentance – made a financial gift to help with the building Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome, then the church would furnish that person with a certificate acknowledging that gift and promising that they or their loved ones would be freed from a portion of the misery expected in the afterlife. In short, the church at that time taught that even those bound for heaven had to be cleansed of their earthly sins and this cleansing (purging) in the afterlife took place in a place called Purgatory. The certificates offered by the church (called "Indulgences") promised to lessen this time of cleansing for oneself or others who have already died. (Photo: [content.time.com](http://content.time.com))



There were some very nuanced explanations of this practice at the time. And there were other very crass explanations that basically amounted to people paying to be forgiven. November 1st was an important day for the selling and buying of these indulgences, known as All Saints Day on the church's calendar. The day before a German Monk named Martin Luther posted a list of 95 Theses – 95 reasons that he objected to this practice of selling indulgences. Along with other writings by Martin Luther, those 95 Reasons went viral. Luther insisted that we are not forgiven because of anything we do – including the buying of indulgences or doing enough good work. Instead, we are forgiven because of who God is.

We are loved and forgiven because God is full of grace and mercy. His teachings and writings got Martin Luther kicked out of the church. But he didn't go alone. Others agreed with him, and after his death those who agreed with Luther became known as Lutherans and also as Protestants. Every Protestant church traces their roots back to this moment in history. October 31st, 1517 was a long time ago. Why does it continue to matter and be remembered in our churches today?

1. Reformation Sunday gives us a chance to tell our story – a chance to remember. We all have a family story – how we got to this point in history. Stories about parents and grandparents, about the things that have shaped our families over the years. Reformation Sunday is a day when Protestant Christians remember and re-tell the family stories of our faith. Stories about men and women who came before us and taught us about the faith. Stories about people who risked everything so that we would be able to gather and worship in the manner that we do.

2. Reformation Sunday reminds us of the most important things. Throughout the year we preach about many things in church. About how we live our daily lives, the choices we make, the habits of our faith. On Reformation Sunday we are brought back to the most important thing – the thing that compelled Luther and others to risk their lives. On Reformation Sunday, we return to the core of our faith: God loved us first, and God continues to shower us with grace and mercy.

3. Reformation Sunday challenges us to do better. Through re-telling our story and returning to the core of our faith, Reformation Sunday prods us to do better. We are called to be more loving and grace-filled, because God was gracious and merciful to us. We are called to repent of the times that we have placed barriers that have kept others from hearing the Good News. We are called to remember that all that we are is a gift from God.

**October 29 Mawlid Al Nabi Islam** Mawlid, also spelled mawlūd or mīlād, in Islam, the birthday of a holy figure, especially the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (Mawlid al-Nabī).

Muhammad's birthday, arbitrarily fixed by tradition as the 12th day of the month of Rabī al-Awwal—i.e., the day of Muhammad's death—was not celebrated by the masses of Muslim faithful until about the 13th century. At the end of the 11th century in Egypt, the ruling Shi'i Fātimids (descendants of 'Alī, the fourth caliph and first imam, through his wife Fātimah, Muhammad's daughter) observed four mawlids: those of Muhammad, 'Alī, Fātimah, and the ruling caliph. The festivals, however, were simple processions of court officials, held in daylight hours, that culminated in the recitation of three sermons (khutbahs) in the presence of the caliph. (Photo: freepik.com)



Sunnis, who constitute the major branch of Islam, regard a mawlid celebration held in 1207 as the first mawlid festival. That occasion was organized by Muzaffar al-Dīn Gökbrū, brother-in-law of the Ayyūbid sultan Saladin, at Erbil, near Mosul (Iraq). It closely parallels the modern mawlid in form. The actual day of Muhammad's birth was preceded by an entire month of merrymaking. Musicians, jugglers and assorted entertainers attracted people from as far away as Baghdad and Nisībīn (modern Nusaybin, Turkey). Muslim scholars, jurists, mystics and poets began arriving as much as two months in advance. Two days before the formal mawlid, a large number of camels, sheep and oxen were sacrificed. On the eve of mawlid, a torchlight procession passed through the town. On the morning of the mawlid, the faithful and the soldiery assembled in front of a specially erected pulpit to hear the sermon. The religious dignitaries were then honored with special robes, and all those attending were invited to feast at the prince's expense.

The mawlid festival quickly spread throughout the Muslim world, partly because of a contemporary corresponding enthusiasm for Sufism (Islamic mysticism), which allowed Islam to become a personal experience. Even in Arabia, where the Prophet's birthplace and tomb had been simply the sites of pious but not required pilgrimage, the mawlid celebrations took hold. Many Muslim theologians could not accept the new festivities, however, branding them *bid'ahs*, innovations possibly leading into sin. The mawlid indeed betrayed a Christian influence; Christians in Muslim lands observed Christmas in similar ways, and Muslims often participated in the celebration. Modern fundamentalist Muslims such as the Wahhābiyyah still view the mawlid festivities as idolatrous. Mawlid celebrations continue to be celebrated and have been extended to popular saints and the founders of Sufi brotherhoods.

The mawlid poems, which relate Muhammad's life and virtues, are also widely popular outside the times of regular feasts. Mawlids are also recited in commemoration of deceased relatives.

**October 31 All Hallows' Eve Christian /Pagan** All Hallows' Eve falls on 31st October each year, and is the day before All Hallows' Day, also known as All Saints' Day in the Christian calendar. The Church traditionally held a vigil on All Hallows' Eve when worshipers would prepare themselves with prayers and fasting prior to the feast day itself. The name derives from the Old English 'hallowed' meaning holy or sanctified and is now usually contracted to the more familiar word Hallowe'en.

In the early 7th century Pope Boniface IV consecrated the Pantheon in Rome, formerly a temple to all the gods, as a church dedicated to Saint Mary and the Martyrs, and ordered that date, 13th May, should be celebrated every year. It became All Saints' Day, a day to honor all the saints, and later, at the behest of Pope Urban IV (d. 1264), a day specially to honor those saints who didn't have a festival day of their own. In the 8th century, on 1st November, Pope Gregory III dedicated a chapel to all the saints in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Gregory IV then made the festival universal throughout the Church, and 1st November has subsequently become All Saints' Day for the western Church. The Orthodox Church celebrates All Saints' Day on the first Sunday after Passover - a date closer to the original 13th May. Photo: Bartlett.com)





It is widely believed that many Hallowe'en traditions have evolved from an ancient Celtic festival called Samhain which was Christianized by the early Church. Pronounced sow-in, Samhain is a Gaelic word meaning 'end of the summer'. This festival is believed to have been a celebration of the end of the harvest, and a time of preparation for the coming winter.

It is widely accepted that the early church missionaries chose to hold a festival at this time of year in order to absorb existing native Pagan practices into Christianity, thereby smoothing the conversion process. A letter Pope Gregory I sent to Bishop Mellitus in the 6th century, in which he suggested that existing places of non-Christian worship be adopted and consecrated to serve a Christian purpose, is often provided as supporting evidence of this method of acculturation. Encyclopedia Britannica states that this date may have been chosen "in an effort to supplant the Pagan holiday with a Christian observance". The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions also claims that Hallowe'en "absorbed and adopted the Celtic new year festival, the eve and day of Samhain". However, there are supporters of the view that Hallowe'en, as the eve of All Saints' Day, originated entirely independently of Samhain and some question the existence of a specific pan-Celtic religious festival which took place on 31st October/1st November.

*Resources for this newsletter: timeanddate.com, myjewishlearning.com, judaism 101.com, bbc.co.uk, catholicnewsagency.com, readthespirit.com, sojoy.org, britannica.com, Smithsonianmag.com. Pictures are from the subscription service Shutterstock unless otherwise identified.*



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