

Mendocino Megillah

★ Mendocino Coast Jewish Community ★

July/August 2008 (5768)

15701 Caspar Road, Caspar, CA www.mcjc.org (707) 964-6146



Rabbi's Notes: L'Tovah

Grrrrr. Well I've now touched some button on my computer that instantly erased my Megillah column, not once or even twice, but three times. After I called in desperation yesterday afternoon, the holy Bob came over, touched a button, and my words reappeared in a flash, leaving me feeling sheepish, incompetent and, dare I say (sorry Hillary) girlish. Not at all on Bob's account -- he didn't even smirk the least little bit. This morning I got right up and pecked away quite a bit further, only to have my column vanish again, irretrievably, as far as I can tell. So today, I am taking this as a sign and not merely an aggravation. Even though I had carefully written out the whole meaning of life for you -- three times -- I am obviously not meant to disclose it yet.

So I wisely walked away from my office (without even pitching my fancy new mouse through the window) and picked up a holy book. I finished the last couple of pages of *On the Road with Rabbi Steinsaltz*, by the lovely Arthur Kurzweil, which I've been enjoying immensely this week.

Until I got to the end, that is. Hopefully you are acquainted with the great contemporary rabbi, Adin Steinsaltz -- indefatigable teacher and writer who has done as much as anyone, perhaps, to make deep, traditional Judaism available to our generation. You may have seen the Steinsaltz Talmud, a tour de force in which Rabbi Steinsaltz is translating and annotating the Talmud, such that a non-Hebrew-speaking student, with limited text background, can actually penetrate the pages (not without working pretty hard at it, as Mina, Binah Polay and I can attest.) Or you may have read *The Thirteen Petaled Rose*, his great work of theology and mysticism. Arthur Kurzweil says he has read this book over 100 times and considers it the most important book he has ever read.

Kurzweil read an interview with Rabbi Steinsaltz many years ago in a magazine and was immediately moved. So he called up the rabbi's office and said he would

volunteer to do anything Rabbi Steinsaltz needed. "Like what?" asked the person at the other end. "I would even go to the airport at 5 AM to pick him up." "Really? How about tomorrow morning?" So Kurzweil became the rabbi's state-side driver, and he has written a wonderful book about their conversations over the last quarter-century.

I like the book so much. I admire their relationship. I am in awe of Rabbi Steinsaltz's wisdom, clarity and personal presence. And I have a great sweet spot for Arthur Kurzweil from a couple of times I've had the pleasure of learning from him at a CAJE conference. I love many details of their interactions.

Then today I got to the end, where Kurzweil tells a story of his own, a story that an elderly cousin of his, a survivor of Auschwitz, told him on a street in Jerusalem. It's meant to be a climax of a sort, I think -- it's a story I've heard before in various forms. In part of it, Rabbi Eliezer asks to follow Elijah the Prophet around on his rounds. They go to the home of a poor but generous couple, whose only possession is their cow. The couple hosts them with all that they can provide, and in the morning Elijah kills the cow. Then on to the rich guy's house and so on. Finally Rabbi Eliezer can't contain himself and says, "How could you do that to that nice couple's only cow???" And Elijah explains that it was actually the woman of the house who was scheduled to die that day. But Elijah was able to work out some kind of cosmic exchange, and the cow died instead.

This is an example of "*gam zu l'tovah*," "this too is for the good" -- "the perspective," says Kurzweil, "that traditional Jewish wisdom urges us to cultivate: despite appearances, despite all of life's tragedies, nothing happens in the world that God does not allow to happen. Thus in some inexplicable way everything is ultimately for the best."

Now wait a second, I think... Why kill the cow? Why not just arrange to have death take the day off for once? And really, why is evading death such a great thing anyhow? How do we know that the poor woman won't have a harder, worse death later on? And what about the

cow's own self? What would the cow have to say about this quid pro quo?

Rabbi Steinsaltz himself tells a story that I like better. There was a Rabbi Meilish in Warsaw, a rich merchant as well as a rabbi. One day his boats filled with timber sank in the river. The news reached his disciples before it reached Rabbi Meilish. So one of his students set about to let him know the bad news:

"The student picked a passage in the Talmud and came to the Rabbi with his question: 'It says that one has to thank God with blessings for the evil that befalls one as well as for the good. How can this be done?'

Rabbi Meilish explained how this could be understood theologically, and then the student said, "If you, Rabbi, learned that all your boats with timber had sunk, would you be happy?" The rabbi said, "Yes, of course."

"' Well,' said the student, 'all your boats are gone!'

"When he heard this, the rabbi fainted. When he came to, he said, 'Now I must confess I no longer understand this Talmud passage.'"

I guess I can sort of relate to Rabbi Meilish's response here. Rabbi Steinsaltz goes on to explicate his own complex and beautiful theology about "*gam zu l'tovah*," which of course makes me want to know about the boats which have sunk in his own life to help him understand the passage.

Which leads me around to the much smaller conclusion that it is very hard to explain why Elijah the Prophet actually does what he does. But we may have some small degree of capacity to see life's difficulties in one light or another. And even these bits of understanding can get confounded when our cows die and our boats sink -- so that there is a constant conversation in our lives between what we think is true when the sailing is smooth and what we think when we are sinking.

I want very much to have a good spirit about difficult things that happen. I don't know that I believe that "despite appearances, despite all of life's tragedies, nothing happens in the world that God does not allow to happen." I'm pretty sure that boats can sink and cows die without any divine intervention. I'm sort of naturalistic on that front.

But, without intending in any way to make light of anyone's sorrows, even those of Rabbi Meilish or the poor couple with their cow, I decided to try taking a very

small piece of adversity -- my cannibalistic computer -- as, not a sign, really, but an invitation to take another path, to let things flow in a different direction than the one I had planned. And mostly I've kind of been laughing about it all this morning, having fun, thinking about all of you, carrying you with me down my little river. Dare I even say that it was up to me, not God -- or, better, God in me -- to decide whether this little misfortune was going to be adverse or "l'tovah," for the good? I hope that you are well, that your cows and your boats are well too, and that, whatever comes your way, it will all be for the good. – Rabbi Margaret Holub

Celebration and Blessing Circle for Ella Russell

There will be a gathering to honor our dear Ella Russell and to offer her our healing blessings -- Tuesday, July 22, 5:30 PM at the shul, with a veggie potluck dinner following. This gathering will be a chance to share with Ella our appreciation of her wisdom and generosity and companionship. All are very welcome. If you would like to help with set-up, serving, or clean-up, please contact Margaret at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673. Feel free to pass this invitation on to anyone you know who would be interested. (mh)

Post-Katrina Rebuilding Trip

MCJC is looking into the possibility of organizing a group to help with the ongoing rebuilding of homes and communities still needed three years after Hurricane Katrina. We will meet on Thursday, July 24, 7:00 PM at the shul, to hear about two possible ways to go -- from Frank Fanto, who has already brought three groups of students and adults to New Orleans to help with rebuilding there, and from John Turnbull, who has brought several local groups to Waveland, Mississippi (a town the size of Fort Bragg, along the Gulf coast, that was completely wiped out by a Katrina-related tsunami.) The timing and other particulars are to be determined. But the need continues to be great, and possibilities for joining in this work continue to abound. If you are interested but can't make the meeting, please let Margaret know -- mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673. (mh)

Tisches Take A Summer Vacation

We won't be holding our monthly Shabbat tisches in June or July, as some of the main organizers will be away during that time. We will try to organize an August 29 tisch -- look for an e-mail message or check in with Margaret to see if it is happening. If you're in town this summer and would have considered attending these simple but festive Shabbat dinners, this would be a great opportunity to invite some people over, or meet at

the beach, light candles, make kiddush and enjoy Shabbat together.

Margaret is also interested in gathering a group that would like to cook for future tisches at the shul on the Fridays that they are held -- to learn some new Jewish recipes and to have the pleasure of cooking and baking together. Interested? Contact Margaret at mholub@mcn.org or 937-5673. (mh)

Tisha B'Av Gathering

Tisha B'av, the ninth day of the month of Av, falls this year on Sunday, August 10. We will gather at the end of the day -- 6:30 - 8:30 PM. Tisha B'av is the day of mourning for the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem and, by extension, for the ongoing cycles of destruction and genocide throughout history and the present day. We will read the book of Lamentations and mourn together for the losses of the past and present, those of our own people and of all peoples. Then, in the tradition of the closing of Tisha B'av, we will turn our attention in the direction of hope and action. We will conclude with kiddush at sundown. (mh)

Subscription and Notification

If you would like to subscribe to this publication and/or receive email notifications for events, changes, or important news from MCJC contact Myra Beals at myrah@mcn.org or send to P.O. Box 1113, Mendocino. Let her know if you prefer to receive a printed Megillah coming in the mail or by email. If you would like to receive notifications by email please indicate that as well. Subscription to the Megillah is included with a contributing membership of \$200 or more. A subscription alone to the newsletter is \$25 per year. Checks can be made payable to MCJC and mailed to P.O. Box 291, Little River, CA. 95456. (mc)

Kabbalat Shabbat

This month we will be celebrating our home Kabbalat Shabbat and dinner on Friday, July 11th at the home of Benna Kolinsky and Danny Mandelbaum in Boonville. They invite you to come early and take a swim in their fabulous pool. It should be quite warm in July. They also request that you carpool as parking is limited and please call them at 895-3883 for directions and to let them know you are coming.

In August on the 8th we will be at the home of Fran and Roger Schwartz in Mendocino. Please call them at 937-1352 to let them know you are coming and in September we will be at the home of the Duncan family on September 12th in Caspar. They can be reached at 962-

0101. The monthly Kabbalat Shabbat includes a song-filled short service that begins at 6:00 pm and is followed by a pot luck vegetarian dinner. If you would like to host this wonderful event in your home in future months, contact Mina at 937-1319. (mc)

MCJC Board Meeting Dates

The next MCJC board meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 10th and then again on Thursday, August 7th. If you would like to attend a meeting please contact Raven Deerwater at raven@taxpractitioner.com so he can include you on the agenda. (mc)

Book Group



The book group will be meeting on Monday, July 21st at the home of Rosamond Gumpert Jorgensen. Please call Fran Schwartz at 937-1352 if you wish to join us.

We will be reading “Absurdistan” by Gary Shteyngart. Shteyngart immigrated from Russia when he was 7 years old. This novel is about a country that might remind readers of certain countries in the Caucasus. This fictitious country is oil-rich and run by an elite kleptocracy and a group of companies, including Halliburton. He describes the book as “almost non-fiction.” The August selection is Tamar Yellins’ book “[The Genizah at the House of Shepher](#)”. This is the saga of a Jerusalem family stretching over 145 years and four generations, but also a thriller about a missing biblical codex and the search for the true text of the Bible. Cheshire Books in Fort Bragg, where you will receive a 10% discount on MCJC Book Club books, has the books in stock. (mc)

The Whole Mishpocha by Mina Cohen

(mishpocha is Yiddish for the "the entire family network of relatives by blood or marriage")



Collect Jewish Stuff: The summer is a good time to take “inventory” of the Jewish stuff you have at home. Look around to see if you have any or all of the following (could even be a little treasure hunt with the kids):

Mezuzah, candlesticks, Chanukah menorah (also called a Chanukiah), a dreidel, Kiddush cup, Seder plate, prayer book, other Jewish books, a tzedakah box, recipes, toys, games, music, clothes or costumes, jewelry, or movies. Maybe you have photographs of family members doing “Jewish” things. You might look for them. It would be fun over the next year or so to collect some Jewish things and make them part of your family experience.

You could even make some of these things. (mc)

You can read the lovely Dvar Torah Mina offered in honor of her father, on the MCJC website. <http://www.mcjc.org/mjoldart/mjamc004.htm>

Jewish Women's Retreat

Thursday afternoon August 14th to noon Sunday August 17th

If you have not yet signed up, you don't want to miss this year's women's retreat. We will be recreating the overlooked holiday of Tu B'Av. Tu B'av means the fifteenth of Av. It comes not even a week after Tisha B'av, the day of mourning for the sorrows of history (which we explored together in great depth a few years ago, when our retreat included this day of grief.) Now it is time for us to figure out how to walk in the river of joy together.

It's *bashert* (synchronous, perfect, a great match) that our retreat this year falls over Tu B'av, the full moon of Av. Tu B'av is one of those holidays, like Rosh Hodesh, that celebrates women. And because it does, hardly anything happens on it. So it becomes ours to breathe life into. What better holiday than one of moonlight, dancing, study, and new clothes? Because it falls on Shabbat we will be twice blessed.

At our retreat this year we will look for new ways to celebrate together, to dance, physically and metaphorically, to study, to trade clothes and identities, to be our own and each other's valentines. Rosh Hodesh was once practically a blank slate. Then, in our own generation, imaginative Jewish women took hold of it and made it what it is today: a time for women to connect and rejoice. Now it's the turn for Tu B'av, and we are the ones who get to start bringing this holiday to life.

We look forward to you joining us for a time of creativity and retreat. For registration information contact Harriet Bye at bysawyer@mcn.org or Deena Zarlin dzarlin@mcn.org (mc)



The Messiah, Bob Dylan and the Lubavitcher Rebbi, Mike Leaf, paper-mache sculpture, Safed, Israel

<http://www.aad.co.il/mleaf/>

Financial Contributions

Contributions to the MCJC can be sent to: MCJC, Box 291, Little River, CA 95456. Please specify if they your contribution is in memory or honor of someone, and your name and mailing address. Thanks! (mc)

TODAH RABAH! (Great Thanks) For The Following Generous Contributors Who in The Last Month Helped Sustain Our Community

Jane Boskoff Graeven and Mark Graeven; Rosamond Jorgensen; Lesley and Stuart Marcus

In Honor of the graduations of Hillary Welty, Elana and Yael Berenson: Sally and Lee Welty; Rachel Binah. (mz)

Calendar

July 05	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
July 10	2:00 pm	Aging Discussion - Shul
July 10	6:00 PM	Board Meeting
July 11	6:00 PM	Kabbalat Shabbat – Koliinsky/Mandelbaum
July 12	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
July 15	5:00 PM	Aging Discussion - Shul
July 17	8 PM	Degenerate Music – Mendocino Music Festival
July 19	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
July 21		Book Group
July 25- 27	8:00 PM	Noveau Burlesque Review
July 26	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
Aug 02	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
Aug 07		Board Meeting
Aug 08	6:00 PM	Kabbalet Shabbat - Schwartz
Aug 09	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
Aug 10	06:30 PM	Tisha B'Av
Aug 14-17		Women's Retreat
Aug 16	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan
Aug 30	10:30 AM	Shabbat Minyan

Looking to the Future

From time to time members have given additional financial help to MCJC. Upon the sale of a home, stocks or some other positive financial event they have shared their good fortune. Also, several members have remembered MCJC in their wills. These generous acts insure the long term strength and sustainability of the

Jewish Community and our shul here on the Coast. We encourage you to do this if you can.

Torah Portions

July 05	Chukat Numbers 19:1 - 22:1
July 12	Balak Numbers 22:2 - 25:9
July 19	Pinchas Numbers 25:10 - 30:1
July 26	Matot Numbers 30:2 - 32:42
Aug 02	Masei Numbers 33:1 - 36:13
Aug 09	Devarim Deuteronomy 1:1 - 3:22
Aug 16	Vaetchanan Deuteronomy 3:23 - 7:11
Aug 23	Eikev Deuteronomy 7:12 - 11:25
Aug 30	Re'eh Deuteronomy 11:26 - 16:17

You can find the Torah readings, portions and JPS translation at <http://www.hebcal.com/sedrot>

Mussar and Torture Awareness

Rabbi Margaret Holub published an article on the Rabbi's for Human Rights website for Mussar Practice for Torture Awareness Month. The Mussar movement originated in 19th century Eastern Europe, principally Lithuania. It encouraged ethical behavior through the use of self examination and study.

June was Torture Awareness Month, but the teaching Margaret presents is appropriate at any time. She suggests the study of 4 Jewish principles or traits, one per week, and how they relate to our response to the US policy toward torture. They are Zehirut (watchfulness), Zerizut (zeal), N'Kiut (cleanliness) and Hasidut (loving-kindness).

Margaret's article is 6 pages, which is a bit too long to republish here, but it can be found online at <http://www.rhr-na.org/resource/mussar-torture-awareness-month>



The Mendocino Maven

This years Shavuot observance was once again marked by all night learning at the shul. Margaret selected the topic of Jewish approaches to war. Many people dropped by and there was a sizable group for Yizkor. I have to confess that while I was one of the 5 or 6 that stayed at the shul until sunrise and blintzes, even with copious infusions of caffeine there was a good deal of emergency napping for me.

A Big Mazel Tov. Myra Beals and Ida Matson who will be married on October 5, 2008, thanks to the recent CA Supreme Court Decision on marriage equality. Myra and Ida were plaintiffs in the lawsuit and have been together 32 years.

I heard from Shirley Hill recently. Shirley sold her beautiful seaside home on Todd Point in April, and moved to Saratoga Retirement Community to be closer to her family. After a couple medical procedures, Shirley is feeling much better, is enjoying her apartment and getting used to driving around her new neighborhood.

Shirley misses her friends in the MCJC and going to the shul. She isn't using email yet, but would love to hear from people on the coast. Her new information is

Shirley Hill (408) 741-7848
14500 Fruitvale Ave Apt 5223,
Saratoga, CA 95070

Rhoda Teplow's daughter Darlinda Just Darlinda formerly known as Rebecca Rosenthal is now living in NYC. She is returning to her hometown to offer 3 performances at the Caspar Community Center of her Nouveau Burlesque Review. Please see below for more information

Gail Porcelan and her family have returned from their extended trip through Europe and are at home in Fort Bragg. It sounds like they had a great time, and I'm looking forward to hearing more about their journey. (rge)

Burlesque Review: Starring Darlinda Just Darlinda

Darlinda Just Darlinda will arrive straight from New York City with her *Polyester Players* to star in a full evening of Nouveau Burlesque Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 25 - 27, 2008.



All performances are at 8 pm at the Caspar Community Center. Appearing in the *Polyester Players* with Darlinda Just Darlinda will be Indigo Blue, Alotta Boutté, Little Brooklyn and Scotty The Blue Bunny as their M.C.

Tickets are on sale at Tangents and If the Shoe Fits in Fort Bragg and Twist in Mendocino or call 707-964-2787(ARTS) for reservations and information. Tickets can be ordered in advance by sending a check to Rhoda Teplow Presents for \$20 each to Post Office Box 453, Mendocino, CA 95460 and they will be held at the door.

Please no audience under 18 years old. The cast will also teach workshops in make-up and other burlesque skills.

Darlinda Just Darlinda, previously known as Rebecca Rosenthal, graduated from Mendocino Community High School and California State University Monterey Bay with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Teledramatic Arts and Technology, cum laude with distinction. Darlinda is truly the daughter of Mendocino Theater having danced in utero in *Missa Luba* at Crown Hall, choreographed by her mom, Rhoda Teplow, and then was nursed in the box office during the first year of the Mendocino Dance Series. She is the daughter of local contractor, Joe Rosenthal, who appeared in *H.M.S. Pinafore* when she was born. She then went on to be known locally for her outrageous talent at the Caspar Day Care Center in her early career, and this July performance will be her second burlesque review in Caspar after 5 years in the New York City burlesque scene. *The Village Voice* calls Darlinda a "mastermind of bizarre extravaganza." (rt)

Tikkun Olam

During Shavuot this year, we studied Judaic approaches to war. Rabbi Margaret Holub gave us a copy of Rabbi Jill Jacobs article in [zeek.net](http://www.zeek.net) on The History of "Tikkun Olam" <http://www.zeek.net/706tohu/>.

Rabbi Jacobs writes that she feels that this expression has been over applied to such an extent that it has become largely meaningless, and traces four historic threads related to this expression: Aleynu: Establishing the Divine Kingdom, Midrash: Preserving the Physical World, Rabbinic Code: Sustaining the Social Order and Lurianic Kabbalah: Restoring Divine Perfection.

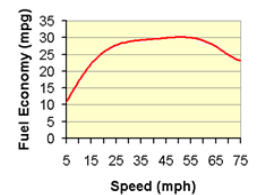
Tikkun Olam (תיקון עולם) is usually translated as the repair or perfection of the world. For me, it is one of the most important Jewish principles. I most often feel that Tikkun Olam applies to the natural world and how our society treats it. I have long felt that our natural world is a supreme gift from God, and that our culture and society have abused it horribly. It is our responsibility to work to understand how our lives impact the world and to do what we can to repair the damage to the natural order. This is a huge subject and I could probably write a book or two on this topic, so I'll just share a couple thoughts on tiny ways we can have a small impact, and perhaps take some baby steps toward repairing the world.

It is almost impossible not to have noticed that gasoline prices have been increasing lately. This seems to be a topic of conversation everywhere I go. I believe that

there are a number of reasons for this, but I think that it is inevitable that energy and everything that is produced and distributed with energy will become more expensive. It is probably worth noting that even at \$5/gallon our gas is still relatively cheap. As of 2007, gas was selling for \$7.95/gal in Israel, \$8.78/gal in Italy and \$9.31 in Denmark. These prices are higher now because of the fall of the dollar and record crude oil prices.

About 7 years ago, I started paying more attention to how much gasoline I was using. Short of trading the Hummer in on a Prius, there are some simple things we can do to reduce the amount of gas we use, like limiting our car trips, car pooling and keeping our tires inflated to the recommended pressure. What surprised me the most was finding that changing the way I drove could have a very tangible effect on car mileage. I was able to increase my miles per gallon by over 20%, by braking as little as possible, accelerating more slowly and limiting my speed. Of course while doing this it is critical to pay attention to traffic and not endanger or frustrate other drivers.

When one brakes, one is converting momentum (read gasoline) to heat. By anticipating the approach to a crest of a hill, stop sign or red light, one can ease off the gas and avoid having to brake as much in a few seconds.



Modern engines are much less efficient at higher rpm's. By accelerating more slowly and limiting our maximum speed, we can save a great deal of gas (and a great many shekelim). While it is probably impossible and unsafe to drive at the most efficient speed on Highway 101, we can spend most of our time in the "slow" lane and allow a little more time for our trips. For more information on improving your mileage, you might want to take a look at <http://www.fueleconomy.gov>

For those of us who have computers, another way to save energy is to reduce the amount of mail we receive. It is not always easy to reduce the amount of junk mail we get, but it is possible to stop our mail boxes from being stuffed with catalogs by requesting that they not be sent. Many banks, utilities and others are only too happy to stop mailing monthly statements, and replace them with emails. Most large companies now allow bill paying online, which eliminates mail going in the other direction. Reducing our mail eliminates the energy used for paper manufacture and shipping, printing and hauling

this stuff around. If you are still receiving the Megillah by US Mail and would like to switch to the email version, just email Myra Beals at myrah@mcn.org
– Bob Evans

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A Touch of Talmud, from Moed Katan, Chapter 3, Ve'Eilu 28A. the Gemara relates another encounter between a sage and the Angel of Death

Rava was sitting before Rav Nachman when he saw that Rav Nachman was slipping into death. Rav Nachman asked “May master tell the Angel of Death not to hurt me.” He answered Rav Nachman “Is master not an important person. Let master speak to the Angel of Death himself” Rav Nachman said to him “Who is important, who is awesome, who is exalted before the Angel of Death?” He asked Rav Nachman “May master appear to me after he dies” After Rav Nachman passed away he appeared to Rava and Rava asked him “Did master feel any pain?” He answered him “It was like hair being drawn from milk, but if the Holy One, Blessed is He, would say ‘Go back to that world, living there as you were before and then die again, I would not want to, because the fear of the Angel of Death is great’ ” (from the Artscroll Schottenstein edition of the Talmud Ballvi (Babylonian) Tractate Moed Katan)

MCJC BOARD & USEFUL NUMBERS

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Rituals and Holidays	Donna Montag*	877-3243	montag@mcn.org
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If you would like to become an underwriter of The Megillah the cost is \$8.00 for a one-time submission or \$80.00 for a full year (11 issues). The Megillah reaches over 300 households. If you wish to become an underwriter contact Harriet at bysawyer@mcn.org 937-3622.



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