



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR Shabbos Table

...FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN...

פרשת שמיני

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

ANIMAL FARM

אֶת זֶה לֹא תֹאכְלוּ מִמַּעֲלֵי הַגֶּרֶה וּמִמַּפְרִיסֵי הַפָּרָה אֶת
הַגִּמְלָה כִּי מַעֲלֶה גֶרֶה הוּא...

וְאֶת הַחֲזִיר כִּי מַפְרִיס פָּרָה הוּא...

"This you should not eat from the ones that raise their cud and split their hooves: the camel, because it raises its cud... and the pig, because it splits its hooves..." (Vayikra 11:4-7)

Don't eat from the camel because it chews its cud, and from the pig because it splits its hooves? Shouldn't it say "although?"



he *sefer Kav Hayashar* quotes a few stories about people who pretended to be holier than they really were.

A wealthy Jewish man, who was also wise and a *talmid chacham*, had a son who was also wise and very responsible.

When the father felt it was time for him to leave this world, he called his son to his bedside, gave him the keys to all his possessions, and left him with some parting advice. Among his instructions, he said, "Beware of people who seem overly holy in crazy ways. When someone is behaving in ways that seem very holy but don't make sense, he is like the camel and the pig. The camel folds his feet under him when he crouches, hiding them, but is always showing off his chewing. The pig lies with his feet splayed out to show off his hooves...of such people, be suspicious."

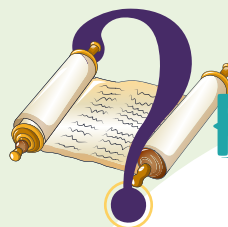
The son took his father's advice to heart. Many years later, he caught his partner double-crossing him by noticing unusual behavior. Upset at what he saw, he ran away from the partner and fled into the city. He ran and ran until he collapsed on a park bench and fell asleep.

That night, there was a break-in at the royal treasuries. Someone forced his way into the king's storehouses of riches, causing massive damage and stealing millions of dollars' worth of gold, diamonds, and other valuables.

As soon as the theft was discovered,



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PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week's riddles appear on page 3.

- 1 Where in our *parshah* was there a *kapparah* (atonement) for the sale of Yosef? Extra credit: Why now?
- 2 The sons of Aharon are usually referred to as בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֲנִים. When are they referred to only as בְּנֵי אֶהֱרֹן? Extra credit: Why?
- 3 How many reasons given for the death of Nadav and Avihu do you know? We found 11.
- 4 Which words in the Torah consist only of the same letter repeated twice? Where are they found?
- 5 Which three *pesukim* in the Torah teach that Hashem deals strictly with *tzaddikim*?
- 6 Who blessed Klal Yisrael (or their ancestors), besides Hashem?



SERIAL >> CHAPTER 15

CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: The *kishuf-macher* is gone, and the Mahara! enlists police help to block the *poritz* from leaving Prague with Efraim.

The traffic stretched for over a mile.

All the gates leading out of the city of Prague were sealed, except for one. Anyone trying to leave the city, in any direction, had to use that gate. Tens of wagons, oxcarts, coaches, and carriages lined the road to the one open gate. And progress was slow.

There was a checkpoint set up at the gate, and the already frustrated drivers had to submit to a thorough inspection of their vehicles if they wanted to be allowed to pass. Border soldiers and municipal police ordered each vehicle to a halt and searched it. They demanded identification from each person leaving the city. Drivers all along the line wondered, "What's going on? Is there some kind of terrorist threat? What are they looking for?"

Strangest of all was the sight of the two people standing at the command booth near the checkpoint, checking each person that passed. It was none other than the chief of police himself, and standing near him was the dignified visage of the rabbi of the city, the venerable Mahara! of Prague.

Somewhere near the back of the line, the *poritz* fumed and fulminated in the black carriage that had belonged to the *kishuf-macher*. The black horses with the red eyes looked much less threatening in the daylight, or maybe it was the death of their creepy master that made them look regular. But the *poritz* was fidgety. What was all this holdup? Was it about him and Johann? Would he get through the gate? Efraim sat calmly in the carriage, playing his harp softly. He was beginning to understand that he had been kidnapped by the *poritz*, his old foster father, again; but he was still confused, and the harp was soothing.

Finally, the *poritz's* wagon approached the gate. "Halt!" the border guard shouted. He mounted the steps of the wagon and peered inside. "License, ID, and registration!" he barked.

The *poritz* produced his own Polish identity papers and fished the vehicle registration from the glove box. "Who is the boy?" the officer demanded.

"This is my son, Johann. As you can see from my ID, we are Polish. There is no documentation for minors in Poland."

"Just a moment," the officer said. He stepped outside and conferred with the police chief. Soon, he was back.

"Please step outside the vehicle, sir," he said firmly. "You and the boy."

"Come, Johann." Muttering fiercely, the *poritz* and Efraim exited the carriage. As soon as Efraim stepped into the sunlight, the Mahara! cried out and leaped forward.

"That's him! Efraim! Chief, that's my kidnapped student!" He ran toward Efraim but stopped short of hugging him. The *poritz* scowled at him from Efraim's side.

"Student! What student? This is my son, Johann. He is not Jewish and is no student of no rabbi."

"No, officer, it's him!"

"This is not your student, I tell you!" the *poritz* shouted. "I am the governor of the Polish city of Lunchitz, and I will not stand for this dishonor! This man is lying and delaying me for no reason. Please detain him so that my son and I can be on our way!"

The police chief stepped forward. "Not so fast, gov'nor. This is the chief rabbi of the city of Prague, and his reputation as an honest man of sterling character is well known. You cannot waltz in here and call him a liar. Do you have proof that this is your son?"

"Of course I do," the *poritz* answered. "Back in Lunchitz, I have his birth certificate, medical records, and all identifying documents possible."

"Do you have anything here, sir?" the chief asked patiently.

"No, why would we? I was not expecting this disgraceful—"

"Save it, sir." The chief turned to the Mahara!. "Rabbi, do you have proof that this is who you say he is? Efraim, and not Johann?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Let's try an experiment," the officer said. Raising his voice, he called, "Efraim!" The boy looked up, and the Mahara! smiled. But the *poritz* was not impressed.

Not to be outdone, he shouted, "Johann!" Again, Efraim turned toward him and looked up.

The chief of police was puzzled. No one had proof, and the boy answered to both names. The Mahara! was beyond suspicion, but on the other hand, the governor had the boy in his wagon. What to do?

TO BE CONTINUED...

2

DVAR TORAH >>

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל אַהֲרֹן קִרְבְּ אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְעֹשֶׂה...

"And Moshe said to Aharon, 'Approach the Mizbe'ach and do...'" (Vayikra 9:7)

שהיה אהרן בוש וירא לגשת, אמר לו משה למה אתה בוש, לכך נבחרת (Rashi)

What did Moshe mean? Aharon was chosen to be *kohen gadol* because he made the *egel*?



ADERES ELIYAHU:

Chazal say (Yoma 22) that one cannot be a leader unless he has a "box of vermin hanging over his head" (i.e., some humbling history). Moshe was saying: Precisely because of the *egel*, you can be *kohen gadol*—because that is your "box of vermin!"



REBBE YECHIEL MEIR OF GUSTININ:

Aharon was embarrassed because people were criticizing the idea that a person who had made an *avodah zarah* could serve Hashem. Moshe commented: Public people always have to deal with nasty comments from the public. That is exactly the reason you were chosen to be *kohen gadol*—so that the abuse you put up with will be a *kapparah* for the *egel*!



DIVREI SHAAREI CHAIM:

As part of his *teshuvah* for the *egel*, Aharon knocked on every door in Klal Yisrael to lead people to follow his example in *teshuvah*. That is why he was most fitting to be *kohen gadol*, who would bring atonement through the *korbanos*.



RAV CHAIM VITAL:

Precisely because Aharon had a very strong *middah* of *yiras Shamayim* and was intensely embarrassed about the *egel*, he was the one most fitting to be the *kohen gadol*!



RAV CHAIM PALAG'I:

Moshe was supposed to be the *kohen gadol*. He lost this role because he refused Hashem's instructions at the burning bush too many times. He was warning Aharon: If you keep refusing, you will lose it too—this type of refusal is the precise reason you received the position in the first place (and not me)!



BEN ISH CHAI:

Aharon did nothing wrong when he made the *egel*—he did it *l'shem Shamayim*. The only problem was that in the end, it caused people to sin. Aharon would fix this by causing people to do *teshuvah*, by bringing *korbanos* on the Mizbe'ach. That is why he was chosen to be *kohen gadol*.



PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

Personal growth avodah of the week

Pesach offered us a free boost to closeness with Hashem. We did not have to earn it; we were shown the levels we could reach. But free gifts don't last, and now we do have to earn it. The seven weeks of *sefirah* are a ladder for us to climb, slowly and painstakingly, to prepare ourselves to enter a covenant with Hashem through our own effort and self-work. This is a very defined time for *avodah*, and it should not be passed up!

We have just concluded the weeks of *chesed* (giving, kindness) and *gevurah*, willpower and self-restraint (tough love). The coming week is about balance: finding the correct applications of each.

Parshah summary

Parshas Shemini concludes the work of *gevurah* and introduces balance by emphasizing the consequences of our actions, the importance of following a strict program, and the opportunity this provides. The *avodah* of the eighth day of inauguration of the

Mishkan is introduced, and the first step is *kapparah* for the *egel* and some other sins. There can be no real relationship without it. Counterbalancing the strict rule is the existence of *teshuvah*, which is a kindness that allows us to fix the mistake.

Klal Yisrael is startlingly awoken to a harsh reality, contrasting with the joyous time of the inauguration, by the death of two of their greatest—Nadav and Avihu—for an infraction so tiny, it is difficult to spot (see Riddles). Aharon displays the essence of balance in his reaction: despite his overwhelming love for his children and sadness for their loss, his self-control keeps him expressionless during the days of joy.

The *parshah* then teaches the essence of kosher foods: which nourishment for the body will also nourish the soul, and which will damage it. Food itself, which is a source of *chesed* for people—by giving them life as well as pleasure—has a dangerous downside, both physically and spiritually. It remains a strong challenge of willpower for most.

AVODAH OF THE WEEK:



1. Self-control with regard to food is one of our most difficult challenges today and is a great area in which to work on balance. Perhaps this is a good time to try *taanis haRaavad*—during meals this week, leave over a bit of each portion of food you normally eat.

2. Our interactions with our peers and juniors (children, students, younger siblings) call for balance between standing our ground and showing kindness. Each night, question a choice you made in one of these areas that day. In hindsight, what motivated you to make those choices? Was it the right call?

RIDDLE ANSWERS:

1. On the eighth day of *milu'im*, Aharon and Klal Yisrael brought *korbanos* to atone for the *egel*, but Klal Yisrael brought an extra goat. This was to atone for the sale of Yosef, which included staining his *kesones pasim* in goat-blood. A *kapparah* was needed now because the *shevatim* could no longer claim they had wanted to get rid of Yosef to prevent the birth of Yeravam ben Nevat and his *avodah zarah*—because they had all done *avodah zarah* with the *egel* (*Toras Kohanim*).

2. The sons of Aharon are referred to as *kohanim*, except for the eighth day of the *milu'im*, when they were *onenim*. Similarly, when Elazar took over the *kehunah* from Aharon after his death, he is not referred to as a *kohen* (because he was also an *onen*). In *Chumash Shemos*, before they became *kohanim*, and when discussing the death of Nadav and Avihu in *Parshas Acharei Mos*, they are also not referred to as *kohanim*.

3. Chazal give a number of reasons for the death of Nadav and Avihu (see *Yalkut, Shemini* 554 and other midrashim):

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| a) They did not consult Moshe before bringing a <i>korban</i> . | kan having ingested wine. | kan without first washing their hands and feet. | kan without wearing a head covering. | j) To teach Klal Yisrael the severe <i>kedushah</i> of the Mishkan. |
| b) They did not consult each other. | d) They did not have children. | g) They entered the Mishkan without wearing the <i>Me'il</i> . | i) They were waiting for Moshe and Aharon to die so that they could take over. | k) This was part of Aharon's punishment for the <i>egel</i> . |
| c) They entered the Mish- | e) They were not married. | h) They entered the Mish- | | |
| | f) They entered the Mish- | | | |

4. The Torah uses the words *תת, וש, רר, חח, וד*:

- | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| a) וּד
אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־יִצְחָק וְדָוִד אֶהְיֶה
(<i>Vayikra</i> 10:4) | b) חח
הָבִיאוּ חֹם וְנָזֶם וְטַבַּעַת
(<i>Shemos</i> 35:22) | c) רר
רָר בְּשָׂרוֹ אֶת זֹאבוֹ
(<i>Vayikra</i> 15:3) | d) שש This appears many times in Chumash | e) תת
לֹא תִסָּף תֵּת כְּהֵה לָךְ נֶעַד וְנִד
תְּהִיָּה בְּאֶרֶץ
(<i>Bereishis</i> 4:12) |
|---|---|--|---|---|

5. a) בְּקִרְבִּי אֶקְדֹּשׁ (*Vayikra* 10:3) b) וְסִבִּיבֵי נִשְׁעָרָה מֵאֵד (*Tehillim* 50:3) c) וְנוֹרָא עַל כָּל סִבִּיבֵי: (*Tehillim* 89:8)

6. Malkitzedek, Lavan and his mother (to Rivkah), Yitzchak, Eisav's *malach*, Yaakov, Aharon (this week's *parshah*), Moshe, Bilaam.

Did you notice that the story of the haftorah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

BACKGROUND TO THE HAFTORAH

In the days of Eli Hakohen, long before there was a Beis Hamikdash or a king of Klal Yisrael, the Pelishtim were defeating Klal Yisrael in a series of military campaigns. In a desperate attempt to win the war, the army took the Aron out to battle with them. This was a terrible mistake because the Aron was captured and fell into Pelishti hands! It stayed there for seven months, causing the Pelishtim terrible problems until they sent it off. It was taken to the house of Oved, where it brought *brachah*, and stayed in Kiryas Ye'arim for twenty years, until after the reign of Shaul.

HAFTORAH SUMMARY

When Dovid became the king, he brought the Aron to Yerushalayim with singing, dancing, and tremendous joy, lodging it in a tent in the city. This was a preparation for the building of the Beis Hamikdash.

But the joy was marred by the death of Uzzah, who tried to catch the Aron from falling when the cart it was in bounced on some rocks. Uzzah, who was a *tzaddik*, was killed by Hashem for this mistake—one is not allowed to touch the Aron, and it can't fall!

Michal, daughter of Shaul and wife of Dovid, despised the king for his lively dancing in the procession before the Aron, and she criticized him. She was wrong and was punished by remaining childless until her dying day.

Dovid asks Hashem for permission to build the Beis Hamikdash. Hashem send a message through Nassan Hanavi that he will be able to prepare the foundations, but only his son will build it, and his reign will be everlasting.

CONNECTION TO PARSHAS SHEMINI

The *parshah* discusses the joyous inauguration of the Mishkan and how it was marred by the death of Nadav and Avihu. The haftorah's story is parallel, as the return of the Aron, in preparation for the Beis Hamikdash, is marred by a death. In both cases, a *tzaddik* is taken because of a wrong attitude toward the Aron and *Kodesh Kadashim*, and Klal Yisrael learn an important lesson.

In the *parshah*, Aharon is scorned for his leadership role (see Litvak, Chasid, Sephardi), as is Dovid, by Michal.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

Trust in our leaders is necessary. Although we may not be able to trust our political leaders, we can rest assured that the Torah—Aron—and its *chachamim* do not need help. Their guidance does not fall or fail.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the police were alerted. Officers fanned out across the city, looking for any evidence or suspicious characters. Before long, they found the young man sleeping on a park bench and fell upon him with a vengeance. He was arrested and dragged to the police station for interrogation.

The chief investigator faced the young man in the interrogation room. All manner of scary-looking machines and devices designed to cause pain lined the walls.

"Admit it!" the interrogator demanded. "You did it! You stole the king's treasures! You damaged the storehouses!" We know what you did!"

"I—I—did nothing! I was just sleeping on a park bench."

"And what, exactly, were you doing on a park bench? You are a no-good layabout, looking for trouble, that's what you are! Admit it!"

"No, I..." The young man stopped. He did not want to rat out his partner, although his partner had double-crossed him, cheated him, and sent him running to the park bench.

"You WHAT?!" the interrogator screamed. "Admit you stole the treasures, or we will force you to do so! We have ways!" He rattled one of the chains on the wall threateningly.

After a bit of treatment with the interrogator's machines, the young man gave up. "Okay, okay, I admit it!" he said. "Just stop, leave me alone!"

"Sign this confession, and we will leave you," the interrogator said. The young man signed. But instead of letting him go, the interrogator delivered the confession to the king, who was infuriated. He sent soldiers to search the man's house, but of course, they did not find the treasure. The king sentenced the young man to be hanged.

The chief interrogator and executioner handcuffed the young man and began leading him to the gallows. One on each side, holding his arms, they marched him to the noose.

On the way, they passed a garbage dump. Worms were infesting the garbage and surrounding area, eating the rotting food. "Walk the prisoner around the area of worms," the interrogator ordered the executioner. "Let's not step on any poor worms for no reason."

An alarm went off in the prisoner's mind. *Don't kill the worms... holy and noble, like the pig!*

"I would like my last wish!" he said.

"Ah, yes, last wish. What is it?" the executioner asked.

"I want to speak to the king!" The executioner and interrogator groaned, but a last wish was a last wish! They turned around and headed back to the palace, avoiding the worms again. Soon, the prisoner stood before the king.

"What do you want?" the sovereign growled.

"Sire, I know where your treasures are, and who stole them!"

"What? Who? Where?"

The young man pointed a finger at the chief interrogator. "He stole them! Search his home and you will find them."

Somewhat doubtfully, the king sent men to the interrogator's house. Sure enough, the missing treasure was found in the cellar! The young man was freed, and the interrogator hanged instead.

The king apologized to the young man and thanked him for helping to recover his treasures. "But tell me," he asked, "how did you know?"

The young man related the incident with the worms. "There he was, leading a man to his death, and he was worried about killing worms. That is being overly 'holy' in a crazy way! That's like the pig and the camel! That's how I knew he was really the *treif* one."



UP FOR DISCUSSION

See this week's *Circle* magazine for the full comic story and halachic dilemma.

OPEN SHUT THEM

Poskim differentiate between disruptive noises that are common and expected and those which are not (*Chazon Ish* 13:1). Common noises, such as babies crying during the night, are not grounds for a neighbor to protest. On the other hand, uncommon noises, such as drum playing in the middle of the night, can be grounds for a protest (C.M. 156:2). Accordingly, when it is normal for the window to be open, those who do not want it open cannot protest, and conversely, when it is uncommon for the window to be open, students may not insist it should remain open over the protest of those who are cold. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 30b), however, emphasizes the importance of forgoing their rights in favor of others.



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כל הולך על גֶחון

“...All that travel on their stomach...” (Vayikra 11:42)

וא"ו דגחון חציין של אותיות של ס"ת

“The *vav* of the word ‘*gachon*’ is the midpoint of the letters of the Torah” (Kiddushin 30a)

Why was the letter *vav* chosen to be the midpoint of the Torah, and why is it enlarged in this word?

The name *vav* can be spelled in Hebrew three ways. Each has an important *gematria* and *remez*:

1. 12 = וי, referring to Yisrael, who are twelve *shevatim*

2. 13 = ווא, referring to Hashem, who is אחד. The *gematria* of אחד is 13.

3. 22 = ויו, the numbers of letters of the alphabet from which the Torah is comprised.

The middle of the Torah, the heart of it, is the meeting point of אוריינתא ישראל וקודשא בריך הוא!

THIS DATE IN JEWISH HISTORY



On the 28th of Nissan in the year 1912, the *Titanic* sank after crashing into an iceberg in the Atlantic Ocean. The *Titanic* was the largest ship ever built at that time, carrying 2,000 wealthy passengers. Its builders bragged that it was “the ship that even G-d couldn’t sink,” but it did sink—on its first trip! More than 1,500 people died in what was one of the worst seafaring disasters in history.

As the ship was sinking, passengers struggled to get one of just a few spots in a lifeboat. A Jewish woman named Leah Aks was waiting patiently on line while holding her ten-month-old baby, when a man grabbed the baby out of her arms and threw him overboard. Leah was hysterical at having lost her baby, but she did manage to get into a lifeboat. She was rescued by a ship called the *Carpathia* and survived. Two days later, she spotted an Italian immigrant named Argene del Carlo on the deck of the *Carpathia*, holding her baby. She claimed the child, but the other woman refused to give him up, insisting he was her baby! The baby had fallen into her lifeboat, and del Carlo believed that G-d had sent her the child as a replacement for her husband Sebastino, who went down with the ship. Leah appealed to the captain of the *Carpathia*, “I can prove this is my child,” she said, “because he has a *bris milah*!” She was reunited with her baby thanks to the precious mitzvah.

The baby grew to become a man known as Frank Phillip Aks, who lived until the ripe old age of 80 in 1991.



HALACHAH

Mayim Acharonim

וְהִתְקַדְּשֶׁתָּם וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים

“And you should sanctify yourselves, and you should become holy” (*Vayikra* 11:44)

וְהִתְקַדְּשֶׁתָּם אֱלֹהֵי מִים רִשׁוֹנִים וְהָיִיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים אֱלֹהֵי מִים אַחֲרֹנִים

“And you should sanctify yourselves”—this is *mayim rishonim*. “And you should be holy”—this is *mayim acharonim* (*Brachos* 53b)



Is washing after eating an obligation?

The Gemara gives two reasons for washing after eating: 1) The *pasuk* of וְהִתְקַדְּשֶׁתָּם—to be holy, by separating bodily needs from *kedushah*. 2) To wash off potentially dangerous Sodom salt, which may have been mixed into our table salt and gotten stuck to our fingers. *Tosafos* says this is not an obligation anymore, because Sodom salt is not common. Many Ashkenazi *Rishonim* *pasken* that way. Rav Yaakov Emden adds that most people eat with utensils today, and salt does not get stuck to people's fingers.

Shulchan Aruch quotes both approaches, and many *Acharonim* rule that it is not an obligation, but very essential to do anyway. Some add other Kabbalistic reasons.

How much water should be used?

There is no fixed amount. Kabbalists intentionally use as little as possible, while the Gra used a *revi'is*.

How much of the hand should be washed?

At minimum, the two outer limbs of the fingers should be moistened. Kabbalistically, the entire length of the fingers should be washed. The Gra washed the entire hand.

Why do women not need to wash *mayim acharonim*?

Because there is no longer Sodom salt, and the washing is a stringency, it is possible that women just never took it on. Many *poskim* do say that women should wash, but it is well documented by the

poskim that the custom of women in most communities is not to wash. When there are male strangers at the table, many women who wash will do so away from the table to avoid calling attention to their hands.

Can one speak, eat, or drink after washing *mayim acharonim*?

The washing must be immediately before *bentching*. One may not speak, eat, or drink between the two. According to the *Mishnah Berurah*, this may be even more serious than talking between washing *mayim rishonim* and *Hamotzi*. There was a case in which a man had unexplained shoulder pain, until the *Arizal* advised him to be careful not to speak between washing and *bentching*. It is unclear whether one can wash again if he did interrupt by speaking.

THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“WHO HEARS BOTH SIDES OF AN ARGUMENT?
ONLY THE NEIGHBOR!”



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