

LECTURE XIV

SCRIPTURE READING: *Exodus 11-12.*

Title: The meaning and significance of the Passover.

INTRODUCTION

The question we are going to look at is: What does the Passover tell us about redemption?

Don't forget that the whole OT and especially the book of Exodus foreshadows God's plan of redemption which he worked out even before he created the universe and which he progressively revealed in the OT.

We can compare this revelation in the OT to a negative of a photograph – and the fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the reality.

Redemption finds its realization in him alone.

We will see how every detail of the Passover was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ, showing once again the amazing unity between the OT and the NT.

But let us begin first of all with

THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSOVER – ITS HISTORICAL SETTING.

The Passover takes place within a particular historical setting.

It is quite clear that the Passover is closely connected to Israel's release from slavery.

The Passover essentially marked the transition from slavery to freedom.

For some 280 years the children of Israel were viciously oppressed.

Despite repeated requests to release the Israelites, Pharaoh had obstinately refused to let them go.

Then God sent the plagues in judgment upon Egypt but Pharaoh refused to let them go.

EX 11:1 Now the LORD had said to Moses, "I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here, and when he does, he will drive you out completely. ² Tell the people that men and women alike are to ask their neighbors for articles of silver and gold." ³ (The LORD made the

Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and Moses himself was highly regarded in Egypt by Pharaoh's officials and by the people.)

EX 11:4 So Moses said, "This is what the LORD says: `About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. ⁶ There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt--worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. ⁷ But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.' Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. ⁸ All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, `Go, you and all the people who follow you!' After that I will leave." Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh.

EX 11:9 The LORD had said to Moses, "Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you--so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt." ¹⁰ Moses and Aaron performed all these wonders before Pharaoh, but the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go out of his country.

It is in this context that God instituted the Passover, which is recorded in **chapter 12**.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

Chapter 12:1-28 contains directions for Passover week that included the Feast of unleavened bread.

1-14 Directions for Passover.

So significant was this first Passover event that the very calendar of Israel was affected.

EX 12:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year

This seventh month on their civil calendar was to become the first month (v.2).

From this time onward, two calendar reckonings are employed by the Israelites — one for sacred purposes and one for civil purposes.

Here God was stressing not just the importance of the Passover, but that it marked a new beginning for them.

¶ *The Selection of the Lamb (12:3-5)*

On the tenth day of the month each family was to select a one-year-old unblemished animal from among the sheep or goats.

On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household (12:3).

⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

¶ *The Examination of the Lamb (12:6)*

For four days the animal is confined for careful examination.

Was it really without blemish?

Your lamb shall be an unblemished male a year old; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month (12:5-6a).

¶ *The Slaying of the Lamb (12:6-7)*

On the fourteenth day at twilight the animal was to be slain and the blood caught in a basin and by means of hyssop applied to the two doorposts and the lintel of each house.

Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight. Moreover, they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it (12:6b-7).

¶ *The Eating of the Lamb (12:8-14)*

On that same night they were to roast the animal and eat or burn it up in its entirety.

They had to eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, dressed and ready to move out of the land of Egypt.

You can imagine the atmosphere as they ate, with excited and joyful expectation – like a holiday atmosphere.

⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire--head, legs and inner parts. ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.

¶ A perpetual reminder 12:14-16

Subsequent generations were commanded to repeat the performance, annually eating the roast lamb, perpetually observing the Passover feast.

It was to be a memorial, a reminder of the great day of their redemption.

EX 12:14 "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD--a lasting ordinance. ¹⁵ For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶ On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat--that is all you may do.

¹⁹ For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. ²⁰ Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread."

¶ Purpose of the Passover [12-13, 21-28]

The reason for the blood is explained in verses 12-13.

For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments — I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt (12:12-13).

That night God's death angel moved through the land of Egypt – and the firstborn of every family from the Pharaoh's palace to the home of the poor peasant died.

Yet the angel of death passed over those homes where the blood of the lamb was applied to the doorframes, protecting the occupants from death.

Here we see why this ceremony was called '**Passover**' – when the angel of death saw the blood, he passed over that house.

In other words, the Passover was connected to protection from God's judgment.

It is significant that this is the first plague that involved Israel.

None of the others did.

It did not touch them – only the rest of Egypt.

But this one would unless they believed God and followed his instructions, Israel's first born would also die.

They had to carefully follow the instructions otherwise they would not be saved from death.

Each family had to apply blood to the doorframes of their houses.

¶ The Passover was also associated with deliverance from slavery.

EX 12:17 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Verses 29-42 – we have the account of death of the first born in Egypt and Israel's release from captivity.

EX 12:29 At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. ³⁰ Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead.

EX 12:31 During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. ³² Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me."

EX 12:33 The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. "For otherwise," they said, "we will all die!" ³⁴ So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. ³⁵ The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. ³⁶ The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

EX 12:37 The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth. There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children.

EX 12:40 Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egyptⁿ was 430 years. ⁴¹ At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD's divisions left Egypt. ⁴² Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come.

The Passover spoke of Israel's deliverance, their redemption from slavery.

The keeping of the Passover was also educational. [12:21-28]

When Moses instructed the elders of Israel concerning the perpetual observance of the ordinance, he indicated the educational purpose.

And it will come about when your children will say to you, "What does this rite mean to you?" that you shall say, "It is a Passover sacrifice to the Lord who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes." And the people bowed low and worshipped (12:26-27).

It was incumbent upon parents that their children know the meaning of the Passover.

That is the historical context and description of the institution of the Passover – but what did it all mean?

What was its significance?

MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PASSOVER.

No explanation was given at the time of the meaning of the Passover.

The children of Israel did not understand the full significance of the various aspects of the Passover.

There were virtually no reasons given for the form it took.

It is in the NT that the meaning and significance are explained.

All the children of Israel knew was that Passover was related to deliverance from slavery and protection from death – that the lamb and the shedding of the blood of the lamb was an integral part of this.

This was the way God was revealing the pattern of salvation.

But even though they could not understand, the Israelites had to obey God – they had to trust him, which of course is the whole point of trust – they did not put their trust in the events themselves or the ritual, but their trust was in the God who gave them the instructions.

Later, of course, God explained more fully the connection between sacrifice, blood, sin, forgiveness and access to God.

However, it was not until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and his death on Calvary that the meaning of what was happening became clear.

What essential elements of redemption are revealed through the Passover ordinance?

- ❑ **Firstly consider the context of the Passover – Israel in slavery.**

The position Israel found herself in – bondage and slavery – pointed to a worse bondage, a worse slavery – to sin and to Satan.

What was true of Israel physically and politically, is true of every single person – mankind is in bondage to sin – under the power of sin.

In **Romans 6 verses 1-17** Paul refers to the state of the unregenerate person, the person who is not a Christian, as being a slave to sin and the Christian as one who has been freed from sin. [**verse 6**]

In **verse 12** he speaks of sin as ruling over the unbeliever and in **verse 14**, he states that sin is the master of the unbeliever.

In **Hebrews**, the writer explains that *Christ by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil--¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

As we look at Israel in bondage we see a picture of every person in need of redemption, in need of deliverance.

But they needed more than simply deliverance from bondage, they were

□ **Under the sentence of death.**

It is significant that this was the only plague that affected the Israelites – none of the other plagues touched them at all. WHY?

God was showing them that the only thing that distinguished them from the Egyptians at this point was the blood.

The death sentence loomed over Egypt, but they were not the only ones affected.

Although a distinction was made between Goshen and Egypt in the preceding plagues, no such distinction was made in this last one – Israel too was under sentence of death.

Any Israelite father who did not apply blood to the doorframe of his house would have lost the firstborn son of his family.

If Israel's slavery speaks of the **power of sin**, the last plague speaks of the **penalty of sin - death**.

God had warned Adam, *you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.*"

Every single person is not only born in slavery to sin, but also in a state of spiritual death – under sentence of death – under condemnation.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

In **Romans 5 verse 12**, Paul makes it quite clear that sin entered the world through one man and through that death has come upon all men.

John speaking of Christians states ¹⁴ *We know that we have passed from death to life,*

But it goes further – not just in a state of spiritual death – but subject to **eternal death – a final irreversible separation from God**.

We too are under the sentence of God.

We stand:

Guilty before God [Rom.3:20]

Under the condemnation of God [John 3:18]

Facing eternal death and judgment [Rom. 6:23]

We are like men on death row.

Our guilt of sin has been established beyond all question – already under condemnation.

The sentence has been passed.

It hangs over our head.

We await its execution.

That is our lot.

We need redemption.

Israel's situation – in bondage to Pharaoh, under the sentence of death, is a picture of every single person's need of redemption.

But how can such a delivery be accomplished?

□ **God's Provision for Redemption.**

Redemption could only be affected at the cost of death – that is what the Passover reveals, the cost of redemption..

Israel's freedom was costly.

Release from the death penalty was accomplished by a sacrifice.

A lamb was slaughtered and its blood spilled and then applied to the doorframes of the house.

That pointed to the true lamb – the ultimate sacrifice, the true Passover.

Notice how Jesus fulfilled every detail of the Passover.

We saw that it was God who selected the offering-a one-year-old lamb, so it was God who selected the true lamb – the lamb of God – he chose the lamb slain before the creation of the world.

1500 years later, that when John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

He was the unblemished lamb – without any imperfection

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. [I Peter 1]

1PE 2:22 "He committed no sin,

*and no deceit was found in his mouth."*ⁿ

Furthermore, as God commanded that the meat be roasted, so our Lord was exposed to the full fire of God's judgment.

Henry Law – 18th Century leader in the evangelical party in the C of E –

'Believer, Jesus is tormented in your stead. All the wrath which all your sins deserved is outpoured on Him. The vengeance of God descends in all its fury. The curse of the law exacts its utmost. The flames of hell tightly grasp Him. He endures the miseries which all His people must have endured if they had wailed for ever in the lake of fire. Faith sees it and exclaims: I live, for Jesus died. I cannot suffer. Jesus has exhausted all. Wrath cannot touch me, because it has touched Him.'

Not a bone in his body was broken as John records,

*JN 19:31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. ³² The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. ³³ But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴ Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. ³⁵ The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. ³⁶ These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"ⁿ ³⁷ and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."*ⁿ

Is it not amazing how our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the Passover down to the last detail.

That is why Paul wrote Christ our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

It is only through him, his sacrifice, and his blood shed that you and I can be delivered from the slavery of sin.

That is the point that Paul makes in Colossians chapter 1 ¹² *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified youⁿ to share in the inheritance of the saints in the*

kingdom of light. ¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption,ⁿ the forgiveness of sins.

It is all in him alone – without him we have nothing at all.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸

In him God has ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life inⁿ Christ Jesus our Lord.

in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

*there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,*ⁿ

And one day, it is the lamb that we will worship before the throne of God as John tells us in **Revelation**,

*REV 5:6 Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders
Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹ And they sang a new song:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased men for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation.*

*REV 5:10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth."*

REV 5:11 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. ¹² In a loud voice they sang:

*"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"*

REV 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:

*"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"*

Of course, all this is so well illustrated in the Lord's Supper, which replaced the Passover – let us read about it – that is what we proclaim – the gospel.

Here is Luke's account of the Lord's Supper.

1CO 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Of course the question we need to must ask – have I accepted that there is no deliverance from the bondage of sin and death apart from Jesus – have I accepted him by faith?

The Israelites did not fully understand what they were doing but they took God at his word.

So late that afternoon one can imagine every Hebrew father taking his firstborn out to the pen.

As he took the lamb he explained to his son the sentence of death that was upon its head.

As the knife was taken and the animal slain, the father told his son the lamb was dying in his stead.

The blood was taken and splashed on the doorposts and lintel.

Inside the house they waited for midnight to strike.

It came.

It went.

And the firstborn was still alive.

God had passed over them.

They had been delivered from the sentence of death!

And why?

Acting with implicit faith in God, they had slain the lamb and applied the blood.

What an illustration of salvation by faith.

Our Lamb has been slain in our place – our substitute.

All that remains is for faith to appropriate that death and claim it was for me.

The blood must be applied.

The sinner under the sentence of death must come by faith to the place of saying,
"It was for me. I am trusting in His death on behalf of me for my deliverance."

It is the blood of Jesus Christ His Son that cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7).

If the homes of South Africa were all represented in Goshen or Egypt that night, it would have been a strange sight to walk down a street.

¶ Before one house, there is a lonely basket of fruit.

They are like the person today offering to God the fruit of their labors, the product of their hands, the works of their life.

But it is in vain, *"When I see the blood I will pass over you."*

¶ Next door there stands a lamb on the front porch tied to the doorknob.

It is beautifully washed and neatly sheared.

This is like the people today who believe in Jesus as a wonderful person and a great teacher.

Their hope for salvation rests in His sinless life, His teaching and His example for mankind.

But it is in vain. *"When I see the blood I will pass over you."*

¶ Across the street there is a sight that is stranger-looking still.

Before the door there is a basin.

It is filled with blood.

Here is a family that has taken God seriously.

The Lamb had been slain — but the blood was not applied.

How representative of literally thousands of us today.

We believe in the death of Christ.

Of course, it is history!

He died.

More than that, He died for sinful men.

Yet His blood has never been applied.

His death has never been appropriated by faith.

They are not trusting simply in the merits of His death for forgiveness and salvation.

EXTRA NOTES ON SACRIFICIAL LAMBS

Besides the Passover, **God did prescribe lambs and sheep for several other sacrifices** in the Old Testament Law. Here's a clear summary, based mainly on the books of **Leviticus, Exodus, and Numbers**:

1. Daily burnt offerings

Numbers 28:3–4 – God commanded Israel to offer **two male lambs (a year old) every day** as a continual burnt offering:

- One in the morning,
- One at twilight.

These daily offerings symbolized the constant dedication of the people to God.

2. Sabbath offerings

Numbers 28:9–10 – On each Sabbath, they were to offer:

- **Two male lambs (a year old) without blemish** in addition to the daily burnt offering.

3. Feast offerings

At several feasts (besides Passover), lambs or sheep were prescribed:

- **Feast of Weeks / Pentecost** – Numbers 28:27
 - **Feast of Trumpets** – Numbers 29:1–6
 - **Day of Atonement** – Numbers 29:7–8
 - **Feast of Tabernacles** – Numbers 29:12–38
- Each included multiple lambs (usually seven each day) as burnt offerings.

4. Sin offerings and guilt offerings

- **For individual sin offerings** (Leviticus 4:32–35):
 - A person could bring a **female lamb** without blemish.
- **For a guilt (trespass) offering** (Leviticus 5:6):

- A female lamb or goat was acceptable.
These offerings provided atonement for unintentional sins.

5. After childbirth

Leviticus 12:6 – A woman, after the days of her purification, was to bring:

- **A year-old lamb for a burnt offering,**
and a young pigeon or turtledove for a sin offering.
(If she couldn't afford a lamb, two doves or pigeons could be substituted — Leviticus 12:8; as Mary did in Luke 2:24).

6. Consecration and special vows

- **Nazirite vow completion** (Numbers 6:14):
 - A male lamb for a burnt offering,
 - A ewe lamb for a sin offering,
 - And a ram for a peace offering.

Summary:

God prescribed lambs and sheep for:

- Daily burnt offerings
- Sabbath and festival sacrifices
- Sin and guilt offerings
- Purification rituals
- Vows and consecrations

Lambs were among the most common sacrificial animals, symbolizing innocence and purity — which is why Jesus is later called the “**Lamb of God.**”

Here's a clear summary of the **other animals used for sacrifices** in the Old Testament sacrificial system, mostly described in **Leviticus, Exodus, and Numbers** — beyond lambs and sheep:

1. Bulls (Cattle / Oxen)

- **Burnt offerings:** Leviticus 1:3 — a male without blemish.
- **Sin offerings:**

- For the **high priest** or the **whole congregation** who sinned unintentionally (Leviticus 4:3, 4:14).
- **Peace offerings:** Leviticus 3:1.
- **Consecration of priests:** Exodus 29:1.

Bulls symbolized strength and were used especially for significant communal or priestly sacrifices.

2. Goats

- **Sin offerings:** Very common (Leviticus 4:23, 4:28); could be a male or female goat, depending on the case.
- **Day of Atonement** (Leviticus 16): Two male goats —
 - One sacrificed as a sin offering,
 - One as the **scapegoat**, symbolically carrying away the people's sins into the wilderness.
- **Feasts:** Numbers 28–29 — often a goat as a sin offering.

Goats were often used for atonement rituals.

3. Birds (Turtledoves or Pigeons)

- **Burnt offerings:** Leviticus 1:14 — especially for the poor.
- **Sin offerings:** Leviticus 5:7–10 — if a person couldn't afford a lamb or goat.
- **Purification after childbirth:** Leviticus 12:6–8.

Birds allowed the poor to participate in sacrifice.

4. Rams

- **Burnt offerings and peace offerings:** Leviticus 9:2–4.
- **Consecration of priests:** Exodus 29 — one ram as a burnt offering, another ram as a **ram of ordination**.
- **Nazirite vow completion:** Numbers 6:14 — a ram as a peace offering.

Rams often symbolized dedication or special consecration.

5. No camels, donkeys, pigs, or other animals

Animals considered **unclean** (Leviticus 11) were **never** accepted for sacrifice.

In summary:

Besides lambs and sheep, the main sacrificial animals were:

- Bulls / oxen / calves
- Goats
- Rams
- Doves and pigeons (for the poor)

Each animal and type of offering carried symbolic meaning related to **atonement, dedication, thanksgiving, and fellowship with God.**

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