

# Genesis 16:13

- You are the God who sees me -

The Gospel according to Hagar for Christians, Jews and Muslims

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## Introduction

- ❖ Christians, Jews, and Muslims all share the same forefather:
  - The Jews are the descendants of Abraham, who was called by God.
  - The Christians are also the descendants of Abraham, especially those Jews who became Christian. And we should never forget that the Christian church started in Jerusalem. Christ was born in Bethlehem, the apostles were Israelites and the members of the first Christian churches were in majority Jews who lived in Judah and in the dispersion. Abraham is called the father of all who believe (Rom 4:11, 12).
  - The Muslims, and especially the Arabs, believe that they are descendants of Abram through Hagar and Ishmael.<sup>1</sup>
  - This means that Christians, Jews, and Arabs (Muslims) are descendants of the same forefather.
- ❖ The history of Abram, Sarai, Hagar and the Angel of the Lord is not just a story like other stories, it is a story about the roots of world history and of three major religions! This story is still relevant today.
- ❖ This sermon outline will focus on the words spoken by Hagar: **“You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”**

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<sup>1</sup> Hagar in Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved August 17, 2016, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagar\\_in\\_Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hagar_in_Islam);  
Ishmael in Islam. (n.d.). Retrieved August 17, 2016, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishmael\\_in\\_Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishmael_in_Islam);  
Adnan. (n.d.). Retrieved August 17, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adnan>

- This is good news! This is really good news. He is still the same God. He hasn't changed.
- This is important news for all who are living amidst all kinds of problems and tensions! He is not a god who is standing at a distance. He is the God who sees. He is a personal God.

John 1:44-51 illustrates this:

Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit."

"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you."

Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel."

Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that."

Indeed: **"You are the God who sees me," for Hagar said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."**

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap with other sermon outlines taken from the Book of Genesis. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a stand-alone. You can also fit this outline into a series of sermons.

## Context

- ❖ This family tragedy, as we might call it, is part of the Genesis narrative, which is beautifully structured. It is part of the account of Abraham (Gen 11:27-25:11).

<i>THE CREATION</i>	
Genesis 1:1-2:3	"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."
<i>THE HISTORY OF HEAVEN AND EARTH</i>	
Genesis 2:4-4:26	"account of the heavens and the earth" (2:4)
Genesis 5:1-6:8	"account of Adam" (5:1)
Genesis 6:9-9:28	"account of Noah" (6:9)
Genesis 10:1-11:9	"account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons" (10:1)
<i>THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM, ISAAC AND JAKOB</i>	
Genesis 11:10-26	"account of Shem" (11:10)
Genesis 11:27-25:11	"account of Terah" (11:27) > Abram/Abraham
Genesis 25:12-18	"account of Abraham's son Ishmael" (25:12)
Genesis 25:19-35:29	"account of Abraham's son Isaac" (25:19)
Genesis 36:1-37:1	"account of Esau" (36:1)
Genesis 37:2-50:26	"account of Jacob" (37:2)

- ❖ The Book of Genesis consists of three main parts:
  1. Genesis 1:1-2:3: In the beginning;
  2. Genesis 2:4-11:9: The history of heaven and earth;
  3. Genesis 11:10-50:26: The history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
- ❖ The context of Genesis 16:1-13. The history begins when Terah and his family moved from Ur of the Chaldeans to the land of Canaan. But they settled down halfway in Haran, nowadays northern Syria. There Abram received the call from God to move further to the south, to the land of Canaan:

Genesis 11:27-32	<p>“The account of Terah.” (11:27). “He is the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.” And it is already mentioned: “The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai. (...) <b>Now Sarai was barren; she had no children</b>” (11:30).</p>
Genesis 12:1-9	<p>“The call of Abraham” and the promise of God (Gen 12:2-3):</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”</p> <p>When Abram travels through the land of Canaan: “The LORD appeared to Abram and said, <b>‘To your offspring I will give this land’</b>” (Gen 12:7).</p>
Genesis 12:10-20	Abram in Egypt, due to famine.
Genesis 13:1-18	<p>Abram and Lot separate. God reassures Abram: <b>“All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever.</b> I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted” (Gen 13:15-16).</p>
Genesis 14:1-24	<p>Abram rescues Lot and receives the blessing of Melchisedek, king of Salem:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand” (Gen 14:19–20).</p>
Genesis 15:1-21	<p>God’s covenant with Abram. God reassures Abram again:</p> <p>“But Abram said, (...) ‘You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.’</p> <p>Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but <b>a son coming from your own body will be your heir.</b>’ He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’</p> <p>Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15:2-6; Rom 4:3).</p>

Genesis 16:1-16	Abram, Sarai, and Hagar; the birth of Ishmael.  "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children."
Genesis 17:1-27	The covenant and the circumcision. The promise of a son, Isaac.

- ❖ At all the major events concerning the call and the promise of a nation, the age of Abra(ha)m is mentioned.

	<b>Abra(ha)m</b>	<b>Sara(i)</b>
Genesis 12:4	75 years old	(65 years old)
Genesis 16:16	86 years old (Ishmael is born)	(76 years old)
Genesis 17:1	99 years old	(89 years old)
Genesis 17:7; 22:5	100 years old (Isaac is born)	90 years old

## Form and structure

- ❖ The story of Abram, Sarai and Hagar can be divided into three scenes, one comment, and finally the conclusion. The third scene is the main one where Hagar is addressed by the angel of the Lord:

<i>Scene 1 (Gen 16:1-4):</i>	Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived.
<i>Scene 2 (Gen 16:5-6):</i>	When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me." "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.
<i>Scene 3 (Gen 16:7-13):</i>	The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm

	running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. Then the angel of the LORD told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her.” The angel added, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.” The angel of the LORD also said to her: “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: <b>“You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.”</b>
<i>Comment (Gen 16:14):</i>	That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.
<i>Conclusion (Gen 16:15-16):</i>	So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

❖ The structure of the words spoken by the Angel of the Lord, is somewhat lost in the translation of the NIV and retained in the ESV:

The angel of the Lord said to her,	“Return to your mistress and submit to her.”
The angel of the Lord said to her, <sup>2</sup>	“I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.”
The angel of the Lord said to her, <sup>3</sup>	“Behold, you are pregnant and shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has listened to your affliction. He shall be a wild donkey of a man, his hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he shall dwell over against all his kinsmen.”

- The threefold repetition of the phrase “the angel of the Lord said to her” lend these words a solemn and official character.

❖ Finally the end of this story is structured as follows:

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<sup>2</sup> The ESV adds: also said to her:

<sup>3</sup> The ESV adds: And the angel...

A	So Hagar bore Abram a son,
B	and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne.
B'	Abram was eighty-six years old
A'	when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

- The focus is here on Abram (BB'), who names the son Hagar had borne him Ishmael, and his age is mentioned.

### Technical, hermeneutical and historical notes

❖ **angel of the Lord** = “מַלְאֲכֵי יְהוָה”: **3.** *the theophanic angel*.<sup>4</sup> He is the angel in whom God makes himself present. He was present at the well, where he spoke to Hagar. Other appearances are found at (examples):

- The angel of the LORD is calling Hagar from heaven (see also Gen 21:17; also: 22:11, 15).
- The angel of the LORD appears to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 31:11).
- The angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in flames of fire from within a bush (Ex 3:2).
- The angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose Balaam but Balaam didn't see him, although the donkey did (Num 22:22-27). Then he opened the eyes of Balaam, so he could see the angel of the LORD (Num 22:31-35).
- When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he just sat down beneath an oak (Ju 6:11,12).
- The angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah. Manoah asked for his name. “He replied, ‘Why do you ask my name? It is beyond understanding (another possible translation: is wonderful)’ (Ju 13:18).

This short overview makes clear that the angel of the LORD did appear in very different ways. The appearance to Gideon, where he just sat down beneath an oak, might resemble the appearance to Hagar at the well.

❖ You are the God who **sees** me = “ἐφοράω”<sup>5</sup>: of the gods, *watch over, visit*.<sup>6</sup>

- = “רָאָה”: **looking, seeing, sight**;— **1.** *seeing, a God of seeing* (= who sees).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977, p. 521)

<sup>5</sup> The Greek Translation of the Old Testament: LXX, Gen 16:13.

<sup>6</sup> Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996, p. 746).

<sup>7</sup> Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977, p. 909).

## Exposition

### Verse 1-4

- ❖ **“Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children.”** Sarai is the main actor in this scene. She is the one who comes up with this solution: **“Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her.”**
  - It appears that the fertile period of a woman extended to the age of 65. Women could become pregnant at a higher age than nowadays. At the age of 65 Sarai discovered that her chances were lost, but not earlier at the age of 40 or 50.
  - Up to the age of 65 Sarai must have had some hope, but now that the years have passed away, all hope is lost. It is a painful situation for both of them, Sarai and Abram. It is also a test of their faith. **“The Lord has kept me from having children.”** Why? Why? Why? Imagine the outcry. Sarai had probably been praying for a long time; now she reached this conclusion.
  - Although this solution was culturally accepted<sup>8</sup> (Gen 30:1-12), still it mustn’t have been easy. And still it is uncertain: **“perhaps.”** Sarai doesn’t know if Hagar will give birth to a child, more specifically, to a son.
- ❖ **“Abram agreed to what Sarai said.”**
  - Abram didn’t respond this proposal by referring to the promises which the LORD had given him. See above the context of Genesis 16.
  - Was Abram motivated by the fear that there wouldn’t be an heir? It wouldn’t be the only instance in which he was motivated by fear. When they went to Egypt (Gen 12:10-20), he told Sarai: “Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you” (Gen 12:13). And the LORD had to intervene subsequently. They did the same thing when they were staying in Gerar (Gen 20:1-17) and again the LORD had to intervene.
    - Abram had expressed his fears to God when he said: “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir” (Gen 15:2, 3).
    - The solution which Sarai is offering is more plausible. Abram will be the father, and the child of Hagar will be accepted as being Sarai’s child. And it was not strictly against the word of God: “This man will not be your heir, but a son of your own body will be your heir” (Gen 15:4).

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<sup>8</sup> This is mentioned in the Laws of Hammurabi, who was the sixth king of the First Babylonian Dynasty (c. 1810 BC - 1750 BC): Hammurabi (n.d.). Retrieved August 20, 2016, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammurabi>

- **“Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness”** (Gen 15:6). But for now, Abram didn’t take his own responsibility. In a sense, Sarai did take her responsibility according to the custom of those days.
- ❖ Abram **“slept with Hagar, and she conceived.”** This pregnancy is a gift from the LORD. He will give this child its name! He will give this child the promises and he knows the character (Gen 16:7-12).

#### Verse 5-6

- ❖ Hagar **“began to despise her mistress.”** This is wrong, she shouldn’t have done so.
- ❖ “Then Sarai said to Abram, **“You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering.”** There is a special emphasis in the Hebrew on “I”. She is shouting to her husband. You would have been able to hear the doors slamming if they had doors, but they are living in a tent. Indeed, Abraham is the head of this household, and should have taken his responsibility. Hagar was bearing his child, which will be the heir according to their plan.
  - **“May the Lord judge between you and me.”** Sarai felt powerless, frustrated, embittered. She was barren and now she also lost her position as the beloved wife of her husband, because he didn’t take any responsibility for this new situation, which he had agreed upon.
- ❖ **“Your servant is in your hands,”** which means: you have the liberty to solve the problem yourself. *I’m not responsible for this situation.*
  - **“Do with her whatever you think best.”** <> **“Then Sarai mistreated Hagar.”** Sarai is taking revenge. She is full of hatred towards her maidservant. She wants her to go away, and by doing so, she was also taking revenge on her husband Abram. If Hagar would leave, then there was **no maidservant, no child, and no heir. Who would then inherit all the property!**
  - So Hagar fled from her.

#### Verse 7-12

- ❖ Where to go? Back home, to Egypt, where Hagar came from.
- ❖ The angel of the LORD found her near a spring in the desert along the road to Egypt. Who is this angel of the LORD? (See also technical, hermeneutical and historical notes.)
  - In this passage, he is three times called the “angel of the LORD” (verse 7, 9, 11) and once his title is shortened to “angel” (verse 9). But in that instance, we read: “The **angel** added, **“I will so increase** your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.” This promise reminds us of the promise given to Abram by the LORD himself (Gen 15:5). The angel is here identified with the LORD. This identification is also found in Exodus 3 where the **angel of the LORD** appeared to Moses in the burning bush. “When the **LORD** saw that he had gone over to look, **God** called to him” (Ex 3:4).

After the **angel of the LORD** had spoken to Hagar, she gave this name to the **LORD** who spoke to her: “You are the **God** who sees me” (Gen 16:13).

- The LORD God made himself present to Hagar. She could see him. Jesus Christ is the one who has been sent: “**Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father**” (Jn 14:9).
- ❖ There is a short conversation between the angel of the LORD and Hagar, which is often overlooked, because it seems so obvious, but it is not. Up to that moment, he hasn’t made himself known to Hagar.
  - “**Hagar, servant of Sarai.**” He knows her name and her position! This position has not changed. She is still the servant of Sarai.
    - The LORD reveals himself as **a personal God**. He is addressing this Egyptian woman by her name.
  - He is asking her two questions: “**where have you come from, and where are you going?**” And he knows the answers to both questions.
    - When people flee from a distressing situation, they know the answer to the first question but often not to the second one. They know the past but not the future.
    - Hagar answers only the first question: “**I’m running away from my mistress Sarai.**” She could have added: “and I am on my way back home.” But this was a plunge into the dark.  
Hagar didn’t mention the cause of her running away, only the fact of her running away.
      - This is very recognizable. She gives the impression that the behavior of Sarai is the cause and that her behavior has nothing to do with it.
- ❖ Now there are these three words of God:
  1. God is sending her back to her mistress. She must obey Sarai again. That was one of the major causes of all the problems, for which Hagar was responsible.
  2. Then she receives the promise which was also given to the father (Abram) of the child:
    - (Hagar > Ishmael): “**I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.**”
      - And God has fulfilled this promise because he is faithful. > Genesis 25:12-18.
    - (Abraham > Isaac): “**I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore.** Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and **through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me**” (Gen 22:17-18).

- The difference is found in the second and the third part of the promise given to Abraham.
  - The blessing, which has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham (Mt 1:1).
3. Then the Lord names the child Ishmael, “**for the Lord has heard of your misery**”, and describes how his character will be. The name Ishmael is a profession of faith.
- The focus in this outline will be on Genesis 16:13.

### Verse 13

- ❖ (ESV) “So she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘You are a God of seeing,’ for she said, ‘Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.’”  
(NIV) “She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: ‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’”
  - The translation of the original Hebrew causes some problems. Both the ESV as well as the NIV give other possible translations.  
ESV translation: “Truly here I have seen him who looks after me.” Alternatives: “Have I really seen him here who sees me?” or “Would I have looked here for the one who sees me?”  
NIV translation: “I have now seen the One who sees me.” Alternative: “I have now seen the back of the One who sees me.”

These translations and their alternatives stress the amazement, the astonishment of Hagar, when she discovers that she has heard the voice of God and has seen the presence of God. The story doesn’t tell us in what form the Angel of the Lord appeared.
- ❖ This profession of faith is truly important.
  - She is using the personal pronoun “**you**”, which gives these words emphasis.
  - Three times Hagar uses words which can be traced back to the same root in Hebrew: “**who sees me**”, “**I have seen**” and “**who sees me**.” The NIV-translation makes this clear, but the ESV-translation “**who looks after me**” is better. It expresses the belief and trust, that God will take care.
    - He is not alone a God of seeing, but also a God of hearing:
      - “For the Lord has heard of your misery” (Gen 16:11).
- ❖ Some questions remains. Why didn’t God intervene at the moment that Sarai went to Abram with her proposal? Why didn’t he intervene when Hagar was full of contempt? Why didn’t he stop Sarai taking revenge? He saw and heard everything!
  - The answers given to these questions must be tentative. When a man or a woman is in trouble, caused by themselves:

- Abram, who didn't take any responsibility;
- Sarai, who came up with her own solutions after she had lost all hope of having children by herself;
- Hagar, who despised her mistress Sarai when she was pregnant;

they often won't listen to the advice, nor accept an intervention. The position of Sarai reveals the following:

- She was very angry with Abram: **"May the LORD judge between you and me"** (verse 5). And then it is written: **"Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her"** (verse 6). She was only justifying herself (verse 5) and she got the liberty to take revenge (verse 6). She probably wouldn't have listened to the LORD.

#### Verse 14

- ❖ This is comment by the writer of the story. He explains why and when this well got its name. And the well still existed at the time of writing.

#### Verse 15-16

- ❖ These verses summarize and conclude the story. It is not told how Hagar was received by her mistress Sarai and Abram, when she had returned. But there are some remarkable facts to be noted.
    - Sarai is not mentioned. This contrasts with the beginning of the story, where she took the lead.
    - Three times it is said: **"Hagar bore Abram a son"** (Ishmael). This stands in stark contrast to: **"Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children."**
    - The focus is on Abram. He names the child Ishmael. Therefore he must have had a full account of the encounter Hagar had with the angel of the LORD.
      - Abram believed Hagar!
      - And he is taking his responsibility as the father of many nations.
- The age of Abram is explicitly mentioned. See context.

### Application

- ❖ The focus will be on verse 13.
- ❖ The gospel according to Hagar:
  - **He is a personal God.** He knows Hagar by name and he knows her position. He has heard and seen her. This is applicable to anyone of us, to individuals, to marriages, to communities, to churches and to peoples:
    - Churches (Revelation 2-7): "I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Rev 3:8).

- People of Israel: “And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them” (Ex 3:9).
  - Individuals: Psalm 139.
- God is a faithful God. He is faithful to Abram and Hagar shares in this faithfulness. The promises God had given to Abram, the father of many nations, also apply to the offspring through Ishmael.
  - He is a gracious and a loving God. Abram, Sarai, Hagar, they have sinned against each other and against God. When the angel calls Hagar, his words are full of grace and love.
  - He is a God of righteousness: “Go back to your mistress and submit to her” (verse 9).
- Hagar has seen God, who made himself known by the angel of the LORD. This seeing has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ:
  - “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (Jn 1:18).
  - “Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father**” (Jn 14:9).
- This short profession of faith is full of amazement: Who am I, that he looks after me?

❖ Pastoral advice

- It can happen that a woman flees from home because the situation at home is threatening and unbearable. In that case it is not advisable to send her back, quoting Genesis 16:9, where the angel of the LORD sends Hagar back to submit to her mistress again. He knew her situation and her future. We often don’t.

❖ Pastoral advice

- It may be tempting to apply Genesis 16:11-12 to the character of modern-day people. It is advisable not to do this, but follow the teachings of Jesus: “love your neighbor as yourself” (Mt 22:39-40) and preach the gospel.

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