

The Maritime Goddess *Tanit* in the New World

by Zena Halpern



The “Insignia of the Maritime Goddess” *Tanit*.
Triangle body, circular head and outstretched arms
Petroglyph from New Mexico, San Juan Mountains



From the Levant, *Tanit* on a Seal
From Tel Kedesh Archaeological Site
Hellenistic Period
Prof. A. Berlin, Univ. of Minn. Excavation & Dr. S. Herbert,
Univ. of MI.

You have just seen 2 slides of *Tanit*; one from New Mexico and one from the Levant.

This opens the presentation which will begin with underwater discoveries in the eastern Mediterranean of figurines of the goddess *Asherah/Tanit* from 2 spectacular shipwrecks, one off the coast of Turkey and one off the coast of northern Israel and move to the latest discovery of the presence of *Tanit* throughout the Mediterranean world.

The Uluburun Shipwreck: A 14th BCE century gold plated goddess was found in the cargo at the bottom of the sea. The goddess was carried to protect the ship.

Ship sank off coast of Turkey, ca. 1300 BCE off the city of Kas. Cargo: 1 ton of tin ingots, 10 tons of copper ingots, amphorae, anchors, gold jewelry, tools. (Institute of Nautical Archaeology, Texas A&M, C. Pulak)



Texts from Ugarit name her as "She Who Treads. Subdues the Sea"

The unknown maritime aspect of the goddess is shown here for the first time. She is "Lady Asherah of the Sea."

Left- Gold pendant found in Uluburun cargo

Right- Gold pendant found in tomb in Ugarit

Names: Canaanite *Astarte/Anat*, *Asherah* /Ancient Israel

Tanit* was the later reflex of *Asherah



The Eastern Mediterranean: Crossroads of Cultures, Seafaring from 10,000 BC and earlier
Spectacular shipwrecks & cargoes found in deep water attest to an ancient maritime history.

The role of the ancient goddess as a maritime power has not been recognized.
Ancient seafarers adapted her to their special needs; protectress of ships and those who sailed them into
unknown seas and distant lands.

Uluburun Goddess
Kas, Turkey

Tanits found in shipwreck
Shavei Zion, Israel

2 deep water Phoenician
Phoenician shipwrecks



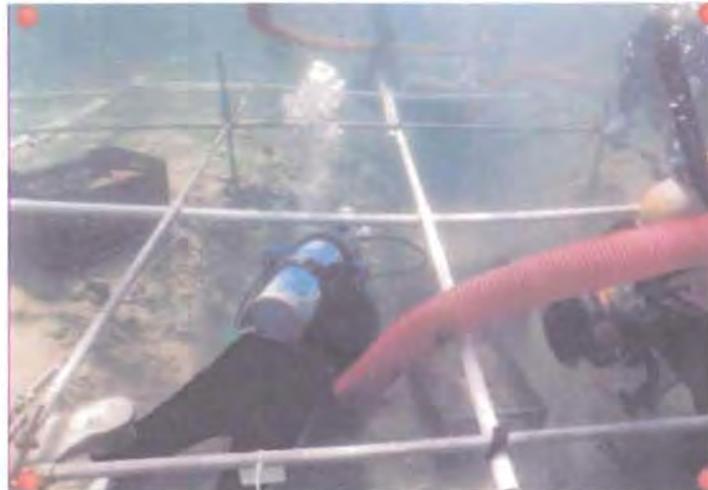
Underwater Archaeology is revealing maritime networks into the Atlantic; advanced technology of ancient harbors; sophisticated ship construction.

The Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean was a region of international seafaring spreading to distant lands. The maritime goddess played a powerful role as trade networks extended across the Atlantic ocean.



- A New Model of Ancient Seafaring and Extensive Bronze Age Trade Emerges as Scholars Study Ancient Shipwrecks and Cargoes.
- The metal trade spread west from major ports. We now know that Phoenician trade existed as far back as the 14th century BC. The goddess was carried on these ships west across the Mediterranean, out to the Atlantic, to Britain, Wales, Ireland, Scotland and to America where her symbol is found in over a dozen states in remote sites.

Underwater Exploration has given us the evidence!



Thousands of ancient ships lie beneath the seas. The Mediterranean Sea is a graveyard of shipwrecks and precious cargoes.



Bronze Age ships have been carved in various sites in the southeastern part of America. These ships carried the "Insignia of *Tanit*" or the replica of the goddess herself.
Photos by Warren Dexter



Tanits have been found carved in Vermont, North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Oklahoma,

Colorado, New Mexico and California.

Tanit from North Carolina carved on a 12 ft. boulder in a remote area N/W North Carolina near a tributary that flows into the Ohio River. Known for 100 years.



Tanit –San Juan Mts, New Mexico. Within the circle with 24 rays is the “The Insignia of the Goddess,”
• triangular body, circular head, arms outstretched



Photos by Gloria Farley from “In Plain Sight, Old World Records in Ancient America,”
Gloria Farley spent over 40 years traveling to remote areas, photographing,
making latex prints of hundreds of inscriptions across America.
Left- photo by Pat Taylor. Right Photo by Carol P. Rudolph

Tanit carved on roof of stone chamber in South Woodstock, Vermont & *Tanit* from Eastern Oklahoma



Photo by Zena Halpern at the Reeves Chamber, South Woodstock, Vermont, 1996. *Tanit* is carved on large stone slabs of the ceiling. The insignia of the goddess is clearly visible; a triangle, outstretched arms and circular head. First seen by Gloria Farley in 1975 with Barry Fell who identified Celtic Ogam script as a dedication to the goddess.

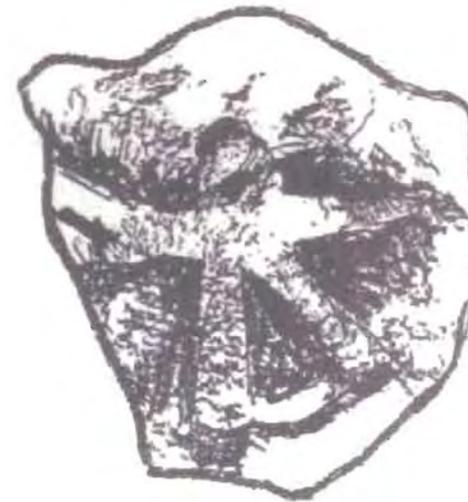


Photo by Gloria Farley. Found in a dried stream bed in eastern Oklahoma in 1969 by David Niven, a Boy Scout. Figure measures 2 ¼ inches. Native sandstone. Site: Bengal, Le Flore County, Eastern Oklahoma

We have seen only 4 *Tanits* carved in America. There are more to be seen found with the distinctive "*Insignia of Tanit*" discovered from a shipwreck off the northern coast of Israel in 1973.

- We want to pause here, cross the ocean to the eastern Med. coast and see a spectacular underwater discovery of *Tanits* found with her insignia carved on the figurines and recovered from the ocean floor. A chance discovery of a scuba diver who found an encrusted figure during a dive led to this major underwater discovery.



"The Insignia of Tanit," the symbol of the Goddess, the ever present triangle, arms outstretched, topped by a disc.

**Late Bronze Age Amulet.
Hecht Museum, Univ, of Haifa, Israel**

A Spectacular Shipwreck with a Cargo of Hundreds of *Tanits*.
Figurines of the Phoenician Goddess Found in Wreck off Northern Coast of Israel in 1973. (NYTIMES, JOHN NOBLE WILFORD,1/15/73)



These are the only *Tanits* ever recovered from a shipwreck. There were over 200 strewn on the ocean floor. Clay Figurines were mass produced from molds On the left, the pedestal has the **sign of Tanit**- a triangle topped by a circular head with arms outstretched.

Right – her right hand is raised in blessing



A team of divers & marine archaeologists from the Univ. of Haifa led by Dr. Elisha Linder said “ the artifacts are of paramount importance in showing the cultural & economic relationships between the Phoenician homeland and Carthage.” The shipwreck is dated to the 5th century BCE

Encrusted *Tanits* were recovered from 40 feet of water and were scattered over an area of 1500 feet

Dr. Elisha Linder, Director diving at the *Tanit* Shipwreck. 1973, Shave-Zion, Israel



The extraordinary importance of the recovery of the Phoenician goddess *Tanit* is the discovery of *Tanits* carved in America. She was brought here on ships carrying the maritime goddess, as protectress of ships and those who sailed them.



The "*Sign of Tanit*" is carved on the pedestal. The ship may have been sailing to Carthage, the major Phoenician colony where she was the principal deity of Carthage. From the latest discovery, we now know she was worshipped from east to west in the Mediterranean World.

"*Sign of Tanit*" from Delos .
Iron Age.
Her sacred symbol spread across the Mediterranean to the Iberian Peninsula and to America.



Photos by Professor Robert Stieglitz, "*Die Göttin Tanit in Orient*," Antike Welt, 1990

The **Tanits** from this shipwreck are the only underwater discovery of figurines with the "**Sign of Tanit.**" The other underwater discovery was the Uluburun shipwreck, ca1300 BC which carried the Canaanite goddess **Asherah** who later merged into **Tanit.**



There is a dolphin on the pedestal of this *Tanit* recovered from the sea.
The Shave Zion expedition was conducted in 1973 by the University of Haifa, the UESI Undersea Exploration society of Israel and the National Maritime Museum of Haifa. Shavei-Zion is a town on the coast of Israel halfway between Haifa and the Lebanese port city of Tyre.

These photos are from the archives of the Shave Zion expedition, 1973
directed by Dr. Elisha Linder and the team of divers and underwater archaeologists from the University of Haifa, UESI
(Underwater Exploration Society of Israel.) Today called RIMS (Recanati Institute for Maritime Studies)



Dr. Elisha Linder, 1973

The Canaanite goddess *Asherah*, recovered from the spectacular Uluburun shipwreck was a protectress of ships. The figurine was kept on board to guard against the dangers of the sea, to protect the crew, passengers and cargo. Her left palm is open in an act of blessing. The gold collar highlights her elite status and her gesture suggests her divinity. She was cast in bronze and embellished with gold overlay.

Late Bronze Age, ca.1300 BC



The Uluburun eleven year excavation yielded the richest cargo ever recovered from the Late Bronze Age.

Of interest was the one ton of tin ingots, unusual for the amount; origin of tin ingots undetermined.

George Bass and Cemal Pulak of INA & Bodrum Museum of Underwater Archaeology were also involved in the

recovery of the Gelidonya shipwreck, ca1200

Photo: "From Beyond Babylon,"

Metropolitan Museum & Bodrum MUA

Left: Late Bronze Age, 15th cent BCE, Gold Pendant from Tell el 'Ajul, Gaza of goddess with distinctive triangle, symbol of birth and life. Right: Electrum pendant of Asherah with a tree growing out of the triangle, 14-13 cent.BC.



Courtesy of Dr. Uzi Avner



From Dever, 2005:228
Keel 1997;Fig.253

Can the origin of the "Goddess Centered Religion" be traceable to the Paleolithic? Neolithic figurines also depict female anatomical features as seen from a recent discovery of an ivory figurine in a cave in south western Germany, the "Venus " of Hohle Fels, 37,000 years old.

NYTimes, May 13, 2009, John Noble Wilford "Full Figured Statuette, 35,000 Years Old, Provides New Clues to How Art Evolved."



The find was reported by Dr. N.J. Conrad, archaeologist at the University of Tübingen, Germany who found the small carving. He comments that the anatomical features of the figurine's sexual characteristics are explicitly shown. The figurine was less than 2.5 inches long. There was a ring at the top to allow the figure to be suspended from a string.

The "Goddess of the Neolithic," showed a continuity from the Paleolithic. She was the birth-giver, portrayed in a birth-giving pose. The goddess was the fertility giver shown as a pregnant nude or the bird woman- life and nourishment giver and protectress. Very specific symbols of birth & fertility were associated with the goddess: pubic triangles as ovals or triangles, chevrons, zig-zags, etc.

**Cretan Goddess,
3500-2500BC**

**Note triangle which
symbolized "birth giver"
(Gimbutas 1989, 203)
The triangle symbol is an
ancient female anatomical
symbol representing
fertility and birth.
It is found in as far back
as 30,000 BC and is
world wide.**



**Female triangle symbol with
male.Karanova culture,c.5000BC
Gimbutas, 1999:18**

A goddess from the Negev Desert, 3500 BCE and a goddess carved in a remote site in the Rio Puerco Valley, New Mexico



A Chalcolithic goddess and cult objects from *Ein Netafim* in the Eilat Mountains of the Negev Desert, Israel. ca. 4000-3000BCE. Excavation of the site, 2 ½ miles northwest of Eilat on the Gulf of Aqaba was conducted by Dr. Uzi Avner and A. Holzer. The site is near Timna where the remains of ancient copper mines have been found. The Chalcolithic Period/ Copper Age –began ca. 5500BCE marks the mastery of metallurgy and the extraction from copper from the mines in the area. The site was found to have remaining walls used as the base to build circular tents, a tradition which dates from the 5th millennium BCE. Courtesy: Dr. Uzi Avner

- Goddess from Colorado/Oklahoma Panhandle Area &
- Picture Canyon, Cimarron River Petroglyph of *Tanit*



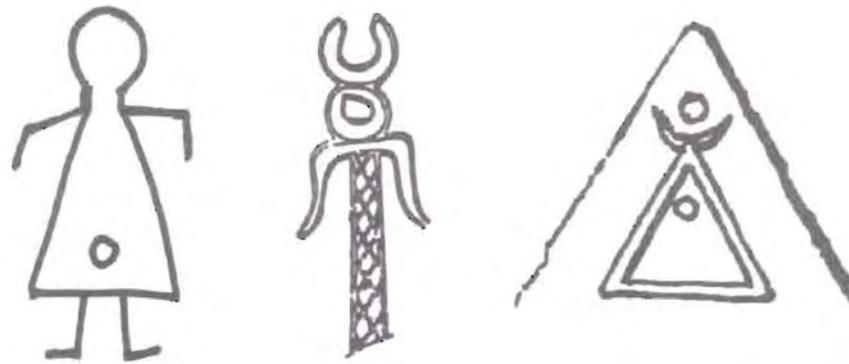
Left- Note within the triangle is a smaller triangle indicating the birth/fertility symbol. The symbol of the triangle and its meaning is traceable to Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures in the geographic area of "Old Europe" and the Near East. Not only was the symbol of the triangle ever present on pottery, statues, shrines but it was found in triangular shaped stone structures; the "womb" of the goddess. The prevailing concept associated with the triangle symbol was of regeneration.

**Tanit carved in Owens Valley, California
next to a ship petroglyph**



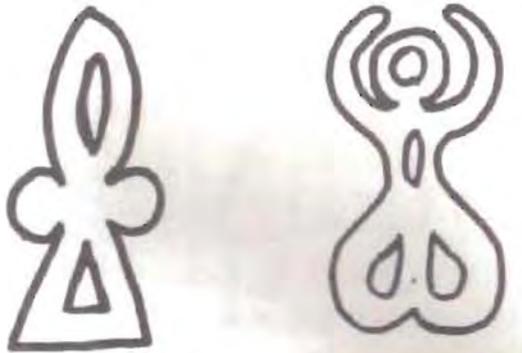
Photo taken by Jon Polansky with Gloria Farley on one of several trips to remote sites in Owens Valley, CA. Gloria Farley climbed up huge jagged blocks of basalt & found a pecked figure of *Tanit* and a second *Tanit*. The triangle is marked with 2 crescent moons. Next to the *Tanit* was an 11 inch ship petroglyph, evidence of her association as goddess of the sea and ships.

- Gloria Farley spent forty years of her life discovering & recording ancient scripts & petroglyphs either by photography or by meticulous tracings & rubbings .She explored caves, canyons, river beds of the southwest to California. She followed the rivers from the Mississippi to the Rockies.Here are more of her sketches from her book "In Plain Sight:Old World Records in ancient America.



Left- *Tanit* from Joshua Tree National Park, CA
Redrawn from photo by Homer Amos.
Center & Right from Libya & Algiers
Redrawn from D'Alviella and De Constantine

- *Tanits* from Ohio & from Oklahoma



These are copper *Tanits* from the Hopewell Mounds in Ohio



Tanit found in the remote area of the Oklahoma Panhandle, the western portion of Oklahoma, near the Cimarron River, a tributary of the Arkansas & Mississippi Rivers. Note depiction of fertility symbol with dot.

In a rock strewn, remote ravine in the Rio Puerco Valley, an area between Hidden Mountain and Mt. Taylor, *Tanits* were found carved on rocks. The Rio Puerco flows into the Rio Grande close to Hidden Mountain where the Decalogue Stone is located. There was ancient turquoise mining on Mt. Taylor & the turquoise was carried to Hidden Mt. which overlooked the Rio Puerco on the lookout for ships to transfer the precious gem to overseas markets. The site is in New Mexico.



Photos by Roger Williamson, retired U.S. Army Chaplain who braved the rattlesnake infested area to take these shots.

**Left: From the Spiro Mounds, eastern Oklahoma a conch shell excavated from the Craig Mound. The conch shell shows 3 symbols of Tanit on a boat. (Farley, 181, sketched from Wyckoff & Peterson)
The area of eastern Oklahoma is near a major river system.
Right: Vase from Sardinia with similar motif as Oklahoma dated 4000-3800BC. From *Grotto di Sa Ucca de Su Tintirriolu de MARA*, Northern Sardinia (Gimbutas, 1989;241)**



Tanits as far as South Africa were found by Warren Dexter, famed photographer.



Tanit in Anubis Cave, Oklahoma
© Warren W. Dexter 1986



Pipe with Tanit
Inscribed on side.
Columbus, Georgia
Warren W. Dexter, 1979

Tanit found on a lead weight from the Bronze/Iron Age harbor at Tel Dor off the coast of Israel. The discovery proves the wide spread presence of *Tanit* throughout the entire Mediterranean world.



Goddesses & Cults at Tel Dor
Ephraim Stern
Confronting the Past
2006; 177-180



Tel Dor is one of the most spectacular harbors of the Mediterranean with engineered harbor construction dated to the Early Bronze Age. The huge mound of Tel Dor has multiple layers of different cultures. Tantura Lagoon, seen here to the left holds the remains of over 30 shipwrecks of every era.



The Lead Weight is evidence of the extensive presence of *Tanit* throughout the entire Mediterranean area from the east Med to North Africa and Spain. Carried as a talisman, she was the “Guardian of Ships & Seamen.”



Tel Dor looking north. One of the harbors is below the mound. The lead weight was found in Area D1 –southwest part of the city seen here.



The square lead weight (5x5 cm) has a loop at the top suspending it from a rod for balance. The reverse of the weight gives the date of its manufacture, “Year 12 of the Era of Tyre” corresponding to 115 BCE. The club shown represents Heracles, next to it are the letters AGO =Greek name shortened, meaning the official in charge of the marketplace. The lead weight was found in the Acropolis area which you see in the photo in the lower center.

The Spectacular Site of Tel Dor, the huge mound overlooking the Mediterranean has produced artifacts from every major culture in the Near East.



Photo of Dor: Sky Ballons Inc., Courtesy, Of The University of Haifa, Israel

The Levantine Goddess Asherah/Tanit has not only been found at Dor, her presence; the distinctive "Sign of Tanit" is now turning up in the entire East Med. coast. The ancient Phoenician harbor towns sent their ships across the seas & oceans carrying the "Sign of Tanit" for protection.



From the Late Bronze Age through to Roman times the East Mediterranean was a region of international trade. Maritime networks spread west to North Africa, Italy, the Iberian Peninsula, out to the Atlantic, to Cornwall and to the Baltic Sea in search of metals & trade.

Ships sailed from harbor cities such as Dor, Carthage and later the great Roman port of Caesarea carrying the ever present "Sign of Tanit," the ancient triangle symbol of the great mother goddess adapted for protection and survival on the ocean.

The discovery in 2000 in the final season of excavation at Tel Dor, the great Bronze/Iron Age harbor of the lead weight with the "Sign of Tanit" is evidence of her extensive and wide spread transmission not only across the Mediterranean but across the Atlantic Ocean to sites in America.

An Undersea Warship Ram from the ca. 3rd century BCE found off the coast of Athlit, just north of Dor has the symbol of *Tanit*.



About 2500 years ago in the sea off the harbor of Athlit, a naval battle took place. The bronze ram, half ton seen here was found embedded in a shipwreck. The ram was remarkably retrieved from the broken ship. The "Symbol of Tanit" was incised on the bronze ram. Remains of the Crusader Castle are seen in this photo.
©Zena Halpern 2004

The Athlit Warship Ram



Athlit and the coast where the warship ram was found in the sea bottom.



Map shows Carmel Coast. Some of the most important discoveries have come from these coastal waters.

The *Tanit & Cybele* from Dor, the Ram from Athlit, once a Phoenician harbor. In the 11th cent. the Crusaders built a castle, remains seen here.

Several meters south in 1985 a 2500 year old ship was discovered with the lower structure completely intact + artifacts from her cargo; tools, cosmetic jars and a rare wooden anchor completely intact.

2500 Year Old Shipwreck Retrieved 1/3 Intact off the coast.
Unique discovery in coastal waters leads to major study of technology of ancient ship construction.



The ship was discovered by a scuba diver off the coastal waters of the kibbutz Ma'agan Mikhael. It was excavated from the sea bottom, preserved and reconstructed, now in a special wing of the Hecht Museum at the Univ. of Haifa.

The Search for Phoenician Shipwrecks: Portugal and Spain

An interdisciplinary team of scientists, two from the Dept. of Geology, Norwich Univ. Vermont have investigated several harbor sites in Portugal searching for buried Phoenician shipwrecks based on the knowledge that these merchant –seafarers were active along the coasts of the Atlantic and trading into northern Europe seeking resources.

Phoenician shipwreck site at Cartagena, Spain.

The vast extent of their trade networks is being uncovered off this coastal city, S/E Spain. The *Baja de la Campana Wrecks* are being excavated by grants from the Nat'l. Geographic Society, INA at Texas A&M and the Nat'l Museum of Maritime Archaeology in Cartagena. Discoveries have yielded cargo from 3 wrecked ships: Phoenician, 7th-6th cent. BCE, Punic and Roman. Phoenician script appears on a whetstone. Mark Polzer & Juan Reyes, INA Research Associates are excavating the site.

Summarizing the theme of this presentation:

From the great 14th century BCE harbor city of *Ugarit* on the N/E Mediterranean coast the ancient goddess took on an extended role as "Goddess of the Sea." Her name is documented on texts from this great sea trading city: "*Lady Asherah of the Sea,*"/ "*She Who Subdues the Sea.*" The maritime dimension of the ancient mother goddess became a powerful protective element for ships and seamen as Late Bronze Age trade became extensive. The symbol of her power was carried on ships across the oceans: the symbol of *Tanit* the later reflex of *Asherah* is found near major river systems in America, in remote canyons in the southwest and in forested areas of the northeast always near river systems.



Left: 2300 year old ship from Bet Shearim Galilee on wall of tomb
Right: Tanit carved in South Woodstock, Vermont on ceiling of Reeves stone chamber



We end our presentation with photos of **Tanit** from a beautiful crafted goddess in Russia, to a crudely cut **Tanit** on a rock in Vermont and from New Mexico.



Photo: Ida Jane Gallagher
Mother Goddess from
2000BC.
Museum in Russia
Note Pubic Triangle



Tanit carved on a rock facing the
Connecticut River, Vermont.
Once ships arrived safely, her
symbol was carved at a site
in a devotional act of dedication
for a safe arrival.
She answered the deep seated,
universal human need for
protection from chaotic forces
& the hope for survival on the
ocean voyage.



Rio Puerco Valley,
New Mexico

Summary *The Maritime Goddess "Tanit in the New World"*

This power point presentation for the Atlantic Conference discusses three relatively unknown areas.

1.) The Maritime Aspect of Tanit. Ancient seafarers carried a nautical symbol; the insignia of Tanit on their ships for protection against the dangers of the sea. Thus there was a maritime religion followed as far back as the Canaanites/Phoenicians, or with even earlier mariners who adapted the ancient mother goddess for protection. They navigated their ships across the oceans with the insignia of Tanit on the prow or stern of their ships.

2.) The Sacred Maritime Symbol. This has been found on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

In over a dozen sites across America, the distinctive insignia of Tanit has been carved in remote areas stretching from Vermont to California. These are shown in the presentation and compared to Tanits in the Mediterranean world.

3. New Evidence. Recent archaeological discoveries point to the widespread worship of Tanit across the entire Mediterranean area, from the East Mediterranean where she is found in over a dozen archaeological sites both on the coast and inland to the West Mediterranean and into the Iberian Peninsula. Tanit was a later reflection of the goddess Asherah identified on texts from Ugarit.

Zena Halpern

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This presentation is dedicated to Dr. Elisha Linder

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