



וְכָל הַמִּדְבָּה לְסֵפֶר

**MANY WAYS TO  
TELL OUR STORY**

**A Handbook of Activities  
and Other Enhancements  
for Your Pesah Seder**

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**JOF A**

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Design and illustrations by Jonathan Kremer

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*JOFA seeks to expand the spiritual, ritual, intellectual, and political opportunities for women and advocates for their meaningful participation to the full extent possible within the framework of halakhah. Our commitment is rooted in the belief that fulfilling this mission will enrich and uplift individual and communal life for all Jews.*

## FOREWORD

Preparing for Pesah — at home or away — can mean an endless to-do list. Planning for a lively family-centered seder experience can be a daunting proposition. With that in mind, JOFA is gifting you with this handbook filled with fresh, fun-filled suggestions designed to engage the whole family in telling — and experiencing — the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

We hope that by incorporating some of the activities developed by the writers of JOFA's Shemot curriculum, you will find that it will be that much easier to fulfill the Haggadah's dictum:

וְכֹל הַמְרַבֵּה לְסַפֵּר בְּיַצִּיאת מִצְרַיִם הָרִי זֶה מְשֻׁבָּח

*Ve'chol hamarbeh lesaper b'Yetziat Mitzrayim, harei ze meshubah!*

The more one can tell the story, the more praiseworthy!

This guide consists of the following sections:

- Introduction
- “Tell Me the Story Again” Games
- Games for Children Who Want to Leave the Table
- Discussions
- Art and Drama
- Readings

Here are some tips for choosing what to include in your seder:

*Think carefully about your guests and their comfort level with different types of activities.*

*Decide which activities you will include at each seder. We suggest:*

- One art and drama activity
- One discussion
- A few energizing activities
- A few games for those restless moments

*A great way to involve older and younger children in an activity is to ask the older ones to help organize and supervise games for the younger ones.*

Remember, if you don't get to all of the activities the first night, there is always the second seder...and next year!

## INTRODUCTION

### THIS YEAR WE WILL ALL BE FREE

The seder allows participants to alternate between experiencing slavery and rejoicing in freedom. Two standard seder rituals that serve these goals are:

1. Eating the *Maror* (bitter herbs) — to taste the bitterness of slavery
2. Reclining when drinking the wine — as a symbol of freedom and feasting

There are less formal and ritualized traditions which also serve this purpose: hitting others with green onions to feel the sting of slavery (a Sephardic custom), or having others pour our wine for us so that we may feel the luxury of freedom.

Beginning with this year's seder, we challenge you to re-think what it means to be a host or a guest at a seder. Consider how the act of hosting might be transformed to reflect the slavery-freedom dichotomy that runs throughout the seder. Here are some thoughts on how the host or hostess might move between the roles of slave and free person:

*Are there ways for guests to help in the preparation of the seder, for example, by cooking, decorating, or setting up? Can guests help by reviewing and preparing materials for seder activities and games?*

*Can the serving, clean-up and other responsibilities be assigned to different people at the seder? Can specific tasks be written on slips of paper and placed under each plate?*

*How can we ensure that the host or hostess is not missing out if s/he must be in the kitchen for parts of the seder?*

### MAY WE ALL TASTE THE SWEETNESS OF FREEDOM THIS YEAR!

## "TELL ME THE STORY AGAIN" GAMES

### WHO

Ages 4 and up

### GOAL

Discover the inner strength of Miriam

### WHEN

Any time during the seder

*Note to parents of young children:*

For many young children props are a necessary component of dramatic play.

Have children look around the table or house for a prop or costume to help them imagine themselves as Miriam.



### 1. MIRIAM'S CONFLICT [SHEMOT 2:1-10]

This dramatic play will help children imagine what Moshe's sister might have felt as her baby brother sailed down the Nile.

A designated narrator tells the story of Moshe's sister, widely accepted to be Miriam, watching and protecting her baby brother in his journey along the Nile and into Bat Paroah's life.

As the narrator speaks, people can shout "freeze" and describe what they think Miriam might have been feeling at that moment. Older children or adults should initially model this.

Here is an example of one exchange:

Narrator: The baby's mother placed the baby in the strong water-proofed basket.

Actor One calls "Freeze!" and speaks as Miriam, saying, "Oh, I wonder what will happen to my baby brother? Who will help him?"

Actor Two says, "I must do something to make sure that he is okay!"

Ask the guests to describe what other emotions Miriam was experiencing. Leave the question open-ended in order to draw out more creative answers.

### WHO

Ages 5 and up

### WHEN

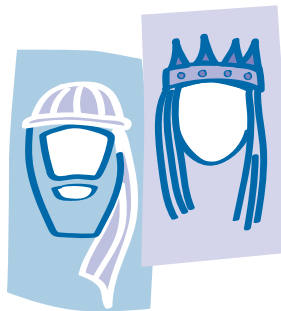
מַגִּיד  
Maggid

### GOAL

Bring the narrative of Shemot to life

### 2. CHARADES

During the Maggid section, which focuses on four verses from Devarim (Deut. 26:5-8), children can play charades using short sections of verses from Shemot that tell part of the Pesah story. Before *yom tov*, write each verse from the selected section on a separate piece of paper and put these in a small bag. Children who are able to write can help with the preparation.



Some sections from Shemot that children can use:

- The midwives — 1:15-21
- Mother, sister and baby Moshe — 2:1-10
- Moshe fleeing Egypt to Midyan — 2:15
- Moshe at the well — 2:17
- B'nei Yisrael's reaction to *Kriyat Yam Suf* — 14:31
- Women dancing at the Red Sea — 15:20

When it comes time to play, the person acting the part takes one of the verses and pantomimes in an effort to convey the scene while others try to guess what it is.

A simpler version of this, perhaps more suitable for younger children, can be played by writing names of people from Shemot on slips of paper. Children can act as the character while others try to guess who it is. If the slips of paper are not prepared ahead of time, someone can suggest a character for the children to portray.

*We recommend bringing a Humash to the seder to supplement the pre-written verses or to use if the verses have not been prepared in advance.*

#### WHO

Ages 3 and up

#### WHEN

Any lull or restlessness from younger children

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר  
*Bechol dor v'dor*

#### GOALS

Consider the decisions B'nei Yisrael made as they left Egypt

Bring some of Miriam's celebration to the seder

### 3. DANCING WITH THE PESAH STARS

Remind everyone what Miriam and the women brought out of Egypt in preparation for their celebration at the Red Sea — tambourines! You can lead everyone in singing and dancing to remember and experience the joy they felt upon leaving Egypt.

Ask the children to prepare a song and/or dance that celebrates the splitting of the sea and present it during the seder.

Engage in a brief discussion following the dancing:

People at the seder may have lots of questions about the tambourines. For example: Where did the women get the tambourines? If they were leaving Egypt in a big hurry, why did they take tambourines with them?



Rashi gives the following explanation: “The righteous women of that generation were so sure that God was going to perform miracles for them that they took tambourines out from Egypt.”

Throughout Tanakh, the Israelites celebrate victory over their enemies by singing and dancing with tambourines.

#### WHO

Ages 10 and up

#### WHEN

Throughout the seder

#### GOAL

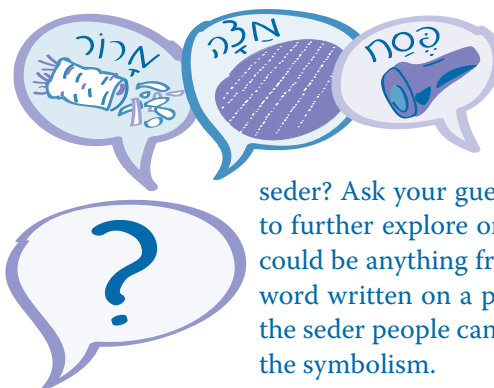
Focus on the essentials of the story and the symbolism of the seder

### 4. RABBAN GAMLIEL USED TO SAY

The seder is full of symbols to help us experience and learn the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

Rabban Gamliel used to say:

Whoever does not speak of these three things at Passover has not fulfilled his or her obligation: the Passover sacrifice, the *Matzah* and the *Maror*.



If you could add one more thing to this list of essentials, what would it be? Is there a part of the Pesah story that you feel could be highlighted more during the

seder? Ask your guests to bring in an object or a text to further explore one aspect of the story. The object could be anything from spring flowers to a significant word written on a piece of paper. Over the course of the seder people can present their objects and explain the symbolism.

#### WHO

Ages 3 and up

#### WHEN

Any time during the seder

#### GOAL

Bring the Shemot narrative to life in a quick game for all ages

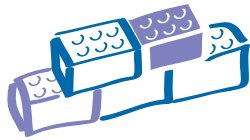
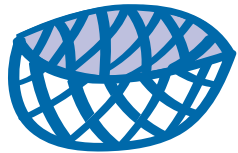
### 5. BRINGING THE STORY TO LIFE

Collect random objects from around your house and place them in a bag or pillowcase. As you move through the Haggadah, have different people take out an object and explain how the object is connected to the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. For example, a child's block can be a brick used by the Hebrew slaves; a hat can be worn by Miriam as she watches over her baby brother in the hot sun.

## GAMES FOR CHILDREN WHO WANT TO LEAVE THE TABLE

Give them one assignment at a time. When each is done, the children can present it to the adults.

### AGES 4-5



1. Give them baskets and dolls to act out the baby Moshe scene. You can assign roles or have them choose their own parts.
2. What did Miriam's song at the Red Sea sound like? Was it fast or slow? Loud or quiet? Try to recreate it.
3. What was the dancing like? Was it wild and fast or slow and controlled? Did the women dance together or was everyone doing her own dance? As the women danced, what were they thinking about?
4. What songs — old or new — would you sing to celebrate freedom? This is also appropriate for older children.
5. Build a model of what Egypt looked like using Lego, Lincoln Logs or other kinds of blocks. Older children may also find this project interesting.
6. Pretend you are a Hebrew slave working in Egypt. What would you say to God?
7. What would you ask Miriam if you met her or if she came to your seder?

### AGES 6-11

1. Create a skit that depicts a particular scene of the Pesah story.
2. Create another question that you would want to ask during *מה נשתנה* (*Ma Nishtanah*). Try to put it to the tune.

### WHO

All ages

### WHEN

Any time during the seder

### GOAL

Further engage in imagining oneself as having been in Egypt

### IF I'D BEEN THERE, I WOULD HAVE...

Children can describe what they would do in the following situations:

- When Bat Paroah found the baby at the Nile, she knew he was Hebrew and that her father had decreed that Hebrew baby boys be killed. What would you do if you were in her position? Why?
- When God split the Red Sea it must have been a shocking sight and probably pretty frightening. What do you think you would have done at that moment if you were a witness? Frozen in your spot? Run across the dry earth between the water? Praised God? Sang and danced? Or something else?
- If you were a slave in Egypt, what would you have said to God?
- God told B'nei Yisrael to take gold, silver, and clothing from the Egyptians as they left Egypt. What would you have said to an Egyptian in order to get him/her to give you their possessions?



## DISCUSSIONS

### WHO

Teens and adults

### WHEN

Just before  
וְהָיָה שְׁעָמְדָה  
*Vehi she'amdah*  
or during the meal

### GOAL

Consider the transition  
from slavery to freedom  
Address the question of  
why B'nei Yisrael needed  
to take things with them  
from Egypt

## A. ALL THAT GLITTERS

### BACKGROUND

When B'nei Yisrael left Egypt, they carried unleavened dough on their shoulders, wrapped in their clothing. They also took gold, silver and clothing from their Egyptian neighbors, as commanded by Moshe (Shemot 12:34-36). Most commentators explain this puzzling incident as a fulfillment of the *Brit bein Habetarim*, in which God promised Avraham that his descendants would leave Egypt with great wealth.

But it is also possible that B'nei Yisrael needed the material goods in order to succeed as free people and live successfully on their own. Even more importantly, they may have needed the goods emotionally so that they could rid themselves of their slave mindset and be able to think of themselves as free people.

Consider a striking parallel in Sefer Devarim, where we are instructed to give generously to a former Hebrew slave as he leaves the household (Devarim 15:12-15). The transfer of goods helps both parties to mark the transition from one status to another and to see each other — and themselves — in a new light.

### QUESTIONS

1. If this is the case, why do you think God asked B'nei Yisrael to request the goods rather than giving it to them? (God is certainly capable of astounding miracles in this story!)
2. Can questionable behavior be justified if, ultimately, it brings about a greater good? Describe similar situations — either in your own life or in the lives of others.



For further thought and personalization:

- Are there objects that are important to you for your sense of who you are?
- Are there objects that help you project that sense-of-self to others?
- Are there objects that you feel you cannot live without?

### WHO

Teens and adults

### WHEN

After the ten plagues  
or during the meal

### GOAL

Consider the different  
ways people praise God,  
within the Pesah story  
and today

## B. DO YOU PARTY LIKE MOSHE OR LIKE MIRIAM?

### BACKGROUND

When the Jewish people reached the shore of *Yam Suf* and knew they were safe from Egyptian pursuit, they broke out in song. Moshe led the men in a lengthy song, which told the whole story of their miraculous escape. Miriam and the women sang a short, mantra-like song and danced with instruments.

Rashi tells us that Moshe sang only after he saw the miracle. His long, narrative song erupted spontaneously once he was certain they were saved.

Miriam and the women seem to have behaved in the opposite way. The Midrash teaches us that the women took tambourines with them as they left Egypt. Although they were rushed, they packed for a celebration, believing in their hearts that God would help them. So when they danced with joy and gratitude, it was with music and instruments!

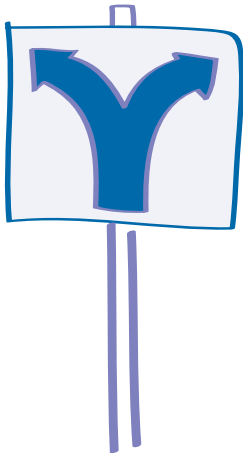
### QUESTIONS

1. What type of celebrator are you? Do you plan celebrations in advance, or do you react spontaneously and in the moment? Which type of celebration is more meaningful to you? Why?
2. When you express yourself religiously, do you prefer to do so in Moshe's style, by reading, contemplating and studying, or in Miriam's style, with music, movement and outward gestures? Why?



**WHO**

Ages 11 and up

**WHEN**At זַעַי וְלִמַּד  
*Tzei U'Imad*  
or during  
the meal**GOAL**Consider the dilemma  
the midwives faced**C. ETHICAL DILEMMAS**

The Hebrews' midwives faced quite a dilemma: kill the Hebrew baby boys or confront Paroah's wrath. In hindsight, it appears that they had no choice but to save the babies. But, if we look at their situation with fresh eyes and consider their options, we might begin to think about their decision in a different way.

Before we consider the midwives' situation, let's get some practice with other dilemmas:

- What were the different factors weighing on Rosa Parks the day that she refused to give up her seat on the bus? Consider the power of the law, the reaction from other people of color on the bus or in her community, and her desire for dignity and respect. Many other people of color faced this same choice when they rode the bus, and made different choices. What factors contributed to Rosa Parks' decision to defy the authorities, the law and the community around her? Do you think that she knew what impact her choice would have?
- You are taking a university exam and you notice that an acquaintance, Yael — who is not enrolled in the class — is taking the exam. Yael is friendly with one of the students in the class who is not at the exam. You figure out that Yael must be taking the exam for her friend. The friend who is enrolled in the class is a highly motivated pre-med student from a rigid family with extremely high expectations for the children. Clearly, she was afraid to fail and asked Yael for help. What do you do?

Now let's turn back to the midwives: What were the factors that led to their ultimate course of action? How did the following impact the midwives' decision: Paroah? God? The moral imperative to save lives?

- Create a scenario of your own and open it up for discussion.

**WHO**

Ages 10 and up

**WHEN**

During the meal

**GOAL**Examine personal  
growth through the  
lens of חֻמֵיץ (*hametz*)**D. BEYOND BREAD CRUMBS —  
PERSONAL CLEANING**

As you rooted, cleaned and boiled to rid your home of all things *hametz*, did you have an opportunity to consider what personal characteristics you might want to eliminate? What are the tendencies or habits from which you would like to be free?

**WHO**

Ages 3 and up

**WHEN**Any time  
during the seder**GOAL**

Experience leaving Egypt

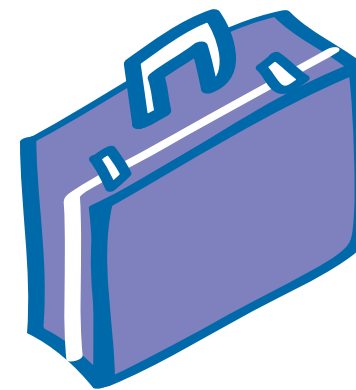
**E. WHEN I LEFT EGYPT**

Ask each person what s/he would bring on the journey out of Egypt. As each person takes a turn, s/he repeats all the things said before. This is a powerful way to experience the idea:

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרַאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ  
בְּאֵילוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

*Bechol dor vador hayav adam lirot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza miMitzrayim.*

In every generation, one is obligated to see oneself as if s/he personally went out from Egypt.



## ART AND DRAMA

### WHO

All ages

### WHEN

At points throughout the seder (*Kadesh, Urchatz*, at each cup of wine, etc.) different people can take a moment and present their character

### GOALS

Personalize the story through the people in the narrative

Allow participants to present their understanding of a character

### PESAH STORY CHARACTERS

Seder participants can come as one of these or other characters from the Haggadah:

Yocheved	Miriam
Miriam	Moshe
Shifrah or Puah	Paroah
Bat Paroah	Taskmaster

Some different ways that seder participants might consider “being” this person:

- Come dressed in costume or provide a basket of assorted head coverings and clothing
- Adopt what you think might be characteristics of the person and behave in ways you imagine they might behave at the seder
- Play a guessing game like “20 Questions” or “Who am I?” with others at the meal
- Have people prepare a monologue to read at the seder in which they describe some aspect of the Pesah story
- Before *yom tov*, write a journal entry describing the general state of mind of someone who is leaving Egypt and read it at the seder

### PLACE CARDS

Children who know how to write can prepare place cards for these “special guests” as a way of preparing themselves to “meet” them.



### WHO

Ages 3 and up

### WHEN

Prepare before *yom tov* and present on the table throughout the seder

### GOALS

Non-verbal, artistic expression of the story or a character

Celebration of Miriam as a person of action and as a leader

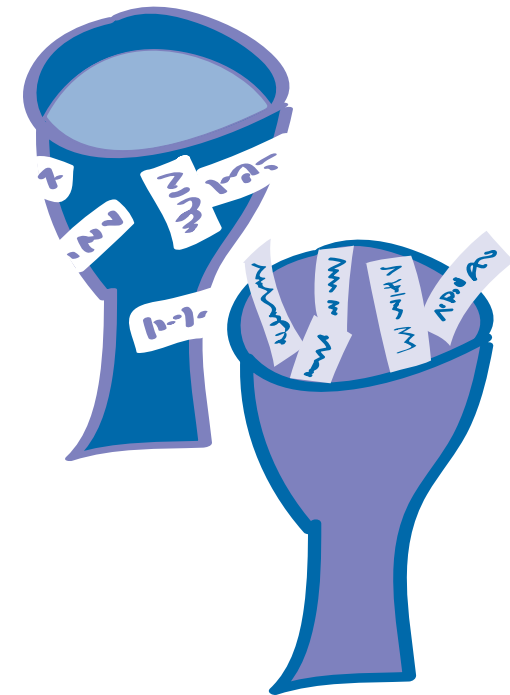
### MIRIAM'S CUP

Write or paint verbs associated with Miriam on any kind of cup or wine glass (Shemot 2:1-10; 15:20-21). Fill the cup with water and place it on the seder table. The water in “Miriam’s cup” symbolizes Miriam’s well that accompanied B’nei Yisrael in the desert.

### OR

Learn Shemot 2:1-10 with your child and identify Miriam’s leadership qualities. Fill the cup with slips of paper on which words describing Miriam’s leadership qualities are written. Paint or decorate the outside of the cup to depict the scene.

Place the cup on the seder table. The words on the slips of paper that celebrate Miriam’s leadership can be read at the seder.



## READINGS

### WHO

Teens and adults

### WHEN

To be read at  
עֲבָדִים הַיְיָנוּ  
Avadim Hayinu

Excerpt from  
*The History of Mary Prince,  
A West Indian Slave.*  
[www.docsouth.unc.edu/  
neh/prince/prince.html](http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/neh/prince/prince.html)

## SLAVERY

### A PERSONAL STORY

*Mary Prince (1788-1833?) was born as a slave in Bermuda. Below is an excerpt from her history. It begins when she was around the age of 12 and her master sold her at an auction.*

“At length the vendue master (auctioneer or person in charge of the sale), who was to offer us for sale like sheep or cattle, arrived, and asked my mother which was the eldest. She said nothing, but pointed to me. He took me by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street...I was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase, and who talked about my shape and size in like words — as if I could no more understand their meaning than the dumb beasts. I was then put up to sale. The bidding commenced at a few pounds, and gradually rose to fifty-seven, when I was knocked down to the highest bidder; and the people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave. I then saw my sisters led forth, and sold to different owners; so that we had not the sad satisfaction of being partners in bondage. When the sale was over, my mother hugged and kissed us, and mourned over us, begging of us to keep up a good heart, and do our duty to our new masters. It was a sad parting; one went one way, one another, and our poor mammy went home with nothing.”

## SLAVERY TODAY

Experts estimate that today there are up to 27 million people enslaved around the world. It's happening in countries on all six inhabited continents. And yes, that includes the United States. The CIA estimates 14,500 to 17,000 victims are trafficked into the “Land of the Free” every year.

Excerpts from *American  
Anti-Slavery Group*  
[www.iabolish.org](http://www.iabolish.org)

- Slavery today is defined as forced labor without pay under threat of violence.
- 600,000 to 800,000 people are trafficked internationally every year. Approximately 80% of them are women and children.
- Slavery was officially abolished worldwide at the 1927 Slavery Convention, yet it continues to thrive thanks to the complicity of some governments and the ignorance of much of the world.
- In the 2000 Refugee Report, “Trafficking in Women and Children: A Contemporary Manifestation of Slavery,” former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright calls human trafficking “the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world.”
- Slavery is an extremely profitable, international industry. Experts estimate trafficking in the US yields \$9 billion every year. Around the world, trafficking in women for commercial sex purposes nets \$6 billion per year. The trade of human flesh is so lucrative that authorities complain that even as they close in on one smuggling ring in the US, another one pops up.
- The four most common types of slavery are: chattel slavery, debt bondage, forced labor, and sexual slavery.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Tammy Jacobowitz** is writing a dissertation on Midrash towards a doctorate in Rabbinic Literature at the University of Pennsylvania, where she studied as a Wexner Graduate Fellow. A co-writer of JOFA's Shemot curriculum, Ms. Jacobowitz is a graduate of the Scholars Circle at Drisha, and teaches in its high school and continuing education programs.

**Judith Talesnick** completed her education training at Drisha's Hasha'ar Educators Program after pursuing a Master's degree in Jewish Women's Studies at Jerusalem's Machon Schechter. In addition to co-writing JOFA's Shemot Curriculum and mentoring teachers using JOFA's Bereishit curriculum, Ms. Talesnick serves as a Judaic Studies consultant for day schools and synagogues.

Ms. Jacobowitz and Ms. Talesnick co-wrote *Ve'chol haMarbeh leSaper, Many Ways to Tell Our Story*, JOFA's handbook of activities and other enhancements for the Pesah seder based on the methodologies of the Shemot curriculum. The multi-sensory activities are sensitive to different learning styles, and encourage questions and personal sense-making. The community of learning created by the meaningful and enjoyable seder activities mirrors the classroom experience fostered by the curriculum.

For more information about JOFA's Bereishit and Shemot curricula, visit [www.jofa.org](http://www.jofa.org), call 212-679-8500 or email [curriculum@jofa.org](mailto:curriculum@jofa.org).



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