



December 2015 eNewsletter



Contributions to Public Discourse

Baha'i Presence at American Academy of Religion Expands

A record number of eight presentations on Baha'i topics was offered at the premiere annual conference for professors and students in religious studies, and the Baha'is present made plans to continue developing the Faith's role. [READ>>](#)

News

Wilmette Institute Embarks on New Initiatives in 2016

The Wilmette Institute Board, at its October meeting, made plans to create courses for youth year of service volunteers, members of the community of interest, other groups in advanced clusters. It planned a course on the Hands of the Cause of God and set fund raising goals for the next five and a half years. [READ>>](#)

Wilmette Institute Fund Raising: Success Without Even Trying!

The Institute has broken its fund raising record by receiving at least \$25,500 since May. It's fund raising letter will be released later this month. [READ>>](#)

Local Study Groups: Now, Make them as Big as You Want!

The Institute is structuring the payments of local study groups differently so that they can be as big as you want to make them. [READ>>](#)

Call for Papers for 2016 'Irfan Colloquia

Abstracts for papers (in Persian, English, and German) for the five sessions are now being accepted for gatherings to be held at Bosch Baha'i School in Santa Rosa, California; the Center for Bahá'í Studies in Acuto, Italy; the Tambach Baha'i Center in Tambach, Germany; and Louhelen Bahá'í School in Davison, Michigan. [READ>>](#)

Celebrating Twenty Years

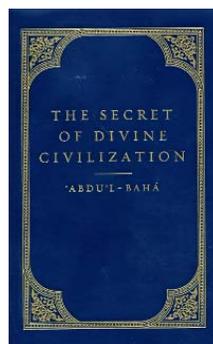
December 2015 - February 2016 Courses

Study 'Abdu'l-Baha's treatise as an example of public discourse and a blueprint for reorganizing the world

[The Secret of Divine Civilization](#)

Another in a series exploring the ministry, writings, and talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha
Lead Faculty: [Necati Alkan](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (December 1, 2015 - January 18, 2016)



In **The Secret of Divine Civilization** we will study 'Abdu'l-Baha's first extensive description of Baha'i social teachings, reading it slowly over a period of seven weeks. Elaborating on principles that Baha'u'llah enunciated in His tablets to the kings and leaders of the world, the treatise describes the true nature of civilization and provides a blueprint for the "future reorganization of the world." To develop the theme of universal peace, honest government, and religion as the true bases of world order, 'Abdu'l-Baha redefines the Islamic tradition that a learned person "must guard himself, defend his faith, oppose his passions and obey the commandments of his Lord." Leaders, in particular, are called to a new standard of honesty and trustworthiness, a theme of particular interest during any election cycle. This course will thus look at the complementary processes of personal transformation and social development, leading to a reorganization of the world. It will also examine the book as an early example of public discourse and consider how we can use it to improve our own efforts in public discourse.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Study the changes needed to be made worldwide to prepare for one common faith

Dr. Stephen R. Friberg Offers Captivating Talk on Science and Religion for Eleventh Web Talk

In his November 15 Web Talk on "Science and Religion: Reconciliation, Cooperation, and Harmonious Development," Dr. Stephen R. Friberg discussed how science and religion, when combined with the "fundamental oneness of religion," will produce future-looking thinking on both topics. [READ>>](#)



Twelfth Web Talk Celebrating the Wilmette Institute's Twentieth Anniversary Features Dr. Michael Penn on "The Nature of the Human Mind: A Bahá'í Perspective" on December 6

Plan to listen to Michael Penn's fascinating exploration of the nature of the human mind by reviewing the developing science and the principles delineated in the Baha'i authoritative texts. The free talk will be live via web video on Sunday, December 6, at 2 p.m. Eastern time (11 a.m. Pacific; 8 p.m. in western Europe. Click [here](#) to register. Links to previous talks--with summaries of the talks and links to YouTube--are available [here](#). [READ>>](#)



Learners in Action

The Benefits of Studying Native American Religious Figures and Ideas

Christine Pratt of Belchertown, Massachusetts, never expected that the course on **Two Peacemakers: Baha'u'llah and Deganawida** would be such an eye-opening exploration of the differences between Native American and European perspectives. She shared her learning with her community via a deepening at Feast, devotional readings, and some children's materials, and is planning a devotional program at a local university. [READ>>](#)



Webinars/Web Talks on Ethical Business Practices, The Tablets of the Divine Plan, and Other Matters

[ebbf Conference](#) / Milan, Italy / May 12-15, 2016
"Consultation: Beyond Decision-Making, A Tool for Learning"

['Irfan Colloquia](#) / Santa Cruz, CA / May 26-30, 2016
Celebrating the Centenary of the Tablets of the Divine Plan
Bosch Baha'i School, English and Persian

['Irfan Colloquia](#) / Acuto, Italy / Jun. 29-July 4, 2016
Celebrating the Centenary of the Tablets of the Divine Plan
Centre for Baha'i Studies, Persian

['Irfan Colloquia](#) / Acuto, Italy / Jul. 5-8, 2016
Celebrating the Centenary of the Tablets of the Divine Plan
Centre for Baha'i Studies, English

['Irfan Colloquia](#) / Tambach, Germany / Jul. 21-14, 2016
Celebrating the Centenary of the Tablets of the Divine Plan
Tambach Baha'i Center, German

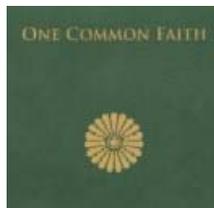
One Common Faith

One in a series of writings commissioned by the Universal House of Justice

Lead Faculty: [Barney Leith](#)

Faculty: [Anne Pearson](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (December 10, 2015 - January 27, 2016)



One Common Faith analyzes the assertion that "the time has come when religious leadership must face honestly and without further evasion the implications of the truth that God is one and that . . . religion is likewise one." In the document commissioned by the Universal House of Justice, we will look at the nature and results of the dominance of materialism in the modern world; the consequences of global integration; and the failure of the world's past religious systems to deal with the crisis of modernity. We

will also discuss what it says about the Baha'i principles that make the Baha'i approach effective: the impact of progressive revelation on understanding religious systems and their efforts to civilize humanity; and the power of unity in reforming civilization and the nature of the forces that oppose it. Finally, we will examine what the document explains about the efforts the Baha'i community must make to become an effective agent of change and lead the world to one common faith. Our study of *One Common Faith* will provide a foundation for teaching, for interfaith dialogue, and for contributing to public discourse.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Understand the Baha'i writings better by studying the Qur'an

Exploring the Qur'an

One in a series providing an integrated approach to world religions

Lead Faculty: [Susan Maneck](#)

Faculty: [Moojan Momen](#)

Duration of course: Nine weeks (December 15 - February 15, 2016)



The Qur'an is the divine revelation on which the religion of Islam is based. Shoghi Effendi has emphasized the importance of Baha'is' studying the Qur'an: "They must . . . approach reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas the study of the Qur'an which, apart from the sacred scriptures of the Babi and Baha'i revelations, constitutes the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated Repository of the Word of God" (*The Advent of Divine Justice* 49). In a letter written on his behalf, Shoghi Effendi advises "the friends to make a thorough study of the Qur'an, as the knowledge of

this sacred Scripture is absolutely indispensable for every believer who wishes to adequately understand and intelligently read, the writings of Baha'u'llah" (*Directives of the Guardian* 63). In **Exploring the Qur'an**, we will examine Baha'i references to the Qur'an and study a summary of the Qur'an and the tenets of Islam. Then we will study how the Qur'an describes itself and delve into several topics in the Qur'an: the nature of God; divine unity; the Prophets of God; and the Latter Day. Finally, we will discuss some Qur'anic verses as they relate to the Baha'i Faith.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

A new look at courtship and preparation for marriage

Are We Ready for Marriage?

Deepening Our Courtship

One in a series on courtship, marriage, and family

['Irfan Colloquia](#) / Davison, Michigan / Oct. 6-9, 2016
Celebrating the Centenary of the Tablets of the Divine Plan
Louhelen Baha'i School, English and Persian

Dedication, Mashriqu'l-Adhkar of Chile / Oct. 13-16, 2016
Santiago, Chile

WEBINARS/WEB TALKS ON the Human Mind and the Guide for Principled Leadership and Management

[Wilmette Institute Web Talk](#) / Dec. 6, 2015
Dr. Michael Penn
"The Nature of the Human Mind: A Baha'i Perspective"

[Association for Baha'i Studies Webinar](#) / Jan. 21, 2016
Dr. Shaheen Tedjarati
"Shoghi Effendi: The CEO (Chief Executive and Inspired Officer), The Ultimate Example and Guide for Principled Leadership and Management"

[Association for Baha'i Studies Webinar](#) / Feb. 24, 2016
Julia Berger
The Role of Religion in Society

Social Media

Wilmette Institute Facebook and Twitter Discounts

Follow the Wilmette Institute on Facebook and Twitter! Doing so could get you a discount on your next Wilmette Institute course. The Institute is offering discount codes for 10 or even 20 percent for selected courses via those two social media.

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Follow us on twitter 

Find us on Google+ 

Wilmette Institute Links

[Wilmette Institute Public Website](#)
[Wilmette Institute Course Delivery System](#)
[Wilmette Institute Student Projects](#)
[Wilmette Institute: Reference Materials](#)
[Wilmette Institute: YouTube Channel](#)
[Wilmette Institute: Twentieth Anniversary Web Talks](#)

Other Links

[Association for Baha'i Studies, North America](#)
[Baha'i Chair for World Peace](#)
[Baha'i International Community](#)
[Bosch Baha'i School](#)
[ebbf \(Ethical Business for a Better Future\)](#)
[Green Acre Baha'i School](#)
[Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity](#)
[International Baha'i Website](#)
['Irfan Colloquium](#)

Lead Faculty: [Susanne Alexander](#)

Faculty: [Alex Blakeson](#), [Hoda Kemp](#), [Wendi Momen](#), [Raymond Switzer](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (January 1 - February 18, 2016)



"Careful preparation for marriage is an essential first step in the preservation of Baha'i marriage" (World Centre Research Department, Introduction, "Preserving Baha'i Marriages" No. 3). As you and your intended spouse go through courtship and begin to discuss marriage, you can benefit from delving deeply into many topics, increasing your knowledge, insights, and skills as you prepare for a unified marriage. Your thoroughness in preparing for marriage will help you determine your compatibility, help you decide whether you have a shared vision of your future life together, establish good relationships with your parents, and make sure you include service to each other and to others a part of your plans. In **Are We Ready for Marriage?** we will study the Baha'i teachings on courtship and marriage, consider the input of marriage experts, and discuss your experiences and learning. We will cover such topics as marriage as a divine institution and the foundation for world unity; uniting a couples' families and securing parental consent to marriage; creating a harmonious spiritually based marriage that includes children; intercultural marriages in the context of a global human family; and practicing gender equality in a marriage. The course is intended primarily for single individuals and couples involved in a courtship and preparing for marriage, but others are welcome.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

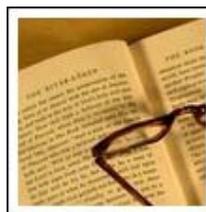
A new title for a course about learning techniques for studying any Baha'i text

[Finding the Hidden Gift: An Approach to Studying the Baha'i Writings](#)

An approach to studying the Baha'i writings

Lead Faculty: [Sandra Lynn Hutchison](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (January 7 - February 24, 2016)



Finding the Hidden Gift: An Approach to Studying the Baha'i Writings is designed to introduce learners to a systematic method of studying any Baha'i scripture by using a number of literary and exegetical tools. We will study selected passages from Baha'i scripture through four "windows" into the meaning of divine wisdom: Language; Theme; Structure; and the Work as a Whole. Through learning to read carefully, with attention to literal and figurative language, theme, structure, and the place of the

work in the author's writings, we will develop tools for analyzing any Baha'i text systematically. The course will also examine quickly five other "windows" into the meaning of scripture: the oeuvre (body of works), the biography, the times, the literary tradition, and the world scriptural tradition.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

A new course studying the progressive nature of Baha'u'llah's revelation with three video webinars

[From Concealment to Glorious Splendor: The Three Stages of Baha'u'llah's Declaration](#)

[Louhelen Baha'i School](#)
[Louis G. Gregory Museum](#)
[U.S. Baha'i Distribution Service](#)
[U.S. National Baha'i Library](#)
[Washington Baha'i History Museum](#)

Mark Your Calendar

March 1 - April 26, 2016
[Climate Change](#)

March 7 - April 24, 2016
[Health Care and Social Action](#)

March 10 - April 27, 2016
[Progressive Revelation](#)

March 15 - May 3, 2016
[The Baha'i Faith and the Arts](#)

March 22 - June 2, 2016
[Economics and the Baha'i Faith](#)

April 1 - May 19, 2016
[Understanding Religion: Conceptual and Experiential Aspects](#)

April 4 - May 4, 2016
[Marriage for Social Progress](#)

April 7 - May 25, 2016
[Christianity for Deepening and Dialogue](#)

April 15 - May 15, 2016
[Hands of the Cause of God: Paths of Service](#)

April 22 - June 7, 2016
[The Kitab-i-Aqdas](#)

May - November 2016 Course Schedule

Below is the Wilmette Institute's course schedule for May through November 2016. The schedule is subject to change.

May 1 - June 17, 2016
 How to Chair Consultation at Feast

May 10 - June 7, 2016
 Preparing for the New Five Year Plan

May 15 - July 2, 2016
 Preparing for Interfaith Dialogue

May 22 - July 9, 2016
 The Writings of the Bab

May 30 - July 22, 2016
 Becoming a Couple

June 1 - July 19, 2016
 Baha'u'llah's Revelation:
 A Systematic Survey

June 7 - July 25, 2016
 Islam for Deepening and Dialogue

June 15 - August 9, 2016
 Dynamic Consultation

June 22 - August 9, 2016
 The World Order of Baha'u'llah:
 Selected Letters

One in a series of courses exploring the writings of Baha'u'llah

Lead Faculty: [Shahrokh Monjazei](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (January 15 - March 3, 2016)



This course will cover the three declarative and pivotal works of Baha'u'llah during the fourteen year span from 1852 to 1866--namely, the *Rashh-i-'Ama'*, the *Madinatu's-Sabr*, and the *Suratu'l-Muluk*, three works associated with the three stages of His declaration: (1) His reception of revelation in the *Siyah-Chal*, (2) His private declaration in the Garden of Ridvan to a group of close followers, and (3) His public declaration to the kings and rulers of the world. Each work will be covered in a video webinar, followed by two weeks of study and discussion.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

A course examining Baha'u'llah's tablets to the world's kings and rulers

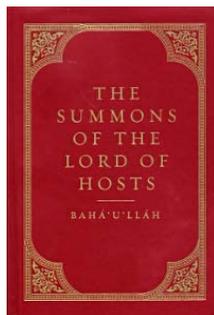
The Summons of the Lord of Hosts

Another in the series on Baha'u'llah's revelation

Lead Faculty: [Christopher Buck](#)

Faculty: [Necati Alkan](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (January 22 - March 7, 2016)



In **The Summons of the Lord of Hosts** course we will explore the series of letters that Baha'u'llah sent to kings and rulers of the world between 1866 and 1870. Written after He declared His mission, the letters, according to the Universal House of Justice, "summoned the monarchs of East and West collectively, and some among them individually, to recognize the Day of God and to acknowledge the One promised in the scriptures of the religions professed by the recipients of His Summons." Baha'u'llah Himself says that "Never since the beginning of the world hath the Message been so openly proclaimed." "As Baha'u'llah's influence penetrates ever more deeply the life of the larger society throughout the world," the Universal House of Justice notes, "it seems especially appropriate" that the full texts of Baha'u'llah's important letters sounding the themes of His revelation be studied by "a broad readership." For texts we will use *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* and a compilation about the tablets that provides background information.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

A new course exploring American Indian religion and the Baha'i Faith

American Indian Religion and Spirituality

Another in the series on religion, philosophy, and theology

Lead Faculty: [Paula Bidwell](#)

Faculty: [Kamao Capps](#), [Richard Hainsworth](#), [Valerie Phillips](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (January 25 - March 10, 2016)



In **Native American Religion and Spirituality** we will focus on indigenous spirituality and the universal message of Baha'u'llah. We will explore how the spiritual teachings

July 1 - August 17, 2016
Exploring the Hebrew Bible
(Christian Old Testament)

July 15 - September 6, 2016
The Destiny of America

August 1 - September 17, 2016
The Tabernacle of Unity

August 15 - October 2, 2016
Hinduism for Deepening and Dialogue

August 20 - October 7, 2016
Building a World Federation:
The Key to Resolving our Global Crises

August 25 - October 12, 2016
The Ministry of 'Abdu'l-Baha

September 1 - October 19, 2016
Practicing the Arts

September 2 - October 4, 2016
Consulting and Problem-Solving as a Couple

September 7 - October 25, 2016
Rediscovering the Dawnbreakers

September 10 - October 28, 2016
Climate Change

September 15 - October 2, 2016
The Advent of Divine Justice

September 22 - December 22, 2016
How to Organize and Maintain a Baha'i Archive

October 7 - November 24, 2016
Judaism for Deepening and Dialogue

October 10 - November 27, 2016
Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

October 15 - December 2, 2016
Buddhism for Deepening and Dialogue

October 21 - November 18, 2016
Engaging in parental Consent for Marriage

October 25 - December 12, 2016
Charters of the Faith

October 31 - December 2, 2016
Engaging in Parental Consent for Marriage

November 1 - December 19, 2016
Understanding Religion: Social and Historical Aspects

November 7 - December 25, 2016
The Baha'i Faith and Philosophy

November 10 - December 28, 2016
The Promise of World Peace

November 15 - January 3, 2017
The Equality of Women and Men

November 22 - January 17, 2017
The Epistle of Kings: A Comprehensive Study of
Suriy-i-Muluk, Baha'u'llah's First Proclamatory Tablet
To the Kings of the Nineteenth Century



in Native American religion echo and parallel similar teachings found in the Baha'i writings, how Bahá'í understandings of spirituality and religion are expanded by considering native traditions, how culture affects the way in which Baha'is look at reality, and how Native North American Baha'is can connect the Baha'i writings to their sacred traditions and thus share the Message in a more effective manner. We will cover a wide range of topics, including how to understand and communicate without

cultural divides, developing an awareness of our inherent biases, the historic effects of Christianity on Native populations, how such effects influence our interactions today and our presentations of the Faith, and the uncomfortable subject of colonization and how it affects Native Americans and European Descendent Americans. In our readings, discussions, and consultations, we will focus on encouraging differing ideas, insights, and perspectives on complex issues to broaden our understandings and enrich our collective experiences and wisdom.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Another new course examining monotheism in the Old Testament and the promise of the coming messiah's Kingdom

[Exploring the Book of Isaiah](#)

Another in the series on religion, philosophy, and theology

Lead Faculty: [Ted Brownstein](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (February 1 - March 7, 2016)



The Book of Isaiah is one of the longest and most complex prophetic works in the Hebrew Bible (Christian Old Testament). Probably composed in stages by different individuals or groups of individuals, the oldest section traces back to Isaiah ben Amoz, who lived in the eighth century BCE. The book contains what many consider to be the oldest clear statement of monotheism and also promises the coming of a Kingdom under a messiah. Many peoples, throughout the millennia, have interpreted the prophetic passages many ways. The Baha'i Faith offers new interpretations of some of the passages in Isaiah, and Baha'is infer other interpretations. In Exploring the Book of

Isaiah we will undertake a careful reading of the text to understand its historical nature and to put Baha'i interpretations in an historical context.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Explore Shoghi Effendi's multifaceted life and works that continue to shape our lives today

[The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi](#)

On in a series of course exploring the ministry and writings of Shoghi Effendi

Lead Faculty: [Barney Leith](#)

Faculty: [Ed DiLiberto](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (February 7 - March 29, 2016)



In **The Ministry of Shoghi Effendi** we will look briefly at Shoghi Effendi's childhood and youth (1897-1921) and more extensively at his ministry as Guardian of the Baha'i Faith (1921-57). We will consider the many roles Shoghi Effendi filled (builder, interpreter, author, and translator) as he carried out his duties as Guardian in fostering the growth and development of the Baha'i Faith. He devoted much of his ministry to building the administrative order outlined by Baha'u'llah and elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Baha in His Will and Testament and to using it as an instrument for



fostering the international spread of the Baha'i Faith called for by 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Tablets of the Divine Plan. Shoghi Effendi also worked tirelessly to extend and beautify the properties of the Baha'i World Center in Haifa and Acre, to erect the facade of the Shrine of the Bab, and to prepare a physical home for the center of the administrative order. Shoghi Effendi translated many writings of Baha'u'llah into English, translated and edited a history of the Babi period of the Faith, penned thousands of letters clarifying basic Baha'i teachings, and wrote the classic history of the first hundred years of the Faith's beginnings. His devotion, self-sacrifice, and suffering are an inspiration to Baha'is of all generations.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Examine Sufism as one key to understanding Baha'i writings

[Introduction to Sufism](#)

Another in the series on religion, philosophy, and theology

Lead Faculty: [Robert Stockman](#)

Faculty: [Daniel Pschaida](#), [Daniel Gebhardt](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (February 12 - April 1, 2016)



Sufism is the mystical dimension of Islam concerned with the describing the nature of and developing a deep personal relationship with God. Sufis created a vast literature in poetry and essay form about the human relationship with God, developed important ideas and terms to describe it, and wrote ecstatically about the experience itself. In the process they discovered important

insights into the meaning of many Qur'anic passages. The language they developed provided the Bab and Baha'u'llah with a powerful vocabulary and a set of metaphors to express their revelation. In Exploring Sufism we will study the origins and development of the Sufi tradition and its foundational role for understanding many Baha'i texts.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

Preparing for discourse on governance from a Baha'i perspective

[Applying Bahá'í Principles to Discourses on Governance in the United States](#)

One in a series of courses on global civilization

Lead Faculty: [Brian Aull](#)

Duration of course: Seven weeks (February 22 - April 16, 2016)



The Universal House of Justice has commented on the breakdown of trust and collaboration between the individual and the institutions of governance because of the corrupt practices of partisan politics. This "broken" state of American democracy is the subject of numerous books and articles. Bahá'is have something to contribute to this discussion, for the Bahá'í electoral process, its consultative approach to decision-making, and

its current efforts in human resource development and community building constitute a living model of democratic life. In **Applying Baha'i Principles to Discourses on Governance in the United States** we will explore how Bahá'is might contribute to discourses on governance in a way that speaks the language and engages the concerns of scholars, activists, and other people of good will working for civic renewal in the United States.

[Course Description](#) [Fees](#) [Course Schedule](#) [Register](#) [Financial Aid](#)

ABOUT US

The Wilmette Institute eNewsletter

The Wilmette Institute eNewsletter is published monthly by the Wilmette Institute, which offers quality online courses on the Baha'i Faith. The Wilmette Institute is committed to engaging a broad and diverse international community of learners in deep study of the Faith and to fostering love for study of the Faith. The Wilmette Institute was established in January 1995 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

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