

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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DOCUMENT 192

THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

EXODUS 24:6 AND THE RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT AT SINAI

"Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins (*aggan*, אֲגָן), and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar (*mizbeach*, מִזְבֵּחַ)."

*A Covenant Deep Dive into **Dam HaBrit** (דָּם הַבְּרִית) — Why Did Moses Divide the Blood Between Altar and People?*

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REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✧ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	Ⓢ ISLAM
The ceremony of Exodus (Shemot) 24:6–8 is the founding legal act of covenant Israel. The people's response — <i>na'aseh v'nishma</i> (נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע, 'we will do and we will hear') — is the Talmud's paradigm of whole-hearted covenant acceptance (Shabbat 88a).	Hebrews 9:18–20 quotes this verse directly to argue that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' At the Last Supper, Yeshua echoes Moses' own words — 'this cup is the new covenant in My blood' (Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20) — deliberately invoking Sinai.	The Qur'an (5:12) records that Allah took a <i>mithaq</i> (solemn covenant) from the Children of Israel through twelve appointed leaders — a striking structural echo of the twelve pillars Moses raised at Sinai (Exodus 24:4).

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as

superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the *Tanakh* does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh**'s own words declare the covenant unchanging (**Malachi 3:6; Tehillim (Psalms) 119:89**), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh**'s covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh*. **Yahweh (יהוה)** and **Elohim (אלהים)** appear in bold throughout. Hebrew book names are given with English in parentheses. Hebrew transliterations appear in *bold italic* with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, and the Qur'an are cited as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Bereishit (Genesis), Shemot (Exodus), Vayikra (Leviticus), Devarim (Deuteronomy)	Foundation text — the ratification ceremony and its covenant antecedents
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah), Zecharyah (Zechariah)	Prophetic witness to the blood of the covenant and covenant renewal
Ketuvim (Writings)	Tehillim (Psalms)	Covenant worship and the memory of Sinai

I. THE TEXT AND CONTEXT — THE RATIFICATION CEREMONY AT SINAI

I-A. THE VERSE ITSELF

Exodus (Shemot) 24:6 reads: *"Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins (aggan, אֲגָן), and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar (mizbeach, מִזְבֵּחַ)." (Shemot [Exodus] 24:6, JPS 1985)*

This single verse sits at the center of the most important legal-covenantal act in the Tanakh outside the giving of the Ten Words themselves: the formal ratification of the covenant **Yahweh** had proposed to Yisra'el (Israel) at Sinai.

I-B. THE SEQUENCE OF THE CEREMONY (SHEMOT 24:3–8)

The ceremony proceeds in a fixed, deliberate legal sequence that the text preserves with unusual precision:

- 1. Verbal acceptance, first pass (24:3)** — Moshe (Moses) tells the people all the words and rulings of **Yahweh**; the people answer with one voice: *"All the words that Yahweh has spoken, we will do."*
- 2. Written record (24:4)** — Moshe writes down all the words of **Yahweh**, builds an altar at the base of the mountain, and erects twelve pillars (*matzevah*, מַצֵּבָה) for the twelve tribes of Yisra'el — the covenant's witnesses in stone.
- 3. Sacrifice (24:5)** — young men of the sons of Yisra'el offer burnt offerings (*olah*, עֹלָה) and peace offerings (*shelamim*, שְׁלָמִים) of oxen to **Yahweh**.
- 4. Division of the blood (24:6)** — Moshe divides the collected blood into two portions: half poured into basins, half dashed against the altar.
- 5. Public reading of the covenant document (24:7)** — Moshe takes the Book of the Covenant (*sefer ha-brit*, סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית) and reads it aloud in the hearing of the people, who respond a second time: *"All that Yahweh has spoken we will do, and we will hear (na'aseh v'nishma, נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע)." (na'aseh v'nishma, נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע).*
- 6. Sprinkling the people (24:8)** — Moshe takes the remaining blood from the basins and throws it on the people, declaring: *"Behold the blood of the covenant (dam ha-brit, דַּם הַבְּרִית) that Yahweh has cut with you concerning all these words."*

The sequence is not incidental. Sacrifice, blood, spoken word, and written word are woven together so tightly that no single element can be separated from the others without breaking the legal structure of the act.

What the statement means: Think of it like signing a major legal document today. You don't just say "I agree" out loud — you also read the terms, sign your name, and there are witnesses. Take away any one part

and the deal doesn't really hold up. Sinai worked the same way, just with ancient legal customs: a sacrifice (showing the seriousness of the commitment), blood (the ancient equivalent of a binding signature — ratifying it in the highest currency available, life itself), a spoken "yes" from the people (informed consent, stated twice), and a written record (a fixed, permanent copy of the terms, so no one could later claim to not know what they'd agreed to).

The document's point is that this wasn't a primitive ritual for its own sake — it was a real legal transaction, built with real legal safeguards: read the terms, agree to the terms, seal it in writing, seal it in blood. Pull any piece out and, legally speaking, the covenant wouldn't actually be ratified.

I-C. WHY THE BLOOD WAS DIVIDED

Ancient and modern commentators alike recognize that the division of the blood is the theological center of the passage. Half the blood is thrown against the altar — representing **Yahweh's** side of the covenant. Half is reserved and later thrown on the people — representing their side. The same blood, from the same sacrifice, binds both parties to a single covenant document. This is not decoration; it is the ceremonial equivalent of two parties signing the same contract in the same ink. The blood does not touch the people first — it touches the altar first, because in the structure of the ceremony, **Yahweh's** acceptance of the terms precedes and grounds the people's acceptance.

In the ceremony, Moses splits the blood into two portions and uses them in a specific order: **altar first, people second.**

Think of it like a contract that needs two signatures. The altar represents Yahweh's side of the agreement, and the people represent their own side. By throwing blood on the altar first, the ceremony shows **Yahweh** "signing" His commitment to the covenant before the people ever get their turn. Only after that does Moses take the remaining blood and put it on the people.

The order matters because it says something about the whole relationship: the people aren't being asked to commit to something uncertain or one-sided. **Yahweh's** own binding commitment comes first, and it's that commitment which gives the people solid ground to stand on when they give theirs. It's less "everyone jumps in together" and more "the foundation gets laid, then you build on it."

II. HEBREW WORD STUDY — THE VOCABULARY OF RATIFICATION

II-A. DAM (דָּם) — BLOOD — H1818

The Hebrew **dam** (דָּם), Strong's H1818, denotes blood in its most basic and most theologically loaded sense. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:11** supplies the Torah's own definition of why blood functions as it does in covenant and sacrificial contexts:

"For the life (*nefesh*, נֶפֶשׁ) of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life."

Blood is not a symbol chosen arbitrarily — it is identified by the Torah itself as the bearer of life. **A covenant ratified in blood is a covenant ratified in the currency of life itself, pledged by both parties.**

II-B. ZARQ (זָרַק) — TO SPRINKLE / DASH / THROW — H2236

The verb translated "sprinkled" in most English versions is *zaraq* (זָרַק), H2236 — a forceful throwing or dashing, not a gentle sprinkling. The same verb governs the priestly action of dashing sacrificial blood against the sides of the altar in **Vayikra (Leviticus) 1:5, 11 and 3:2**. The action at Sinai is deliberately identical in vocabulary to the standard priestly ritual of the Tabernacle not yet built — Moshe is functioning here as the officiating priest of the as-yet-unformed priesthood, dashing the blood exactly as Aharon's (Aaron's) sons would later do at the altar of the Tabernacle.

II-C. AGGAN (אֵגֶן) — BASIN — H101

The word for "basins" here is *aggan* (אֵגֶן), distinct from the more common *mizraq* (מִזְרָק) bowls used elsewhere in Tabernacle service. *Aggan* is attested elsewhere only in **Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 22:24** and **Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs) 7:3**, and archaeological and comparative Semitic evidence identifies it as a large, deep, two-handled bowl or chalice — a vessel built to hold and display a substantial quantity of liquid, not merely to catch runoff. The size of the vessel matters: it establishes that a defined, weighable, visible portion of blood was set aside for a second, distinct ceremonial act.

II-D. BRIT (בְּרִית) AND THE IDIOM KARAT BRIT (כָּרַת בְּרִית) — H1285

Brit (בְּרִית), H1285, "**covenant**," is paired throughout Tanakh with the verb *karat* (כָּרַת), "**to cut**." The standard Hebrew idiom for making a covenant is literally "**to cut a covenant**" (*karat brit*, כָּרַת בְּרִית) — language that presupposes a cutting ceremony, most plainly displayed in the covenant of the pieces in **Bereishit (Genesis) 15**, where animals are cut in half and the covenant party passes between the pieces. Moshe's declaration in **Shemot (Exodus) 24:8** — "**the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has cut (*karat*) with you**" — locks the Sinai ceremony directly into this older idiom. The blood is not an addition to the covenant; the cutting and the blood are, in Hebrew legal idiom, the same act of covenant-making.

In Hebrew, you don't "make" a covenant, you "cut" one. That's just the standard phrase — like how in English we "**sign**" a contract. The word for covenant (*brit*) almost always shows up paired with the verb "**cut**" (*karat*).

That phrase didn't start out as a figure of speech — it came from an actual physical ritual. Genesis 15 shows what it originally meant: animals are cut in half and laid out in two rows, and the party making the covenant walks between the pieces. That's where "**cutting a covenant**" comes from literally.

So when Moses says at Sinai, "**this is the blood of the covenant Yahweh has cut with you**," he's not using a poetic flourish. He's using the literal legal term, and it points straight back to that older cutting ritual. That's the key point: in Hebrew, "cutting" and "blood" aren't two separate ingredients added together to make a covenant official. The cutting *is* the blood ritual — they're one and the same action. So when the text says a covenant was "cut," it's already telling you blood was involved, the way saying someone "signed" a deal already tells you paper and ink were involved.

III. HISTORICAL CORROBORATION — COVENANT RATIFICATION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

III-A. BEREISHIT (GENESIS) 15 — THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE PIECES

The Sinai ceremony does not introduce blood-covenant ratification into Israel's story — it completes a pattern established four centuries earlier with Avraham (Abraham). In **Bereishit (Genesis) 15:9–18**, **Yahweh** directs Avram to cut a heifer, goat, and ram in half and arrange the halves opposite each other. A smoking firepot and flaming torch — representing **Yahweh's** own presence — pass between the pieces while Avram sleeps in a deep trance. The covenant is unilateral there: only **Yahweh** passes through, obligating Himself alone. At Sinai the structure matures: the people are now old enough, so to speak, to take on their own side of the same blood-bound obligation, and both altar and people receive the blood.

III-B. ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN SUZERAIN-VASSAL TREATIES AND THE HITTITE PARALLEL

The discovery and translation of second-millennium BCE Hittite treaty texts in the twentieth century supplied historians with the closest documented structural parallel to the covenant form found in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

Hittite suzerain-vassal treaties followed a recognizable six-part pattern:

- (1) preamble identifying the great king,
- (2) historical prologue recounting the king's prior benefits to the vassal,
- (3) stipulations — the obligations laid on the vassal,
- (4) provision for deposit of the treaty document and its periodic public reading,
- (5) a list of divine witnesses, and

(6) blessings for obedience and curses for violation.

Exodus 24's sequence — spoken terms, the writing of a covenant document, its public reading before the assembled people, and a ratifying rite — mirrors this treaty form closely enough that a substantial body of Near Eastern scholarship treats the Sinai covenant as adopting recognizable ancient treaty diplomacy and repurposing it for a covenant between **Yahweh** and a whole nation rather than between two human kings. Where Israel's covenant departs sharply from its Hittite analogues is precisely at Exodus 24:6–8: no surviving Hittite treaty ratifies its terms with a blood rite applied jointly to both the divine party's altar and the human party's assembled representatives.

The Hittite treaty format is basically a legal contract template — the kind a lawyer would recognize instantly. It's got a preamble (who's making this agreement), a background section (why we're doing this), the actual terms, a filing/review clause (store the document, read it out periodically so nobody "forgets" what they signed), witnesses, and a penalty clause (what happens if you break it). That's not so different from a modern business contract: parties, background, terms, "this agreement shall be reviewed annually," witnesses/notary, and a breach clause.

Exodus 24 follows that exact same skeleton. Spoken terms → written document → public reading → ratifying act. A nation living in that era would have recognized the *format* immediately, the same way you'd recognize a modern contract's structure even if the subject matter was totally new to you.

Here's the modern parallel that makes the comparison land: imagine two companies merging. Every merger contract in that industry follows the same boilerplate structure — that part's just "how deals get done," borrowed and expected. But then imagine this particular merger contract required something no other merger in the industry ever required: both CEOs literally signing in their own blood, on the same page, in front of the whole company. The paperwork format is unremarkable. The way it's *sealed* is not.

That's the distinction III-B is making. The six-part treaty structure is common ANE business practice — Israel isn't inventing a new kind of document. What's unprecedented is that no surviving Hittite treaty applies a ratifying blood rite to *both* parties, king's side and vassal's side alike, in one shared act. Sinai borrows the recognizable "contract format" of its world and then does something with it that nobody else in that world is doing.

III-C. BLOOD RITES AMONG ISRAEL'S NEIGHBORS

Blood oaths and blood-sealed agreements are attested broadly across the ancient Near East and beyond — from Arabian tribal blood-brotherhood rites to Greek and Scythian oath ceremonies recorded by later classical historians, in which contracting parties mingled blood or drank from a shared blood-mixed cup to bind an agreement with the gravity of life itself. The Torah does not borrow these practices uncritically; it locates the entire meaning of blood ritual within its own theological center — **Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:11**

— where blood atones for life *because life belongs to Yahweh alone*, and **Yahweh** Himself assigns it its atoning and covenant-sealing function. The comparative material corroborates that a ratifying nation in this era would have recognized blood ritual as the highest possible register of legal seriousness available to it; it does not corroborate that Israel's theology of blood was derivative rather than divinely instituted.

IV. FIVE COVENANT WITNESSES TO THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

Per the **Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. The following witnesses corroborate the meaning and reach of *dam ba-brit* across the Tanakh and its historical reception.

WITNESS ONE — BEREISHIT (GENESIS) 15:17–18: THE COVENANT OF THE PIECES

"On that day Yahweh cut (karat) a covenant with Avram, saying: To your offspring I give this land." (Bereishit [Genesis] 15:18)

The pattern of a blood-bound, unilateral divine self-obligation precedes Sinai by generations and establishes that *karat brit* already presupposed a cutting/blood ceremony before Moshe ever stood at the mountain.

WITNESS TWO — VAYIKRA (LEVITICUS) 17:11: THE THEOLOGY OF BLOOD

"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls." (Vayikra [Leviticus] 17:11) This is the Torah's own explanation of why blood — and not any other substance — carries covenantal and atoning weight: it is the assigned bearer of *nefesh*, life itself.

WITNESS THREE — ZECHARYAH (ZECHARIAH) 9:11: THE BLOOD OF YOUR COVENANT

"As for you also, because of the blood of your covenant (*dam beritekh*, דָּם בְּרִיתְךָ), I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit." (Zecharyah [Zechariah] 9:11) Centuries after Sinai, the prophet still invokes *dam ba-brit* as the standing legal basis for **Yahweh's** obligation to redeem His covenant people — proof that the ceremony's force was understood in Israel's own tradition as permanently binding, not a one-time ritual with no continuing legal weight.

WITNESS FOUR — DEVARIM (DEUTERONOMY) 29:9–14: COVENANT RENEWED, NOT REPEATED

"Not with you alone do I cut this covenant... but with those who are not here with us this day." (Devarim [Deuteronomy] 29:13–14) Moshe's renewal of the covenant on the plains of Moav explicitly extends the

binding force of the Sinai ratification forward to every generation of Yisra'el not yet born — the blood act at Sinai was understood to obligate descendants who were never present at the mountain.

WITNESS FIVE — IVRIM (HEBREWS) 9:18–20: THE NEW TESTAMENT’S OWN READING OF THE VERSE

"Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood... Moses said, 'This is the blood of the covenant that **Elohim** commanded for you.'" (Ivrim [Hebrews] 9:18, 20) Cited here strictly as historical-comparative reference per standing rule, not as binding authority: the writer of Hebrews quotes **Shemot (Exodus) 24:8** nearly verbatim and treats the necessity of blood for covenant ratification as an established legal principle he can build an argument upon — independent corroboration, from outside the Tanakh, that *dam ha-brit* at Sinai was understood in the first century as a legally binding, not merely symbolic, ratification.

V. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION RECEIVES DAM HA-BRIT

ELEMENT	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
Primary Reception	Na'aseh v'nishma (Shabbat 88a) as the paradigm of whole-hearted covenant acceptance; the ceremony is Torah's founding legal act, read every year in the Sinai narrative cycle.	Hebrews 9:18–20 cites the verse directly; the Last Supper's 'blood of the covenant' (Matthew 26:28) deliberately echoes Exodus 24:8 to frame a new ratification.	No blood-ratification ceremony is described for Sinai in the Qur'an, but mithaq (solemn covenant, Q. 5:12) with twelve appointed leaders parallels the twelve pillars of Exodus 24:4.
Covenant Strength	Preserves the ceremony as legally binding on all future generations (Devarim 29:13–14) — a live legal category, not mere memory.	Preserves the principle that 'without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness' (Hebrews 9:22) as continuous with, not opposed to, Sinai's own logic of atoning blood.	Preserves covenant as a real, binding mithaq with stated conditions and consequences (Q. 5:12–13) — echoing the Torah's own blessing/curse structure.

Covenant Departure	Some later interpretive traditions treat the ceremony as purely commemorative rather than as an ongoing legal reality binding the reader today — the written text itself resists this in Devarim 29:14.	Where later doctrine detaches 'blood of the covenant' from the Sinai text's own vocabulary and legal structure, it risks treating the phrase as free-floating symbol rather than Yeshua's own deliberate citation of Moshe.	Q. 5:13 records that the Children of Israel broke this mithaq — a conclusion the written Tanakh itself narrates at length; the point of agreement across traditions is that the breach was real and consequential.
Covenant Convergence	Blood as the bearer of life, and life as the currency of covenant obligation (Vayikra 17:11), is the shared ground beneath all three columns of this table.	The joint application of blood to altar and people — divine acceptance and human acceptance sealed in one act — is the structure every tradition recognizes as the heart of the ceremony.	A covenant made publicly, before appointed representatives of the whole people, with stated terms and stated consequences, is common ground across Sinai's ceremony and the Qur'an's account of mithaq.

VI. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The blood of the ratification ceremony is drawn from a single sacrifice and divided in two, so that the same blood binds Yahweh's altar and Yahweh's people to one covenant document.	Shemot (Exodus) 24:6, 8
II	Blood functions as covenant seal because the Torah itself assigns blood as the bearer of nefesh (life) — the highest possible pledge either party could offer.	Vayikra (Leviticus) 17:11

III	Karat brit, 'to cut a covenant,' is Hebrew legal idiom rooted in an actual cutting/blood ceremony, first modeled unilaterally with Avraham and completed bilaterally at Sinai.	Bereishit (Genesis) 15:17–18; Shemot (Exodus) 24:8
IV	The people's acceptance is stated twice — before and after the covenant document is read aloud — establishing that consent was neither blind nor coerced but repeated and informed.	Shemot (Exodus) 24:3, 7
V	The ratification at Sinai binds not only those physically present but every subsequent generation of the covenant nation.	Devarim (Deuteronomy) 29:13–14
VI	The prophetic tradition continued to invoke 'the blood of your covenant' centuries later as the standing legal ground for Yahweh's redemptive action toward His people.	Zecharyah (Zechariah) 9:11
VII	The ceremonial form of Sinai's ratification — spoken terms, written document, public reading, ratifying rite — is corroborated by known ancient Near Eastern treaty structure, situating the covenant in real historical practice rather than late literary invention.	Comparative ANE treaty texts; Shemot (Exodus) 24:3–8

VII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT DAM HA-BRIT ASKS OF THE READER

The ratification at Sinai was never a private transaction between Moshe and Yahweh conducted on the people's behalf without their knowledge. The text insists, twice, that the people heard the terms and answered for themselves. The covenant response asked of every reader of this document — Jewish, Christian, or Muslim — is fourfold.

First: Hear the terms before answering. The people did not consent to a covenant whose terms were withheld from them. Moshe read the Book of the Covenant aloud before their second, final acceptance. A covenant entered without knowledge of its terms is not the model Sinai provides.

Second: Recognize that acceptance was costly, not ceremonial only. Blood — the bearer of life itself — sealed the agreement. The gravity of covenant obligation is measured in the currency the Torah assigns to it: life, not sentiment.

Third: Recognize that the covenant reaches the present reader. Devarim (Deuteronomy) 29:14 states plainly that the covenant was cut with those not present that day. No reader of this document stands outside its reach by virtue of not having stood at the foot of the mountain.

Fourth: Answer, as Yisra'el did, in both halves — do and hear. Na'aseh v'nishma is not merely a historical curiosity of rabbinic literature; it names the shape covenant acceptance takes for anyone under the written Tanakh's authority — obedience and understanding held together, neither substituting for the other.

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"Behold the blood of the covenant that Yahweh has cut with you concerning all these words."

Shemot (Exodus) 24:8 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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