

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE



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THE FACES OF CPM

Blessings in the Midst of the Pandemic



FROM THE PRESIDENT, DR. MITCH GLASER

knowledge because God is omniscient and omnipresent; He is the beginning, middle, and end of all things, and nothing can take him by surprise. One of my favorite pastors, John Piper, puts it this way:

When the King James says, “all things work together for good,” it does not mean, they work that way on their own, or by some power of fate. It means that God makes all things work together for good. So God is the one working...and what he is bringing about is good, and what he is bringing good out of is “all things.” Paul is not saying all things are good. He is saying all things are turned by God for good.¹

I wholeheartedly agree with Pastor Piper. The Lord has taken the terrible and used it for good for our 127-year-old ministry among our Jewish people! The last fourteen months have been challenging but incredibly fruitful for the gospel!

To give you the whole story, I would like to rewind to March of last year and walk you through our 2020 year—scary, I know, but hang on, you will see how God miraculously provided, often in the eleventh hour.

On the Heels of Our 125th Anniversary

For me, it is important to remember that the pandemic erupted right after the wonderful and joyful celebrations of our 125th year of ministry in 2019. We were jubilant! We held numerous events across the country. There was a fantastic concluding banquet with Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, as our keynote speaker. We ended 2019 with a conference on

Dear friend,

Shalom in the great and powerful name of Jesus our Messiah!

One of my favorite Bible passages has continually proven to be true throughout this challenging time. The Apostle Paul wrote, “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*” (Romans 8:28).

Now, this passage does not mean bad things that happen are outside of God’s foresight and

the history of Chosen People Ministries’ founder, Rabbi Leopold Cohn, which was held at the Feinberg Messianic Center in Brooklyn. Out of that conference, we produced a book about Rabbi Cohn called *A Rabbi’s Vision Continues*. In early February 2020, we had another unique event, the Borough Park Symposium, which included a lineup of several noteworthy, mainstream Jewish scholars—a rare opportunity for the Messianic Jewish community.

We planned an advancement campaign that was to kick off in January 2020. Chosen People Ministries was growing, both domestically and overseas. Our centers, congregations, Feinberg program, and short-term ministries were driving forward, and we had finally moved back into our beautifully renovated Manhattan headquarters. The renovations were costly, and though it took a while to recover financially from the expenditure, we continue operating without debt, even up until today—thanks be to God! All our programs were growing, and we were getting ready to launch new ministries—especially to Israelis traveling around the world and in the United States. We were hopeful, with great vision and excitement about the future.

Enter March 2020

Then it hit! Let me share how I came face to face with the pandemic. I flew up to Toronto for a Canadian Chosen People Ministries board meeting on Friday, February 28, 2020. For some reason, my usual way of entering the country through the preferred traveler program



¹ John Piper, “All Things for Good Part 1,” *Desiring God* (blog), June 9, 2002, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/all-things-for-good-part-1>.

was closed, and I had to stand in line for more than two hours to pass through customs to enter Canada. I was used to some people from various countries wearing face masks, but now it was almost everyone but me, which made me think that I was really missing something and that maybe the virus we were beginning to hear about was getting worse!

I knew that there was a coronavirus outbreak in China and that a few people in Seattle had already contracted the disease. I was supposed to return to Canada the following week for a Bible conference in Vancouver. From there, I was expecting to fly from Seattle to England and then Israel. During that week, news of the virus began heating up, and there were reports of the first deaths in—of all places—Seattle.

Some of our Israeli staff told me that I might have to quarantine if I did come to Israel. There was even a possibility that the government would not allow me into the country at all. All of this was fast-breaking news. I canceled the trip and did the Vancouver Bible conference by Zoom, though I dislike canceling anything!

We shut down our Manhattan headquarters office on March 16, 2020 and the Brooklyn and Florida offices soon after.

We set up a system for our mail to be transferred daily from New York City to Langhorne, Pennsylvania, where our mail was opened and sorted at a firm owned by a friend of one of our board members. All our staff began working from home, and we started meeting every morning at 8:30 AM for prayer via Zoom and at 4:45 PM to end the workday.

From that point on, life became very different. Our ministry became primarily digital; our direct ministries,

services, and Bible studies went online, primarily through Zoom. We initiated a host of additional online ministries as we already had a strong digital media department and a bunch of outreach websites. We were very engaged in bringing the gospel through the use of social media.

But little did we know that life and ministry would not get back to anything close to what we would consider normal for more than a year.

Time to Pivot

We are all very aware of what has transpired this year, and thank God, even though quite a few of our staff had COVID-19, no one died. Almost everyone has recovered. Many of us, however, lost friends and family to the disease. Unfortunately, we are not yet finished with COVID-19 as some staff members even contracted the disease over the last couple of weeks. We will probably still see other cases, I am sorry to say, though hopefully not among our staff. We especially need to pray for India and, specifically, Andrew and Levanya Yelchuri, our staff members in Goa, India, whose ministry is to reach the hundreds of Israelis traveling through India after their army service. Of course, this is now halted, but we pray the Israeli young people will return when the pandemic lifts in India.

In many ways, it was especially difficult for us as Your Mission to the Jewish People is focused on large and heavily populated urban areas where the majority of Jewish people live. Some of our congregations, Bible studies, and ministries are already meeting in person, particularly in the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia.

At this moment, we sense the Lord powerfully at work and leading us toward a better and brighter gospel future. I thank God that our staff stayed close to one another and never lost hope in the Lord. We knew He would make a way for us through this season of darkness.

The future is as bright as the promises of God, and it is time for us to look forward and seize the future for His glory.

I hope and pray you are well and that the Lord has preserved you and your loved ones through the pandemic. I am especially sorry if you lost a friend or loved one to the disease. May He wrap His all-powerful arms around you and bring the comfort that only comes from our risen, powerful, and faithful Savior.

So, join me as we look back for a moment and reflect on the good things He has done this past year and peek ahead at some of our advancement plans for the future!

In Messiah Jesus,


Mitch





■ Caring for Our Staff

When the pandemic first hit, we were concerned we would have to lay off some of our staff for financial reasons. Thankfully, because of generous ministry partners like you, we did not furlough or lay off any of our team.

Although the pandemic forced everyone to work remotely, our staff felt more connected than ever before as we met each day for prayer at the beginning and end of the workday via Zoom. This was a wonderful way to help the staff get to know and care for one another. We also initiated a *wellness program* and brought in speakers specializing in spiritual growth, health, fitness, personal finance, and more to help our team thrive mentally, physically, and spiritually during the pandemic.

As we move forward into a post-COVID-19 world, we hope to continue the strong sense of community—centered in Jesus and our work among the Jewish people—established this past year.

■ Children's Camps

We were forced to postpone our in-person summer ministries, overseas outreach trips reaching Israelis traveling around the world, and our Chosen People Ministries children's camps.

Over the last several years, Chosen People Ministries has intensified our camping and youth ministries. We host two sleep-away summer camps—one on the West Coast and one on the East Coast—that minister to children and youth ages five through sixteen. We named the camps Camp Keshet East and Camp Keshet West since *keshet* is the Hebrew word for "connection." The camps allow Messianic youth to connect and grow their faith in the Messiah Jesus.

We were especially disappointed that we had to cancel our children's camps in Israel, where we usually had about 600 kids in camps throughout the year. The Israeli government did not allow us to proceed with these efforts.

After much prayer and consideration, we are excited to announce that our children's camps in the United States and in Israel will resume this summer! Our children and youth need discipleship, mentorship, and connections with their community, as well as time with God's creation. Please pray for us to enjoy a safe, fun, and blessed camping program.

■ Online Services, Bible Studies, and Holiday Events

Since we could not meet in person during the Jewish high holiday season, we created six regional online small-group

Bible studies. We launched a three-week effort during the fall focused on the Jewish high holidays. We followed up with a two-week Hanukkah series of studies, focusing on the Hanukkah story and the New Testament account of Jesus' ministry in John chapter ten.

A Jewish woman who was not a believer joined our Northeast regional Hanukkah virtual study. She lived a secular Jewish lifestyle that left her feeling unfulfilled. She was very open and asked a lot of questions. After a lengthy discussion, she gave her life to Jesus, her Messiah. One of our female missionaries is now discipling her!

These studies continue regularly, and we have now had more than one hundred Jewish people studying the Bible with us online! We hope to lead Jewish people to the Lord through these virtual studies and encourage Jewish believers to grow and host studies for their friends and family. Please pray for this ongoing ministry, which will certainly continue well beyond the pandemic!

In addition to these small-group Bible studies, we hosted several virtual events over the past year, including two virtual Messiah in the Passover presentations and a webcast with author Joel C. Rosenberg to discuss important events in Israel. These three events alone engaged about 20,000 "computers" or digital devices online!

We also hosted a two-day seminar with New Testament scholar Dr. Craig Keener to help us better understand the New Testament through Jewish eyes. Joel C. Rosenberg joined us for a conference on the Abraham Accords entitled *Israel: Whose Land Is It Anyway?* and we hosted an online Messianic worship concert called *Music for the Mishpocha*. All of this was in addition to our virtual high holiday services, a children's Hanukkah party, and a children's Purim pajama party.

Again, these events were attended by multiple thousands of people and many Jewish people who did not know the Lord. We have been following up with them through Zoom, phone calls, and now, of course, in person!

As you can see, this was undoubtedly a year of many firsts. These first-time online opportunities were so effective that we will continue to offer many different types of virtual events in the future!

Last month, we had a discussion with three scholars: Dr. Darrel Bock, from Dallas Theological Seminary; Dr. Randall Price of Liberty University; and Dr. Michael Rydennik from Moody Bible Institute about the biblical basis for Israel's right to the land. We also addressed the tensions and war in Gaza and prayed for those suffering on each side of the conflict.



■ Digital Media

In addition to our virtual events that resulted in more than 80,000 views, there were also many other successes. Social media became critical to our work this past year. Our videos published on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram attracted a total of 1.3 million views since last March. Through our Facebook advertisements alone, more than 780 Jewish unbelievers requested additional information and provided their contact information. We also discovered and engaged with a few thousand Jewish believers in Jesus, whom we can help witness to their families.

We also released a new podcast, *Our Hope*, in response to the pandemic. We wanted to provide listeners with content centered around hope while staying consistent with our mission statement. So far, we have released more than fifty episodes, which have been downloaded 35,000 times.

■ New Digital Evangelism Websites

When the pandemic began in March 2020, we knew it was time to expand our evangelistic websites. We launched *AboutMessiah.com* for a secular but curious Jewish audience. Articles include “What Does the Bible Say about Suffering?” and “How Does Science Point to the Existence of God?” The site focused on apologetics for Jewish people and includes more pastoral and cultural topics such as forgiveness, loneliness, and how to have peace with God in the midst of turmoil. We also have a live chat for our visitors to connect with us and pages with video content and recommended resources.

In December 2020, we launched a beta version of *Chosen People Answers*, a Messianic apologetics website geared toward a more academic audience with intellectual objections to belief in Jesus. It contains an extensive library of Jewish texts and an initial batch of long and short articles. This site contains articles about the resurrection from a Jewish perspective, Messianic prophecy, looking at the Jewish backgrounds of the New Testament, and more. We designed these articles for Jewish skeptics, and thinkers, who might be open to the gospel if their tough questions can be addressed with sensible and biblical answers. We already have hundreds of pages of information on the site.

■ Training for Ministry

The Feinberg Program. Our Charles L. Feinberg Center for Messianic Jewish Studies in Brooklyn offers an accredited Master of Divinity degree in Messianic Jewish Studies. The Lord’s faithfulness was evident over this past challenging year as we moved our in-person classes online.

With His help, we persevered, and our professors learned quickly and now excel in providing online courses.

Over the past year, regular contact with others in the classes, though virtual, has given students a camaraderie many have not experienced. The online format allowed us to have students studying in five different countries, and we know this will increase!

Though our primary focus remains the in-person education of students in one of the most important Jewish centers of the world, the pandemic has caused us to see that online seminary education has a bright future. Hopefully, we will be offering accredited seminary courses to hundreds of students in various countries, including Israel.

Chosen People Bible Institute. In addition to our seminary program, we will be launching our first-ever online Bible institute for believers who would like to learn more about the Jewish roots of their faith. This program will aim to serve those with busy schedules who cannot afford—time-wise or cost-wise—a seminary or Bible college education. Courses will cover evangelism, theology, apologetics, Jewish and Messianic history, prophecy, and more. Although the program will not be accredited, students can earn a certificate at the end.

We are currently preparing the first courses, and recording will begin next month. A typical class will have about fifty short videos totaling eight hours, and students can learn at their convenience. We hope to have three or four courses ready for fall 2021, and we will continue to add classes every month.

■ Hosting Israelis

When Israelis finish their mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces after high school, many choose to travel the world before beginning college or their careers. For this reason, we maintain a thriving ministry in New Zealand, India, and soon in Brazil—all hotspots where young Israelis flock. Hosting Israelis for free allows us to love and minister to them and, through developing friendships, and as He allows, to share the gospel.

We are developing a network enabling Christians to host Israelis in their homes and an app on which Israelis can search and find these host families in the United States. We will provide all of the necessary training for hosts to prepare them to minister to these adventurous and open young adults in a Jewish way. We plan to launch a pilot program very soon. If you are interested in participating, please let us know by calling 212-223-2252!

The Ultimate Eternal Blessing

In our last Bible study, we looked at the incredible blessings of God in Psalm 23:5: *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows.”* God prepared the table, and we will feast amid our enemies—in the middle of all of our troubles, trials, and tribulations. We are honored guests. Our host has anointed our heads with oil; the Holy Spirit of God not only fills us daily but has also taken permanent residence in us to enable us to live lives pleasing to God. Our cup overflows. The blessings of the Lord, even during a pandemic, are ours in all the abundance of our Messiah.

The psalm concludes with verse six: *“Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life.”* I believe the English translation does not do justice to the Hebrew here. The Hebrew connotes the idea that God’s goodness (*tov*) and lovingkindness (*chesed*) will constantly pursue the psalmist, regardless of the circumstances. God’s blessings remain with His people no matter what—no matter how dark the valley, even the valley of a pandemic. No matter how we may try to avoid Him during difficult times, we need only to turn around and see that God’s blessings are there, in constant pursuit of us.

Finally, verse six ends with, *“And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* This last sentence is the culmination of the entire psalm. It conveys both a temporal and an eternal meaning. The word translated “dwell,” *ve’shavti*, also represents the idea of returning. It comes from the Hebrew word *shuv*, which means “to turn or repent.” As David meditated on the Lord’s leading and provision as his Good Shepherd, he recalled the fellowship he shared with the Lord in His presence, in His house. He also remembered how the Lord forgave even his most grievous sin, how God restored him, and how he **returned** to Him. I believe that is the temporal blessing. But the ultimate blessing for every believer is the eternal blessing—to dwell in the house of the Lord *forever*. For David, this eternal blessing was the proverbial top of the mountain.

Psalm 23 is one of the most well-known portions of the Bible for its deep meaning. It is particularly encouraging during times of trouble and sorrow. I have often meditated on God’s words and promises in this psalm, and they never cease to bring me comfort when I find myself in a deep, dark valley. The shepherd’s rod and staff comfort me because He calls me His own. He provides for my daily needs and gives me peace when I do not know what tomorrow will

bring. He keeps me on the right path, and He helps me make the right choices so I do not wander away from Him. He walks with me through dark times, and He never leaves me. I never need to fear because He is always with me.

You, too, can rely on the truth that God is always faithful. You can count on that promise no matter what you go through. His mercy and goodness follow you; they constantly pursue you, even when you stray from Him. And He invites you to dwell in His house forever. All you have to do is receive this truth and allow Him to lead you as your Great Shepherd.

In the first study of Psalm 23, I mentioned how one of my favorite songs sung at the Passover Seder is the song, “Dayenu.” The Hebrew word *dayenu* means roughly, “It would have been enough.” The lyrics convey contentment and the worshiper’s gratitude toward God. When looking at Psalm 23, “dayenu” is an appropriate conclusion. We can say without hesitation, “*Adonai ro’i*” (the Lord is my Shepherd), and “dayenu,” that is most assuredly enough.



Rich Freeman, D. Min., serves as the vice president for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.

MINISTRY NEWS BRIEFS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

MINISTRY RESUMES IN ISRAEL

Although life is not yet back to the pre-pandemic “normal,” the relative reopening and relaxed restrictions in Israel are refreshing and hopeful. For the first time in longer than a year, our staff was able to meet in person at a park and exchange visible smiles. Last month, in addition to our monthly women’s Bible studies, which still met via Zoom, we organized a special ladies’ brunch in the park, to which we invited women from both our Hebrew-speaking and English-speaking Bible studies. Both food and fellowship were fully savored! Please pray for wisdom as we try to sensitively and cautiously navigate between continued online Bible studies and in-person fellowship. Meeting online has allowed busy ladies from farther away to join us, while we do still crave in-person ministry.

WOMAN RECEIVES THE GOSPEL DURING PASSOVER IN MOSCOW

In April, our staff members in Moscow celebrated the feast of Passover. Despite some restrictions due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, they celebrated this wonderful holiday with a small circle of congregational members. This year, two elderly Jewish ladies, Olga* and Esty,* whom our staff members help with medicine, decided to join us. As usual, the Passover Seder, a traditional Jewish feast, was held in a very traditional manner. The main and central character featured at our festive table was Jesus the Messiah. We remembered His suffering on Calvary’s cross, His sacrifice of redemption for all mankind, and His resurrection. The guests sat and listened attentively, but when the traditional Jewish Passover songs began, Olga took our staff member’s hand and, crying softly, she said that the whole Passover ceremony reminded her of her childhood, when she celebrated Passover with her whole family. It was very touching. Olga’s heart opened up to hear about the most important thing of her life—eternal salvation through faith in Jesus—and she gladly accepted Him into her life. Please pray for these wonderful women, Olga and Esty, that the Lord will continue to work in their hearts.

ORTHODOX HEAR THE GOSPEL IN ARGENTINA

Because of restrictions in Argentina due to the coronavirus, large gatherings are prohibited. Still, our ministry to the Jewish people is continuing either in person, by phone, or online. A few weeks ago, Avi,* an

*names changed

Orthodox Jewish man, heard about our ministry online and wanted to know whether we were really Jewish. He agreed to meet in our office to speak with our Argentinian director who also came from an Orthodox background and told him how he, being an Orthodox Jew, had accepted Jesus as his Messiah. Avi was so impressed with the meeting and our staff member that he asked if they could meet again, and this time he brought a friend. They discussed the Hebrew prophecies and were so impressed that now they wanted to know more about being Jewish and believing in Jesus, but this time they wanted to bring their wives! They met again and slowly began to realize that being Jewish and believing in Jesus are not incompatible ideas. Although none of them have accepted Jesus as their Messiah, they are open and searching. They were happy to know that if they accept Jesus they do not cease being Jewish. They are now reading the New Testament and asking our staff member many questions. They were also impressed that our director was not pushy and kept a simple, open dialogue about Jesus and that peace with God comes as a result of the forgiveness of sins through the Messiah who died for our sins. Pray for these two Orthodox Jewish families and for all who are hearing the gospel.

COMPUTERS FOR ISRAELI CHILDREN IN NEED

For the last few months, Chosen People Ministries—Israel has been engaged in the unique project of giving computers to children in need. God has blessed this ministry, and we had the opportunity to help dozens of families. Each of these families is a treasured gift from God. We especially help large families and those with children with disabilities. Many of them are not yet believers, and this gift is only the first step to reaching them. We have ongoing personal relationships with all of them. Next month, we plan to visit each family. We have already prepared a special gift—books on spiritual topics for each family member. One eleven-year-old boy, Alyosha,* became close to us. His brother participates in our children’s camp. Due to a severe illness, he underwent several organ transplants (kidneys, heart, and lungs). He recently spent several weeks in the hospital, and his friends were not allowed to visit him. The computer that he received within the framework of this project was his favorite gift, and it helped him to communicate with the outside world, for which he is very grateful! Pray for Alyosha and his family. They need God’s support!



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LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Through your partnership with Chosen People Ministries, you are making a wonderful impact on Jewish people in the United States and around the world as together we:

- ❖ Share the good news of Messiah
- ❖ Support Jewish people in hard-to-reach places
- ❖ Equip people to evangelize to the Jewish people
- ❖ Advocate for Israel and against antisemitism

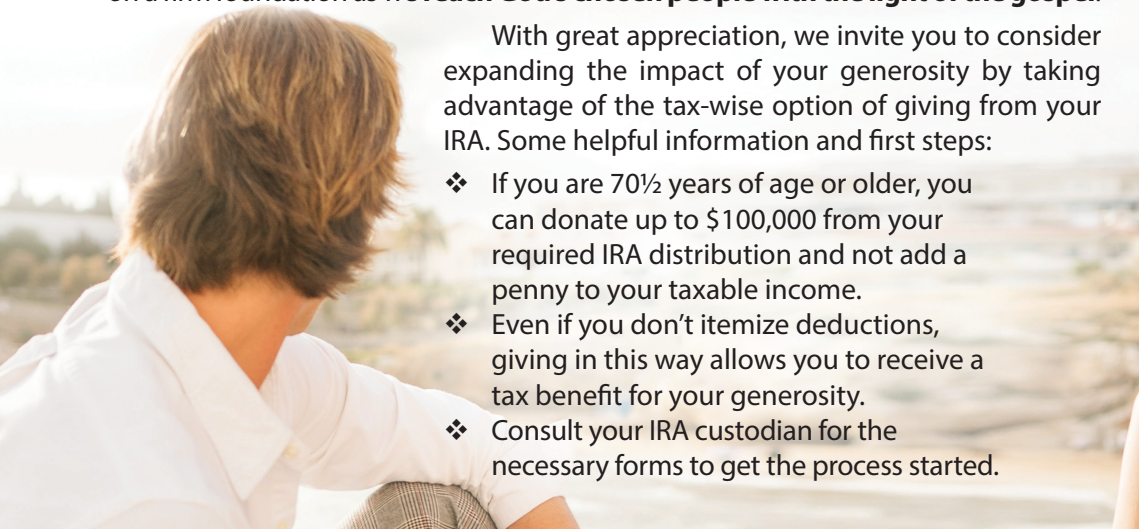
We are grateful for your love and support as we proclaim the good news of Jesus the Messiah to Jewish people around the world!

Your faithfulness is a great blessing as we approach the end of our fiscal year on June 30. With your help, we can finish the ministry year strong and begin our next year on a firm foundation as we **reach God's chosen people with the light of the gospel.**

With great appreciation, we invite you to consider expanding the impact of your generosity by taking advantage of the tax-wise option of giving from your IRA. Some helpful information and first steps:

- ❖ If you are 70½ years of age or older, you can donate up to \$100,000 from your required IRA distribution and not add a penny to your taxable income.
- ❖ Even if you don't itemize deductions, giving in this way allows you to receive a tax benefit for your generosity.
- ❖ Consult your IRA custodian for the necessary forms to get the process started.

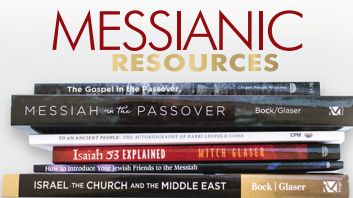
"IT IS TOO SMALL A THING THAT YOU SHOULD BE MY SERVANT TO RAISE UP THE TRIBES OF JACOB AND TO RESTORE THE PRESERVED ONES OF ISRAEL; I WILL ALSO MAKE YOU A LIGHT OF THE NATIONS SO THAT MY SALVATION MAY REACH TO THE END OF THE EARTH"
(ISAIAH 49:6 NASB).



For more information on giving through your IRA or other planned giving options through Chosen People Ministries, contact Cindy Forbes at 212-223-2252, ext. 1208 or cforbes@chosenpeople.com.

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Senior Editor: N. Surasky. Contributing Editors: E. Karp, M. Goldstein, C. Machado, J. Miles. Designer: L. Ruedinger. Cover Design: M. Jacoby.

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