

## Genesis 10+11 — Babel

**November 1, 2015**

Have you ever looked at a globe and wondered why we have different nations? The lines on the maps do not exist in real life. Where did they come from? Why aren't we all one nation, one culture and one language? Wycliffe Bible translators estimates there are 6,809 languages. Where did they come from? Wouldn't it be much easier if everyone spoke the same language? It would remove the foreign language requirement in high school, which I am sure every student would like.

Genesis has answers to these questions. Today we will discover why there are so many different languages, cultures and nations scattered around the world.

If you are new, I would like to welcome you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. CrossWinds is a multi-campus church. All of the CrossWinds campuses are studying the book of Genesis. Today we come to Genesis 10 and 11. Genesis is put together in chronological order. One of the few exceptions is Genesis 10 and 11. Chapter 10 is an overview chapter that introduces us to the nations of the world that scattered over the earth after the flood. Chapter 11 tells us why everyone scattered.

Earlier in our study of Genesis, the first genealogical list we ran into was in Genesis 5. It covered 1,600 years. It traced the lineage from Adam to Noah. Then we hit Genesis 6 to 9, which zoomed in on the details of Noah and the flood, where God wiped everyone and everything off the face of the earth

because of humanity's exceeding wickedness. All that remained was Noah, his family and the animals on the ark. They were the restart crew for Planet Earth.

Even with a fresh start with a righteous family, as we saw last week, it didn't take long for sin to rear its ugly head in the lives of Noah and his children. Noah became a drunken, naked fool. Ham, his son, disgraced his father and his nakedness.

In Genesis 10 we hit the next genealogical list that traces the world from Noah to Abraham. If you put Genesis 5 and 10 together you have the genealogy from Adam all the way to Abraham and the forming of God's chosen people.

This morning we kick it off by reading the genealogies. I know that thrills everyone. Genealogies are the part of the Bible we skip in our quiet time. It feels like reading the Hebrew phone book. Paul said that all Scripture is profitable, so we are going to study the genealogies. I trust God will do us spiritual good as we study them.

Last week we learned Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth. Shem and Japheth are the good guys that covered their father's sin. Ham, and his family line, were cursed by Noah because Ham exposed and mocked his father's sin. The choices of these three young men rippled into the lives of their children for generations. As the genealogies start, we begin with Japheth. He is one of the good guys.

### **The genealogy from Noah to Abraham.**

#### **Japheth**

The sons of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. The sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah. The sons of Javan: Elisha, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. From these the coastland peoples

(maritime peoples) spread in their lands, each with his own language, by their clans, in their nations. Genesis 10:2–5 (ESV)

Some translations point out that Japheth and his children didn't just live on the coast but that from his family line came the people that sailed on the waters. These guys were the ship builders, the fishermen and the shrimp boaters. These were the guys that invented fish sticks and seafood boils. What we find is one generation passed its family business skills to the next generation. This is the beginning of family business.

It is like the "Swamp People" program my kids love to watch. The Landry family are alligator hunters. Their parents and grandparents were alligator hunters. They are passing on to their children how to hunt alligators, who will pass it to their children. It is a family business.

In Iowa we don't pass alligator hunting down the family line. If we pass anything down it is farming. If your daddy was a farmer, the chances are you will be a farmer. The only way to get into farming is to marry into it.

I simply want you to notice that it is important where we come from. Our parents help determine who we are and what we do. We will see that theme again and again in this morning's study.

## Ham

The sons of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. The sons of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabteca. The sons of Raamah: Sheba and Dedan. Cush fathered Nimrod; he was the first on earth to be a mighty man. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." The beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shiner. From that land he went into Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. Egypt fathered Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, Pathrusim, Casluhim (from whom the Philistines came), and Caphtorim. Genesis 10:6–14 (ESV)

For young parents, these verses have a lots of good names for kids. This is the section of the sermon where all the pregnant women take good notes. One name you probably don't want to use is Nimrod. Any mother that names her son Nimrod is giving evidence she didn't want to be pregnant. Anybody by the name of Nimrod will have a tough time in school.

Nimrod grew up to be a tough guy. He was a hunter, a warrior, and a leader. He drove a truck with big tires. He had a gun rack in his back window. He killed animals with his bare hands. He had a physique like Arnold Schwarzenegger, a beard like Willie Robertson and acted like Rambo. The name Nimrod means, "we shall rebel" in Hebrew. When it comes to God, he was not interested in humility and worship. He was interested in being the local bully. He was committed to rebelling against God

While he was a committed rebel, he was not a dummy. He possessed natural leadership gifts. He set out to galvanize all the new people on the planet and to build cities. I won't take the time to go into all the details of all the cities he began but I want to point out two. The first is Babel. That is short for Babylon. If you know anything about Babylon in the Bible you know it was a powerful city that comes up again and again. It was a godless city.

Nebuchadnezzar eventually became the king of Babylon. Babylon was one of the first worldwide superpowers. Babylon conquered the southern kingdom of the Jews and took it captive for 70 years. Another city Nimrod built was Nineveh in the land of Assyria. This is the city Jonah called to repentance. While it had a brief period of repentance in the days of Jonah, for most of history,

the Ninevites were an ego-driven, ruthless lot. The Assyrians were the ones that conquered the northern kingdom of Israel just like the Babylonians conquered the southern kingdom of Judah. As you can see, the roots of the Middle East conflict run deep. In a moment we will see another son of Noah was Shem. He was the blessed son that covered his father's sin. From Shem came the Israelites. Ham was the cursed son of Noah because he exposed his father and mocked his sin. From him came Babylon and Assyria, both kingdoms that tried to destroy the Jews. Do you see how the character of these three sons of Noah rippled into future generations? The descendants of Ham, the cursed son tried to wipe out the descendants of Shem, the blessed son of Noah. The past played out in the future. Let's look at Canaan, another son of Ham.

Canaan fathered Sidon his firstborn and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hives, the Arkites, the Finites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterward the clans of the Canaanites dispersed. And the territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon in the direction of Gerar as far as Gaza, and in the direction of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. These are the sons of Ham, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. Genesis 10:15–20 (ESV)

We met Canaan last week. When Ham turned into a peeping Tom on his father and told everyone about his father's sin, Canaan was cursed because of his father's actions. We just read about all of Canaan's descendants, the Canaanites.

What do we know about them? They went into the Promised Land of Israel. That is where they settled. What were they like? Leviticus 18 tells us about their sexual practices. You can read it on your own. It isn't pretty. Lots of

sluttiness, perversion and nakedness. Most of us know the reputation of Sodom and Gomorrah. They are in this list.

Later in Genesis we get a little side comment that describes the descendants of Canaan in Genesis 15:16ff. In this section, God was prophetically speaking to Abraham. Here is what God said. I recommend you read the surrounding verses on your own for more details.

And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. Genesis 15:16 (ESV)

The Amonites, Girgashites, Jebusites and the rest of the “ites” were just heaping up their iniquity. God was patiently waiting for them to repent. After 400 years, their iniquity would be complete and God would send the descendants of Shem, through Abraham, to wipe out the Canaanites. That is the story of Israel conquering the Promised Land. The Israelites were to wipe out the Canaanites in the Promised Land. They were not make friends. They were not to have their children intermarry. They were not accommodate them. They were to destroy them because they were to act as God’s hand of judgment up on them for their sin. That makes the ruthlessness of the Israelites more understandable when they entered the Promised Land.

## **Shem**

To Shem also, the father of all the children of Eber, the elder brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. The sons of Aram: Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash. Arpachshad fathered Shelah; and Shelah fathered Eber. To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided, and his brother’s name was Joktan. Joktan fathered Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, Obal, Abimael, Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. The territory in which they lived extended from Mesha in the direction of Sephar to the hill country of the east. These are the sons of Shem, by their clans, their languages, their lands, and their nations. These are the clans of the

sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, in their nations, and from these the nations spread abroad on the earth after the flood. Genesis 10:21–32 (ESV)

Last week we saw Shem was the middle son of Noah. He was the blessed son because he covered his father's sin rather than exposed his father's sin. We need to notice that Shem fathered all the children of Eber. It goes from Shem to Aram to Shelah to Eber. Eber is short for Hebrew. Abraham and the Hebrew people come from this blessed line.

We did it! We read the genealogies! Everybody gets a little star. I know some of you are thinking you can't believe I just studied the genealogies on a Sunday morning in church. You don't like reading the phone book. You don't like genealogies. What possible practical good could come from studying a genealogical list? I am thankful you asked.

**Application — I am leaving a legacy.**

We need to learn that we are part of a legacy. From these three sons of Noah came all the people of the earth. Everyone is influenced by those that came before them. In America, we like to think of ourselves as autonomous, as independent individuals. We think we will not affect those that come after us and we are not affected by those that came before us. The Bible says that is not true. Generally speaking godly fathers produce godly sons. Rebellious fathers or absent fathers produce rebellious sons. Fathers and mothers end up photocopying themselves into their children. We can't help it. We do this either for good or for ill. That is what happened with the descendants of Ham. The ungodly rebelliousness of Ham was photocopied into his children for generations. Look at Ham's legacy. His grandchildren and great grandchildren built cities like

Babylon and Nineveh that were filled with people in rebellion against God. That was the family line, the family legacy.

Our lives are not just affected by those that came before us. We have a huge influence on our children and their children for multiple generations after us. I learned a good work ethic from my father who got up early and stayed late at work. I learned the importance of being in church for worship and the importance of Christian community from my parents who were at church when the doors opened, and they were often the last to leave. I am usually the last to leave, just like my parents. They photocopied that part of their lives into mine.

What do I do in a tough time? I get down on my knees and pray. I learned that from my mom. I heard her praying on her knees in the guest bedroom next to my bedroom early in the morning before she made us breakfast when I was a child. I tell you, we photocopy ourselves into our kids. We can't help it. We are part of a legacy.

Let me show you the power of legacy. This is a photo of the gravestone of David Trucksess. He came to America on a boat. He was the first Trucksess in America. He died in 1897. Read the fine print on the gravestone. He was president of the board of trustees of Lower Providence



Presbyterian Church for 45 years. He was a church leader. I am privileged to be a church leader. I guess the church leadership thing photocopied itself six

generations forward. I can't wait to see him in heaven and give him a high-five and thank him for his life and the legacy he left behind.

We have to learn to think and live beyond the weekend. We need to think and live five or six generations into the future. Your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren will either be blessed or cursed based on your life today. Maybe in heaven we will have the chance to look at how the way we lived didn't just ripple into the lives of our children but we will see how the choices in our lives rippled into the lives of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren six or seven generations into the future.

Think about this before you pick up a drink. While it is not wrong to drink, do you want your grandchildren picking up a drink every weekend or picking up a ball and glove to play with their children in the yard every weekend? Model now the life you want them to live then. How much attention do you want your grandchildren devoting to their hobbies instead of their families? Think about the example you set. It will be photocopied forward. Fathers, how do you want your son treating his wife in a conflict? Model now the way you want your grandsons to treat their wives in conflicts. Mothers, how do you want your granddaughters raising their children? What kind of atmosphere do you want in your great-grandchildren's homes? Model it now. It will be photocopied forward.

[A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous. Proverbs 13:22 \(ESV\)](#)

It is easy to just think about today and just spend our money for today. Wise people save for their grandchildren's college educations and even their great-grandchildren's college educations. When they retire they won't look at

spending all their money on themselves. Instead they will lay up money for their children's and grandchildren's futures, even multiple generations ahead.

Proverbs 19:14 talks about how houses and wealth are inherited. If you want your grandkids to grow up with a mother that can stay home and raise her children, then you sacrifice and save. You help your grandkid with a down payment on a house so your grandchildren are not so financially strapped that Mom has to work crazy hours when her kids are young. You want your great-grandchildren raised by a godly mother, not dumped in daycare by somebody who doesn't care about them or love Jesus.

From the genealogies we learn that we are part of a lineage. We leave a legacy. It is a great blessing when you come from a good lineage and it takes hard work to break a bad lineage. With the power of the Holy Spirit, it can be done. We can leave a good lineage that will influence generations into the future.

In the genealogies we read that people were scattered over the face of the earth. How did that happen? That is in Genesis 11. Let's find out.

### **The Tower of Babel**

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shiner (Babylon) and settled there. Genesis 11:1–2 (ESV)

So people found a big chunk of flat real-estate. Nimrod was the leader. He convinced them to build a city. Remember Nimrod's character. He was the little Hitler. He was the ISIS leader. If God said, "Go left," he said, "Go right." God said, "Scatter," Nimrod said, "Let's stay put."

And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” Genesis 11:3–4 (ESV)

The great plain in the land of Babylon was a perfect place for a city. The only problem was they didn’t have any rocks. They didn’t have any trees. What could they do? Somebody watched the sun bake clay so they came up with the idea of making bricks out of clay. This area also had tar pits. Somebody got the idea you use clay for bricks and tar for mortar. Putting bricks together they could build an entire city. This would have been a massive city made out of giant lego bricks.

This is more complicated than it appears. There would have needed to be water a water supply, sewer lines and streets. There was a lot of planning. You can picture these guys laying out an entire city on one giant set of papyrus blueprints. This was the beginning of the city of Babylon. In the Bible Babylon is consistently given a bad rap. It started here in Genesis and goes all the way to Revelation where Babylon is used as the picture of society in rebellion against God. Right from the beginning we see Babylon was a city in rebellion against God.

The centerpiece of the city was to be a great tower. Sometimes they call it a Ziggurat. We don’t know all they planned to do with the tower but we do know it would have been the centerpiece of their human achievement. It would have been to exalt their greatness. This is like the Empire State building when it opened in 1931. It was the tallest building in the world to state America’s

greatness. That is why the terrorists took down the Twin Towers. It was a way of trying to destroy America's greatness.

The problem with the tower and the city was not an engineering problem. It was a heart problem. These guys wanted to make a name for themselves and to avoid scattering over the face of the earth.

### **Pride**

The first sin was their pride. They wanted to make their name great. They didn't want to think highly of God. They wanted to think highly of themselves. They were afraid of anonymity. They were afraid of being scattered and losing that feeling of significance. Today, the same is true for many of us. We want to make a name for ourselves. We want people to look up to us. We want people to think we are important. This is what drives politicians, athletes and actors. It is what drives us. If we are famous, revered or successful, then we think we succeeded in making something of ourselves. We want to see our names glorified. We want to see our names in lights. The problem is we need to make a choice. You cannot try to make your own name great and God's name great at the same time. We need to choose who we will make famous with our lives.

God says, "Don't ask yourself what will make you look good. Ask yourself what will make me look good." Get your own fame and success out of the picture and put God's name and the name of Jesus as the focus of the photo. That may mean we are passed over for a promotion because in humility we are considering others better than ourselves around the office. It may mean we lose money because in business we hold godly character higher than profit. That may mean

we give up a lucrative career for a humble career. God calls his children not to do what is best for them but what is best for making his name famous.

In Genesis 12:2 we will see that God said to Abraham, “I will make your name great.” God may choose to make somebody famous. That is ok. It doesn’t begin by seeking our fame. It begins by seeking to make God famous through our lives. Our names will become less and his name will become more.

### **Comfort over mission**

The other problem is these guys wanted to avoid God’s command to Noah we read last week. God told Noah and his sons to be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth. These guys wanted to get cozy and clump up like a hairball. They didn’t want to fill the earth. They wanted to make their own names great on the earth. Rather than do what God called them to, they wanted to exalt their names and get comfortable.

Sometimes we are just like the Babylonians. We lift comfort over mission. God called us to spread out and go to Jerusalem, Judea and to the ends of the earth to share the gospel. Like a bunch of Babylonians we want to stay put and do what makes us feel good, what makes us feel comfortable. We want to stay in our own four walls and only hang out with our family and in our own church with our own friends and with people just like us. The mission of God is that we reach people we don’t know by opening up our lives and homes to build relationships and talk about Jesus. Comfort means staying home and staying closed.

I love God’s response to their great work. It is comical. You have to read the Bible and have a sense of humor.

And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. Genesis 11:5 (ESV)

These guys thought they were great. They thought they were hot stuff. They thought their city was massive. They thought their tower was incredible. It was the tallest tower on the planet. God, from his perspective, was not impressed. God had to get down on his hands and knees and squint to see the thing. They thought they were hot stuff. They thought they were world famous. They thought they were shakers and movers and significant. God was not impressed. God said, “I created the entire solar system and all the planets and the vast universe with by simply saying ‘and the stars’ on the day of creation. Trust me. Your little tower is not impressive. Whose name should be famous? Mine or yours?”

Some of us are like the Babylonians. We think we are hot stuff because we made our names famous. We have a fast car or a big IQ or a 4K TV or a fast boat or a big house. Trust me. God is not impressed. I don’t care who you are or what you do. There is no room for us to boast or brag when we stand before God. The only thing worth boasting about is the one thing we didn’t do. God loves us through Jesus. We are the most blessed beings in the universe through Jesus, and we did nothing to deserve it. You can’t have a high view of God and yourself at the same time. You can’t make God’s name famous and your name famous at the same time.

And the Lord said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” Genesis 11:6–7 (ESV)

God said, “If this is what they are doing, imagine if I give them more time. Imagine what will happen if they complete the project. They will become inebriated with their own self-importance. Their evil hearts will lead them to think of themselves as great. They will oppress everyone else on the planet. When people are unified and work together they can do either great good or great evil. These guys are on their way to do great evil with their pride.”

This is why we don't want one world government, one world leader, one world military or one world culture. The more power, leadership and resources that are centralized into the hands of a sinful person, the more catastrophic the disaster that will ensue. Look at Hitler. Look at ISIS. Look even in our own government. When evil gets centralized and organized, people try to make themselves look great and they oppress others.

God said, “I already dealt with this in the flood. Here we go again. Mr. Nimrod is a nimrod who is leading everybody in self-exaltation. I promised to not destroy everyone with a flood. Let's have some fun. The problem is they are filled with pride and they are not scattering. Let's humble them and get them to spread.”

Everybody got up one morning and they was speaking a different language. Going to work on the great tower was like watching a foreign film without the subtitles. You couldn't understand anything. The blueprints for the tower read like the Chinese section of the instruction manual for a new digital camera. Nothing made sense. If they couldn't talk together, they couldn't work

together. Everyone was forced to do what God told them to do in the first place, which was scatter over the face of the earth and fill the planet.

I am sure people woke up that morning mad at God. I am sure they were angry he was ruining their well-laid plans. In reality, it was God being gracious. He was saving them from their own pride and from great evil. He was forcing them to do what was best for them.

Some of you feel the same way. You wanted a certain job but God messed up your plans. You wanted to go to a certain school but God had things fall apart. You wanted a certain boyfriend or girlfriend but the relationship fell apart. Now you are mad at God.

Did you ever think that maybe God squashed your plans not because he hates you but because he loves you? Maybe God was saving you from yourself. If you got what you wanted and did what you wanted to do it would have been a dumb idea, not a good idea. God, in his love for you, made your well-laid plans fall apart. Folks, if we know Jesus loves us, we can trust him.

So now we have French, Portuguese, German, Hebrew, Greek and more than 6,000 other languages. People find others that speak their language and they move away and spread out over the earth. Now we have our different nations, languages and cultures spread out over the globe.

### **Application**

**The only answer to the problems of the world is Jesus.**

In this passage we find God came down to see the sin problem. In the New Testament he came down to solve the sin problem. He did it with Jesus. The hope of humanity is not a great world leader, like Nimrod, Obama, Hillary,

Trump or Carson. The hope of the world is not in technological progress like the invention of bricks and mortar or an iPhone or the Internet. The hope of the world is not clumping together to create a great city to work together and solve all our problems. The problem in the world is sin. The only answer is Jesus.

Jesus is the one who died on the cross for our sin. When we confess our sin and ask him to be our savior, his Holy Spirit comes into our lives. He convicts us of sin and he begins to remake us from the inside out to be more and more like the character of Jesus. The only way to solve the problems on the news we see every night is through Jesus.

**I can't make God's name famous and my name famous at the same time.**

Some of us are afraid of anonymity. We are afraid of being another cog in the wheel, another social security number in the system. We are striving for greatness and we think making our names great will make us great. It won't. The Bible says in Psalm 145:3 that great is the Lord and he is greatly to be praised. If we want to make anybody's name famous through our lives, it is Jesus. Let God lift us up if he wants to lift us up. We don't need to lift up ourselves. Knowing we are loved by Jesus and we are the most blessed beings in the universe is more than enough significance. This week don't make your name famous. Make Jesus' name famous. Put the focus of your life on him, not on yourself.

**I am to scatter for mission, not just gather for comfort.**

The Babylonians were unwilling to scatter. They were committed to the comfort of being with people like them. They didn't want to be like Star Trek and

boldly go where no man had gone before. In Acts 2, which is the New Testament counterpart to the tower of Babel, on the day of Pentecost, when people from all different languages, cultures and ethnicities were packed into Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came on the apostles and enabled them to speak different languages so the gospel could be heard by people around the earth.

After Christ rose from the dead he commanded us to go into all the nations and preach the gospel to make his name great. He commanded us to scatter. Just like the Babylonians, many of us are more interested in staying put. We stay in the four walls of our own houses. We just hang out with our families or the people of our church. God calls us to get involved in all kinds of community activities and rub shoulders with people who have never heard about Jesus. We are all commanded by God to scatter into our community. This is why we have another campus in Spencer. We could have built the Spirit Lake campus bigger and centralized more size but we didn't. We scattered to follow God's command and reach more people. This is why we support missionaries and even physically go and help missionaries. God wants other people to know about Jesus. Today, many of us need to repent of being Babylonians. After church, instead of just hanging out with your friends, scatter and meet somebody new. Invite them to your home for dinner. Scatter into the community and meet somebody new this week. Tell them how much God loves them through Jesus.

When Jesus went back to heaven, he said he was going to build a great city. He is going to complete what the Babylonians started but God wouldn't let them finish. God is creating a great city that is the centerpiece of the new

heavens and Earth. It is called the New Jerusalem. One day it will come out of heaven. It will be our new home and it will be the centerpiece city on the new heavens and Earth. Like Babylon, it will have a high place. The high place won't be a tower. It will be a throne. Seated on that throne high enough for everyone to see will be Jesus. The radiance of his glory will illuminate not just the city but the earth. In that city will be people from all nations, languages, tribes, and cultures that are working together not to exalt their own name but to exalt the name of Jesus.

As we close I invite you not to put your hope in the advancement of technology or cities. I invite you to repent of your sin and put your hope in Jesus. I invite you to live not for making your own name famous but for making his name famous through your life and lifting others up before yourself. I invite you to scatter. I invite you to not just hang out in your house and with your friends and in your church but to move into our community and talk about how much God loves us through Jesus. Make Jesus' name famous.



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