

ONCE UPON A CHASSID

The Wisdom and the Whimsy
The Fire and the Joy

Stories, Anecdotes & Sayings
translated and adopted from the writings of the
Rebbes and Chassidim of Chabad Lubavitch
Arranged in conjunction with the 54 sections of the Torah

By Yanki Tauber

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 Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** עי"ה
 ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד
Shagalov
 Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766

Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** עי"ה
Ekman
 Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765

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Marenburg
 Passed away on the second day
 of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766

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 ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** עי"ה
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 Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769
 ה. נ. צ. ג. ה.

AND IN HONOR OF
 Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל
Shagalov

DEDICATED BY
 Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y.** and **Gittel Rochel** שיחי
Shagalov

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23:5

כי תראה חמור שנאך רבץ תחת משאו
וחדלת מעזב לו עזב תעזב עמו

*When you will see the donkey of your
enemy collapsed under its load, you
may wish to refrain from assisting him;
nevertheless, you should help him*

Whipping into Shape

Once, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (later to found the Chabad chassidic movement) was preparing to leave Mezeritch after a prolonged stay with his rebbe, Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch. Rabbi DovBer's son, the famed Rabbi Avraham 'the Angel', came to see him off. As the coach was about to set off, Rabbi Schneur Zalman heard Rabbi Avraham say to the coachman: "Whip the horses, so that they should cease to be horses!" (Another version goes: "Whip the horses, so that they should know they are horses!")

For Rabbi Schneur Zalman, this remark opened a new vista in man's service of G-d. He decided to remain in Mezeritch a while longer...

* * *

Once Upon A Chassid

Explained the Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita*:

The inner meaning of Rabbi Avraham's remark can be best understood in light of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov's famous interpretation of the verse: "*When you will see the donkey ('chamor') of your enemy collapsed under its load, you may wish to refrain from assisting him; nevertheless, you should help him.*"

'*Chamor*', Hebrew for 'donkey', also means 'the material' - a reference to the physical body and its mundane drives and needs. Thus, taught the Baal Shem Tov, this verse also describes a Jew's attitude toward the body and physicality:

"When you will see the 'chamor' of your enemy..." - Initially, you will see your material self as your enemy. In the early stages of a person's struggle to refine his self and character, the physical obstructs and hinders his spiritual growth - the soul and the body are adversaries.

"...Collapsed under its load..." Under such 'hostile' conditions, the Torah and its precepts are a burden to the body, despite the fact that Torah is *its own load*, given to man specifically to refine and elevate the physical. Not recognizing what is for its own benefit, the body resists the 'load'.

Thus, one's first inclination may be **"to refrain from assisting him"**, to negate the material. Says the Torah **"nevertheless, you should help him"** - cure the 'donkey' of its asininity, refine and develop its tremendous potential. First,

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make it aware “that he’s a horse”, bring it to recognize the coarseness of its undeveloped state. Then, “whip the horse so that he should cease to be a horse,” directing its energies and resources toward positive and G-dly ends.¹

Source:

Likkutei Sichos (Collected Talks of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe shlita) vol. 1, p. 118.

1. There are two phases to this process of self-refinement, referred to the teaching of chassidism as *iskafiah*, ‘conquest’, and *is’hapcha*, ‘transformation’: (a) the physical nature of man remains a beast, but is trained to control its animal instincts - conquest; (b) The beast is de-beasted: its drives are divested of their coarse forms of expression and the pure energies they contain are redirected and humanized - transformation.

This is the significance behind the two versions of Rabbi Avraham’s formula for dealing with ‘horses’: “Whip the horse so that he knows he’s a horse” - *iskafiah*, “Whip the horse so that he should cease to be a horse” - *is’hapcha*.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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The appointment of David, the King Moshiach, has already occurred, as it says,¹ "I have found David My servant, with My holy oil I have anointed him." It requires only an acceptance of his kingship by the people and a complete revelation of the attachment between the king and the people - in the true and perfect Redemption.

(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, Parshas Shekalim, Mevorchim HaChodesh Adar, 5751)

1. *Tehillim* (Psalms) 89:21.

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In regard to recent events:

First of all, it occurred that on the eve of this Shabbos, the heads of the great and important countries of the world, and at their head the leaders of the two superpowers, convened together. They resolved and announced a new era in the relationship between the countries of the world. The status of war between the nations of the world was nullified, to be expressed in a reduction and elimination of weapons of destruction until there is peace and unity, a working partnership and strong cooperation between nations for the good of all mankind.

Prior to this event (by Divine Providence) the President of this country declared to all his people (on Wednesday, "the preparation for Shabbos,"¹ the beginning of the eve of this Shabbos) that he would announce and publicize a reduction and elimination of weapons of destruction, utilizing the money that was not spent to

1. *Pesachim* 106, end of side a.

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procure weapons to expand economic programs that provide for the citizenry. The announcement was confirmed by Congress, wherein the laws of the country are established and which have the force of law according to Torah ("the law of the government is the law"²)

One has to consider the lesson as well as the details of the event - its place and time, including its connection to the contents of the time in **the Torah**, the Parsha of the week, as will be explained.

The lesson of this event is a general and fundamental aspect of the Divine service of the Jewish people ("our work and Divine service while in exile"³) - **to bring the coming of Moshiach:**"⁴

One of the promises of the true and final Redemption through our righteous Moshiach is connected to the conduct of the nations of the world: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."⁵

Furthermore, this will occur through the activity of our righteous Moshiach himself, as stated at the beginning of the verse,⁶ "He will judge among the nations and reprove many peoples" ("The judge is king Moshiach... for he is the master of all the peoples, and he reproves them; he says to whoever in whom is found sin, let the crooked be made straight... and because of this there will not be war between one nation and another because he will make peace between them, and they will not need weapons of war, and they will beat them to make of them utensils for working the ground"⁷). For

2. *Gittin* 10b. See there for cross-references.

3. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

4. The expression of our Sages, of blessed memory - in the Mishneh at the end of the first chapter of Brochos.

5. *Yeshayahu* 2:4. *Micha* 4:3.

6. *Yeshayahu* 2:4. *Micha* 4:3.

7. Commentary of *Radak* on the verse.

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"At the end of days the mount of the House of the L-rd will be mended... and all the nations will flow to it, and many peoples will go and they will say let us go up to the mount of G-d, to the House of the G-d of Yaakov and learn from his way and go in his paths, because Torah goes forth from Tzion and the word of G-d from Jerusalem,"⁸ and "the one who will teach them is the king Moshiach, about whom it is said, and he will judge."⁹

The heads of the nations of the world are resolving and announcing the reduction and elimination of weapons of destruction and an expansion of programs that provide sustenance for the country and the world as a whole. This is the content of the promise that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares," breaking weapons of war to make them vessels for working the ground, "ground from which comes bread."¹⁰ [Since they are currently making this resolution,] this is a clear sign concerning **the beginning of the fulfillment of this promise** of the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

A further clarification:

Since we find ourselves in the "highest time" of the coming of our righteous Moshiach, "Behold he (the king Moshiach) comes,"¹¹ we already see (an example) and the beginning of **the effect of the king Moshiach on the nations** - "and he judges between the nations and reproves many peoples and they shall beat their swords to plowshares..." Essentially, G-d is inspiring the rulers of the world ("the heart of kings and princes is in the hand of G-d"¹²) to resolve

8. *Yeshayahu* ibid, 2-3. *Micha* ibid, 1-2.

9. Commentary of *Radak* on the verse.

10. *Iyov* 28:5.

11. *Shir HaShirim* 2:8 and *Shir HaShirim Rabba* on the verse.

12. A common expression - based on *Mishlei* 21:1. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 13, p. 285, note 1 and the marginal note there.

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and announce together concerning the position and situation of "they shall beat their swords into plowshares."

The resolution and announcement occurred specifically at this time, because of its special connection with the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

It may be added, that the connection of the event to the beginning of the activities of our righteous Moshiach is also emphasized **in the details** of the event - **the time and place** wherein the heads of state made the resolution and announcement concerning the position and situation of "they shall beat their swords into plowshares":

The place wherein this event occurred (a place designated for representatives of the nations of the world to gather to deliberate among themselves in a courteous and peaceful manner) is in this country and this city. In the country and city wherein is "**Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel**"¹³ [The House of our Rebbe in Babel], "Beis Chayeinu" [The House of our Life], the synagogue and study hall, the house of Torah, Prayer and acts of loving-kindness, [all creations] of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation. He chose [this place] and established here the headquarters from which "Torah will go forth," the dissemination outward of Torah and the wellsprings into all corners of the world until the coming of our righteous Moshiach (when your wellsprings extend outward¹⁴). For then also will the promise be fulfilled that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares."

The meaning of this concept is:

13. *Megillah* 29:1. And see at length the pamphlet on the subject *Mikdash M'at Zeh* etc. (*Sefer HaSichos* 5752, p. 465.)

14. The Holy Letter of the Baal Shem Tov - *Kesser Shem Tov* at the beginning. And in many places.

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When the leader of our generation came to the lower hemisphere and established his residence in this country and city, there began in force the purification and refinement **of the lower hemisphere**, extending there the revelation of the giving of the Torah (which had been in the upper hemisphere¹⁵). More than this, it became the source from which extended and spread the fundamental activity of disseminating the Wellsprings outward **literally into all corners of the world**. This was done through the shluchim [emissaries] that he sent throughout the world (also to the upper hemisphere), to the farthest corner imaginable, in order to disseminate Torah and Judaism to all the Jewish people (including and specifically those dwelling among the gentiles and speaking their language and acting in all appearances like them).

Further, and this is also essential, he disseminated matters of goodness, justice and integrity between the nations of the world as well, through fulfillment of the commandments of the children of Noach.¹⁶ As greatly emphasized in recent years, as we come closer to and approach the time of the coming of our righteous Moshiach, "Then I will turn to the nations a pure language to call all of them on the name of G-d and to serve Him with one consent."¹⁷

In this last period (beginning with the year of **miracles**, and continuing into the years of "**wonders** I will show him" and "**wonders** in everything") this activity has reached its climax, with the breaking down of the boundaries of the country [Russia] that at its inception engraved on its flag and declared a war against the dissemination of Torah and Judaism, to the extent of waging war

15. See *Igros Kodesh* of the *Rebbe Rayatz*, vol. 2, page 492 ff. See there for cross references.

16. According to the ruling of the Rambam (*Laws of Kings*, chapter 8, halacha 10), that "Moshe Rabbeinu commanded, by Divine edict, that all who come into the world be compelled to accept the commandments commanded to the children of Noach."

17. *Tzefanyah* 3:9. See Rambam *ibid*, end of ch. 11.

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against belief in the Creator and Guide of the world. (This also includes the imprisonment of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, and consequently his expulsion from the borders of that country.) Nevertheless, the activities of the *shluchim* of the leader of our generation extended even there, spreading Torah and Judaism in secret and with real *mesiros nefesh* [self-sacrifice]. This continued until the recent period, when the decrees of the country were nullified, and it became possible to continue the activities of spreading Torah and Judaism with greater strength and vigor, openly and publicly. Finally, the previous government fell and a new government was established, declaring itself for justice, integrity and peace, based on belief in the Creator and Guide of the world.

As a continuation of this, on the eve of this Shabbos a meeting between the new president of that country and the president of this country occurred, in partnership with many other leaders of the great countries of the world. There they accepted the resolution and publicized its contents that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares."

The location of this conference, its resolution and announcement **in the city of the leader of our generation**, my sainted father-in-law (in which gathered the leaders of the countries, including as well the president of this country, who had to come from the capital city to this city¹⁸) implies that all this came as a result of the activities in disseminating Torah and Judaism, justice and integrity

18. Even though **the simple** reason for this is that the designated location for the representatives of the nations of the world to gather in an established way was from the outset designed to be in a place that was not the capital city of a particular country, yet the **true** reason for establishing that place [the United Nations] specifically in this city is that it was to be **the capital city** of "the kings, the rabbis" (see Gittin 62, end of side a and in other sources), my sainted father-in-law, **the leader of our generation** (and see below note 20.)

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throughout the world. That was done, and is being done, through the leader of our generation, **the Moshiach of the generation**.¹⁹ This is so to such an extent that through the completion of the Divine service mentioned above, at this time the whole world is made ready for the beginning of the activities of the king Moshiach, "and he will judge between the nations and reprove many peoples, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares."²⁰

The time in which this event occurred is also appropriately

19. See the pamphlet mentioned above (in note 11), section 5, that the leader of the generation is the Moshiach of the generation. This is emphasized especially in regard to my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, as alluded to in his two names: "Yosef" - "the L-rd shall set his hand again [Yoseef]... and gather the outcasts of Israel" (*Yeshayahu* 11:11-12), and "Yitzchak" - "then our mouths will be filled with laughter [S'chok]" (*Tehillim* 126:2. And see *Brochos* 31:1).

20. It should be noted, that the United Nations, organized for the purpose of peace and unity among the nations, was established in the lower half of the world after and in **proximity to the arrival of the leader of our generation** to the lower half of the world (beginning with the acceptance of the resolution in the middle of the war, about 5702, and principally at the conclusion of the war, about 5705). The headquarters were established **in the city of the leader of our generation**, even constructing a special building (about 5711). This emphasizes that the unity and the peace between the nations is a result of the activities of the leader of our generation in purifying the world (through the dissemination of Torah, Judaism, righteousness and integrity throughout the world). According to the increase of purification of the world through the leader of the generation, so also increases the solidification of an organization whose goal is to achieve unity and peace in the world, to the point of the completing and perfecting the purification of the world, fulfilling the prediction that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares," which is the foundation of this organization (to such an extent that it is emblazoned on the walls of the building.)

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connected with the Redemption because of its connection to the life **of the leader of our generation**; for it occurred on the eve of the last Shabbos of the month of Shvat, the eleventh month, on the tenth of which is the *hilulo*²¹ (the completion and perfection of the Divine service) of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation. The eleventh [of Shvat] produced an expansion and innovation in his leadership, with greater strength and greater vigor, until the completion and conclusion of all the Divine service of our generation (the last generation of exile which is the first generation of Redemption). [This happened] during the [past] forty-two years, which correspond to the forty-two stages of travel in the desert of the nations [i.e., exile]. Thus we are already prepared and poised to enter the land in the true and final Redemption (as discussed at length at a previous gathering).²² For **the time** (as well as the place) of the announcement that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares" emphasized the connection with the activities of the leader of our generation, my sainted father-in-law, the Moshiach of the generation, through whom is fulfilled the promise that "they will beat their swords into plowshares."

...It may be said that the resolution and announcement of **the leaders of the nations of the world** on the eve of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim concerning the condition and situation of "they shall beat their swords into plowshares" is an effect of the resolution and announcement of "**our kings, the Rabbis**" that "Behold he (the king Moshiach) comes." [The situation today] began with the legal decree of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation, that we have already completed our work and Divine service in the course of the exile and we are already prepared to greet our righteous Moshiach. It then continued through the legal decree of

21. [The Zohar describes the passing of a tzadik as "hilulo." Literally it means wedding, because it is the "reunion" of the soul of the tzadik with his Maker. Translator's note.]

22. Talks of 11 Shvat and Shabbos Parshas Beshallah (*Sefer HaSichos* 5752, p. 380).

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the rabbis and authorities of the Jewish people **that the time of Redemption has arrived**, "a king from the house of Dovid will arise... it is presumed [b'chezkas] that he is Moshiach " until the situation and position of "behold, he is certainly Moshiach [vadai]." ²³ [These are] legal decrees "**from Sinai**," which extend into and penetrate **the barriers of the world** as well, to such an extent that the leaders of the nations²⁴ resolve and announce **voluntarily** (and "**in their courts**" for they have the force "the law of the country is the law") concerning the situation and position that "they shall beat their swords into plowshares."

...According to what was said above, the wonder and amazement becomes much stronger, together with the great pain and confusion (a pain so great that one should not go into lengthy discussion of this matter on the Sabbath) - how is it possible that the Jewish people still find themselves in exile?!... Until when?!...

Is it possible that after all the signs that the true and complete Redemption is coming imminently and immediately in actual reality, including the event of this eve of Shabbos, when even the nations of the world announce that the time has arrived for "they shall beat their swords into plowshares" we find ourselves on the holy Shabbos day outside the land? Instead of being together with all the Jewish people from all corners of the world, is in our holy land, in Yerushalayim the holy city, and in the Beis HaMikdash [Temple], gathered at the "table prepared and set for the meal before the people,"²⁵ upon which is set the Livyosan, the Shor HaBor and the Yayin Meshumar!

Further, and this is essential, the announcement, the

23. *Rambam, Laws of Kings*, end of ch. 11.

24. That "even though he doesn't see, his mazel [lit., constellation, spiritual guide] sees" (*Megillah* 3a).

25. Rashi's commentary to the beginning of our Parsha.

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commandment and the power to "make me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them" (as we read in the Torah at Mincha) in regard to building the Third Beis HaMikdash has not yet been received!

From this is understood the great need and the urgency to increase with greater vigor and greater force involvement those things which draw closer, hasten and bring in actual reality the Redemption, imminently and immediately.

First of all, in the matter emphasized in Parshas Mishpatim:

"Mishpatim" are the details of the laws between people in order to achieve peace²⁶ (and obviously the absence of its opposite, nullifying the cause of the final exile²⁷), which brings the Redemption, as our Sages of blessed memory²⁸ said about the advantage of justice [mishpat], that "with it **Tzion will be built**, as it says,²⁹ Tzion will be redeemed with justice." [This also applies] to tzedekah ("and its captives through tzedekah"²⁹) and acts of loving kindness,³⁰ as explained in our Parsha,³¹ "If you will lend money to any of my people that is poor" and "Acts of loving kindness are greater than tzedekah."³² Also the relevant section of

26. See *Shmos Rabba* at the beginning of our Parsha (ch. 30:1): "they came to judgment and they made peace." In the Chiddushe HaRaDaL there: "Possibly it means through a compromise, as it says in Sanhedrin (6b), what is a peaceful judgment? It is a compromise."

27. See *Yoma* 9b.

28. *Shmos Rabba* there, 15.

29. *Yeshayahu* 1:27.

30. Including as well the effect on the nations of the world to be involved with tzedekah; particularly after the resolution of the leaders of the nations to save on the expenditures for weaponry, it is much easier to affect an increase in activities of tzedekah, whether for the nations of the world or for the Jewish people.

31. 22:24.

32. *Sukkah* 49b

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*Bava Basra*³³ (the "explanation" of parshas Mishpatim in the Oral Torah) explains in detail the concepts of the mitzvah of tzedekah. Among the fundamental ones is "Great³⁴ is tzedekah **for it brings close the Redemption**, as it says,³⁵ "Thus says the L-rd, keep judgment and do justice [tzedekah], for my salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed."

As a continuation of this, there is also the lesson from the beginning of parshas Terumah (which is read at Mincha on Shabbos): "Make me a Sanctuary and I will dwell among them," beginning with the individual sanctuary within each and every Jew ("within it is not written but within them, within each an every one"³⁶), within his inner heart. [The Sanctuary should also be] in his house and his room, making it a house of Torah, prayer and acts of loving-kindness. This includes in particular joining in building and expanding synagogues and Houses of Study in a manner of "Take for me terumah... gold and silver and copper"³⁷ (all thirteen (fifteen)³⁸ things enumerated in the Torah), through which is accelerated and hastened and effected immediately the building of the third Beis HaMikdash in reality, in the simple sense.

This resolution³⁹ should bring immediately the reward,⁴⁰ bringing the Redemption, imminently and immediately in reality, for then the Melave Malka [the meal after Shabbos], "the meal of Dovid, king Moshiach,"⁴¹

33. 8a ff.

34. 10a.

35. *Yeshayahu* 56:1.

36. See Alschich on the verse. *Sheloh* 69a and in other places.

37. 25:2-3.

38. See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 21, p. 153, in the references there.

39. [To give according to the generosity of their pure hearts to the Gemach [Free Loan] Fund, for whose benefactors a Melave Malka was arranged after this Holy Sabbath. (**Publisher's note**)

40. See *Taanis* 8b. *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* end of section 571.

41. *Siddur HaArizal* in its place [section dealing with the Saturday night

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will be arranged in partnership with the leader of our generation, our righteous Moshiach, at our head, in our holy land, in Yerushalayim the holy city, in the third Beis HaMikdash.

May it be His Will, and this is the most fundamental matter, that he true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach comes into actual reality imminently and immediately... with all the explanations of "MiYaD" (including as well the acronym that encompasses the generations, **Moshe**, **Yisroel** (the Baal Shem Tov), **Dovid** (king Moshiach)).

And specifically to our generation, that the acronym of "MiYaD" alludes to the three periods connected to my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation:⁴² in the order closest to us, **Moshiach** (**Menachem** is his name), **Yosef Yitzchak**, **DovBer** (the second name of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe).

And all the explanations of "mamosh" [really], and above all immediately in the **literal meaning** of "mamosh", really, really, really.

*(From the talk of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, 27 Shvat,
Blessing of the New Month Adar I, 5752)*

Melave Malka repast] and in other places.

42 See above, section 59.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Mrs. Roneete Mona Mina bas **Reb Zev** ע"ה **Kurtzman**

Passed away on 9 Cheshvan, 5783

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May she go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.
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