THE DEBT WE OWE TO THE JEW



By

F. J. MILES, D.S.O., O.B.E., V.D., D.D., etc.



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EXPLANATORY FOREWORD

The Author, as a member of the Council, was present at a week's Conference in Chicago, inaugurating "The American Association for Evangelization of the Jews." The Council and its Committee met in The Moody Memorial Church, in which a public meeting was held each evening. One of the appointed speakers of nation-wide renown could not be present. The present writer was asked to take his place. During the day he tried to gather some thoughts while in Committee. The address met with a very cordial response and a request (since repeated) to publish it. It is now written from the notes made immediately after delivery. The spoken form has for the most part been maintained and Scriptural references have been added.

The substance of the address has since been given at a "Yom Kipper" celebration and at two Conferences. Each time the speaker has been asked to publish it in pamphlet form. Though conscious of its limitations and of how much more might be better said by a specialist in Hebrew Christian work, the speaker-writer sends it forth to a wider audience in the hope that it may be used to further the presentation of their Messiah to the Kinsmen of Jesus according to the flesh. To which end will the reader please unite in prayer with

Yours because His,

F. J. MILES.

London, June, 1946.

THE DEBT WE OWE TO THE JEW

by

Dr. F. J. MILES, D.S.O., ETC.

In answer to the question we might well state that "the tribe of the bleeding heart and the weary feet" provide the world's greatest and world-wide witness to the truth, inerrancy, infallibility and inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures. While this is true in general of the revelation of God to men, of the development of revealed truth to and through them, we may apply it in a special and particular sense to prophecy. Elsewhere I have written that "Much of the prophecy in the Bible has become history, and the history has proven the accuracy and therefore the inspiration of the prophecy." We now apply this to Israel. Beginning in Lev. 26, reiterated in Deut. 28 and 30, amplified in Ezekiel 36-39, referred to by our Lord during His ministry in such passages as Luke 21:24, and expounded by Paul in Rom. 9-11, we have the scattering of the Jews among the nations dealt with. There are numerous passages in both the Major and Minor Prophets but the above will suffice. As actual proof texts we may quote Lev. 26:33-"I will scatter you among the nations"; Deut. 4:27-"And the Lord will scatter you among the nations"; Deut. 28:37-"And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee" (the phrase "The Wandering Jew" bears witness to the fulfilment of this prophecy). Facts are facts and "facts are very stubborn things." No one would dream of denying that the Jews are scattered among the nations. It would be absurd to take time to describe the details. Frank, candid and honest thinkers would also agree that while they are no nation they remain a distinct race because of their religious relationship to Jehovah. Nothing like this has ever occurred in human history: it is absolutely unique. It forms an overwhelming

testimony and tribute to the authenticity, accuracy and authority of God's Holy Word.

Our subject does not permit of my dwelling on the companion prophecy—but I cannot ignore or omit it. Just as Jehovah warned the Jews that if they disobeyed Him He would scatter them, so He promised that if they would return unto Him He would gather them and return them to the restored Promised Land. The two prophecies run together in the chapters referred to above. As the first has been fulfilled we have solid ground of confidence that the second will be. I quote two passages only from Ezekiel 36. In verse 19 we have the scattering which has taken place: "And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries: according to their way and according to their doings I judged them"; while in verse 24 we have the gathering which assuredly will occur: "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land." The two aspects are combined in Jer. 31:10: "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock." (cf. Context). See also Hos. 3:4, 5, etc.

So much by way of Introduction. Following that comes the text, for a preacher must have a text as well as a title. The text should agree with the title, or better, the title and theme should issue from and be in harmony with the text. Ours is found in the opening verses of the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Paul has been describing the iniquity of man, both Jew and Gentile, and as he puts it later in his letter, sin has been seen to be "exceeding sinful." He has described the awfulness of sin as revealed in man irrespective of race. About to affirm that before God who has "no respect of persons" (Ch. ii:11) "there is no difference or distinction" between Israelites and Gentiles "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Ch. iii:22, 23), he asks

"WHAT ADVANTAGE THEN HATH THE JEW? or what profit is there in circumcision?" and answers his own question:

"Much every way; chiefly because that unto them were

committed the oracles of God."

The question and answer both focus and circumscribe our theme. We concentrate on the debt we owe to the Jew.

CONCERNING THE BIBLE, both as regards the Old and New Testament.

From the human standpoint most of the books of the Bible were produced by Jews. And no one will gainsay the statement that they were preserved and passed on to us by the same race. The foundations of scriptural teaching were laid in the history and development of the Jews. There is a real sense in which we may affirm that Christianity is a development of Judaism. Of course, there is absolute contrast between law and gospel (John 1:17), but even the Gospel content would lose some of its substance if deprived of its Old Testament background. We have had the Bible as the possession of the English-speaking people for so long that we are apt to take for granted this priceless heritage. We know so much about it, or think we do, that we fail to "possess our possessions." We have so often heard it said that we should regard the Bible and treat it as we would any other book, that it may be well for us to recall the truth that it is not like any other book. Other books were limited by and to the place, period, people and purpose of their production. The Bible stands out in contrast.

PLACE OF PRODUCTION.

For instance, Germans naturally tend to read German works. What chance has a book written by a Frenchman of being widely read in Prussia? What book written in, say, India or Turkey or Brazil or Mexico is likely to have a vogue in Europe? Apart from the great international classics and other outstanding works such as those of Bunyan, Dante, Dumas, Goethe, Milton and Shakespeare, what works do you know that have overleaped the boundaries of the nationality of their origin? The fact is that, generally speaking, we regard oriental lands and peoples as lower in the scale of life than our own, so we do not look to them for illumination or education. But here is an oriental book written for Orientals comprehending within its scope and sweep the whole wide world: it is an outstanding marvel!

Including small sections in another language it was written in only two but it has been translated into 1,070 tongues and dialects and has proven to be "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" using them each and all.

But the Bible differs from all other literature as to its PERIOD OF PRODUCTION.

All books are tied to THE PERIOD OF THEIR PRODUCTION. How few folk there are who read the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," the Chinese sayings of Confucius, the Indian Vedas: yes, or even how many the Koran? And if we leave the realm of religion and ask a similar question concerning the ancient classics—we have to confess—"But very few indeed!"

We have already noted that practically all books are tied to the place of their production. There are notable exceptions. For instance, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" has been translated into over 120 languages. This, however, indirectly pays tribute to the uniqueness of the Bible for this greatest production of the immortal dreamer is based upon and draws its power from the Bible. The few exceptions forcefully prove the rule that most books are limited to the land of their origin. But in the Bible we have a collection of books for the most part written in a dead tongue for a people who now have no land and are no nation (yet remaining a distinct race), yet this collection of works is the most widely circulated and read in the world.

Other books are only of value and so limited in their appeal for some particular

PERIOD OF TIME.

They are suitable for youth, or appropriate to maturity, or helpful in old age. A glance at any publisher's advertisements will prove this point. Other works again are confined

to some particular plane of life, as, e.g., those published by the Student Volunteer Movement are mainly intended for students desiring to "follow the Christ, the King," while those issued by "The Friends of the Soviet Union" express their purpose through the name of the organization issuing them. For the most part, books are limited in their range of usefulness to the period during which the people for whom they are expressly produced live and function. But the Bible is for all ages and stages of life. There are many passages in it that deal with periods of life, as, e.g., old age in such texts as Isaiah 46:4; or Youth in i Tim. iv:12; ii Tim. 2:22; or relationships of life as when Psalm 103:13 makes special appeal to Fatherhood, and Isaiah 49:15 and 16 to Motherhood. But the fact remains that the Bible as far as I can remember nowhere specifically claims to appeal to all sorts and conditions of man-all periods of human history-yet it does that very thing.

Take one aspect of this. Leviticus was written for a particular people living on a particular plane of life at a particular period. But when we come to read the Epistle to the Hebrews we find this old-time work not tied to its time, but peculiarly helpful. Or again, read in the First Chapter of John's Gospel the appeal and challenge to "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Ask yourself: What would those who heard it think that it meant; to what in their life and knowledge would it make appeal? It would call to their minds their sacrifices, and because the verb means both "beareth" and "taketh away," i.e., to lift up so as to bear away, it would conjure up in their minds that great Day of Atonement when two spotless animals were brought before the High Priest. He placed his hands on the head of the one, confessing the sin of the people. The animal was sacrificed (slain) as their substitutionary sacrifice, and its blood was sprinkled and upon the Mercy Seat within the Veil. The High Priest then repeated the procedure with the second animal which was then led away into the wilderness to be lost-to return no more. The first illustrates "beareth," and the second "taketh away." This is in harmony with the old saying "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is by the New revealed."

PEOPLE OF PRODUCTION.

That is the people by whom and for whom it was produced. Let us look at this Oriental Book and try to visualize some of its old-time characters.

Remind yourself of the growth of the Bible, more or less corresponding to the growth and development of the race. Recall the fact that in the infancy of the race it was difficult for man to appreciate principles so that they were incorporated in practices and persons; difficult abstract truths were set forth in concrete form. The early story of the Bible is a series of character sketches. As a matter of fact we never really get away from the power of the personality of the actors and authors even when we reach the close of the canon. But what do we know of these Bible Characters? Dr. Alexander Whyte and others have given us books to aid us in seeing these great figures on history's stage as they were in their own day so that we might set them before us in our own day for our profit. But, after all, what do we know about them? They loom so large in our vision: we have known them from our youth up: Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel, Saul, David, Paul! Yet, what do we know? Was Abraham dark or fair for an Eastern man? Was Moses short and stout or lean and lanky? Were Joshua and Gideon characterised by a martial bearing? And, passing to the New Testament, had Martha (do we call her Worrying Martha?) a wrinkled brow and her sister Mary a calm, contemplative countenance? Had Peter the flashing, fiery eye that we should expect to go with his impulsive and impetuous nature? Was Judas Iscariot the cringing and contemptible creature with the hangdog expression that some of us so readily imagine him to have been? No answer to these questions comes to us from either Old or New Testaments.

If we take up a modern book it gives us a description of the characters, their faces and features and figures, and of the clothes they wore. There are purple patches descriptive of the beauties of the land in which they lived. So these characters become the creatures of time tied to their own period and place. We are given detailed, descriptive pictures of their houses and their surroundings and they are set in comparison and contrast to their compatriots and companions who are also portrayed in but lesser degree and detail. But we know nothing of these things as they concern these Bible Characters that tower above all other men on the stage of history and life.

Not the clothes they wore but the characters they bore: not their features but the relationship between God and man that they featured; these are the things that count. This lack of description of the countenance, clothes, and countries of these Biblical Characters is no mere accident. Their lives and stories are intended to teach us by way of example (cf. i Cor. 10:6, 11; Rom. 15:4, etc.). We are to form mental pictures of them suitable and applicable to our own time and need. Not their outward characteristics but their inward characters are the matters that concern us. There are no portrayals of their times; they are ours for all time. There are no detailed descriptions of their homes; we are to make them at home with us.

THIS ABSOLUTELY UNIQUE PRODUCTION WE OWE TO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL: GENERALLY REFERRED TO BY ONE BIBLICAL NAME, AS THE JEWS.

To claim that the Bible conveys timeless truth of universal application is not to affirm that there is no development. There is. The revelation was given as men were able to receive and react to it. The Old Testament is made up of "the literature of a Race!" while the New Testament records "the literature of a movement." We Christians are so apt to stress the value of the New Testament that we are equally apt, maybe sometimes unconsciously, to disparage the Old. At least, most of us are guilty of magnifying the New at the expense of the Old. Therefore "stirring up your pure minds by way of remembrance," a thrice reiterated phrase used by Peter in his epistle, I call your attention to:

THE MINISTRY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Need I remind you that it was the one Bible that Jesus had? That He used it, quoted from and based teaching upon it? (cf. Luke 24:25-27; 44-48).

Then note that Paul used it. Writing to the Corinthian Church he urged them to "purge out the old leaven" and affirmed that "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us." What would that have conveyed to his hearers, and what would it mean to us apart from the strict regulations regarding leaven, and the historical record of the Passover found in the Old Testament?

But I dwell on our use of the Old Testament. How glibly we quote John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But what of verse 14 that precedes and leads up to it? Of what value would it be to us to hearken to our Lord saying that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up "-if we had no Old Testament containing the story of the Brazen Serpent? So we stress the fact that WE USE IT. Take the Epistle to the Hebrews, originally written to and for Christian Jews of the dispersion, but so full of enriching teaching for us all based on the Old Testament. It has often been shown that we cannot enter into its fulness apart from a study of Leviticus. It is a particular application of Augustine's statement translated and paraphrased in so many and varied English couplets.

"The New is in the Old contained,
The Old is by the New explained."

The first four verses make an introductory epitome of the Epistle: "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in

these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

"Better" is used nine times and is one of the key-words of the epistle. But how could we understand the pre-eminence of Jesus over Angels, Prophets, Priests, Moses, Aaron; how respond to the fulness of a Better revelation, hope, priesthood, covenant, promises, if we had no Old Testament record of them?

As Hebrews, so Galatians was written to those who were in danger of reversion to Judaism and had to be taught the better part of "the children of faithful Abraham." What would and could that mean apart from the Old Testament contents? Of what value would that glorious galaxy of heroes and heroines of faith based on the Faithfulness of Jehovah found in Hebrews xi be to us apart from their Old Testament history?

The fact is that all the shadows and symbols and sacrifices in the Old Testament set forth the Saviour of Mankind. All the types and offerings find their fulfilment in Him. "Every word of God" leads to "the Incarnate Word." He fills all full. They are facets of one glorious gem, but His outshining far exceeds the sum-total of all their foreshadowing. He exhausts them all. Truly "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (ii Cor. 4:6). (The inner story and the greater glory of our Saviour and Sovereign Lord in the New Testament.)

And not one jot or title of all this would or could have been ours apart from the contribution of the Jews. Let us pay the debt we owe to the Jew.

IESUS: OUR SAVIOUR AND SOVEREIGN LORD.

He Himself said "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv:22). We take it for granted—JESUS WAS A JEW! But what does it mean to us? It has been said that every nation has had its contribution to make to the sum-total of the world's well-being. For the enrichment of mankind the Romans gave law; the Greeks culture, art and beauty; the Jew religion.

Jesus came to a world widely under Roman domination. Rome had given the world a common law, a common method of government, her soldiers and representatives travelled over Rome-built roads to the end of the earth. So, then, if any new movement was to be inaugurated to extend throughout the globe and exert a world-wide influence, that movement and its mover would naturally be a Roman. But Jesus was not a Roman: Jesus was a Jew!

The Greeks had given the world Art, Beauty, Culture. The great thinkers and philosophers were of the Greeks. Therefore, if any new philosophy for the enrichment of man was to be introduced and would supersede all the previous philosophical principles produced by the Greeks, it might quite naturally be taken for granted that it would emanate from a Grecian Philosopher. But Jesus was not a Greek: He was a Jew!

The Jews had never been missionary people. True, one of their number had risen to the height of praying that "God, even our own God," might bless them in order that "Thy saving health might be known unto all nations." But that was only one redeeming flash of light seen against the dark background of national selfishness and supposed superiority. Since the days of our Lord the followers of Islam have been the missionary folk. Up to His day, during it, and since the Buddhists have been the missionaries. The Jews never. But Jesus was not a Buddhist: He was a Jew!

The Religions I have just referred to all had a past—a history. The Jews had a past plus a prophecy: a history and

a future. The others all looked back: the Jews alone and in contrast to all the rest looked forward: they looked for a Coming Messiah. They were the custodians of the Word that foretold His Advent. And when He came, fulfilling that word—Jesus was a Jew!

HE CAME TO REVEAL THE ONE TRUE GOD. He came to reveal Him to a world in which there were what Paul referred to as "gods many and lords many;" to proclaim a Monotheistic Faith and to reveal the One true God. Jesus came to His own people who were characterized by Monotheism. He could begin His teaching by assuming it; not having to argue about and reason up to it. So Jesus was a Jew!

HE CAME TO ESTABLISH A KINGDOM. But He could not have taught the doctrine of the Kingdom to peoples provided with many kings. A kingdom demands a single king The Jews, over the centuries, had been taught, and by bitter experience had learned, that there was one King of kings. So, in order to establish His Kingdom, Jesus was a Jew!

HE CAME TO REVEAL THE FATHER. Even had the faiths of the world had fathers of their faiths they would have necessarily had many. But the concept was foreign to their thinking and philosophy. It was latent and sometimes patent in the past of the Jews. So Jesus was a Jew!

HE CAME WITH THE GLAD AND GLORIOUS NEWS OF GOD'S RECONCILIATION TO MAN: to teach and induce men to be reconciled to God. But men never could have been reconciled to many gods and no one could have attempted to teach such a manifold reconciliation. So Jesus was a Jew!

WHAT A DEBT WE OWE TO THE JEW!

His Coming provided a fulfilment of and gave a fulness to Prophecy.

In Micah v. 2 there is a prophetic word given seven centuries before the birth of Christ: "But Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of

old, from everlasting." Even the most modernistic critic, in what would be styled an up-to-date commentary, has described this verse as dealing with "Messianic anticipation." But what likelihood was there of such a thing happening? Reading the Old Testament, consulting historical records, we learn that Palestine had been conquered, the Jews captured and scattered throughout other lands, and that foreigners had come to reside in the land formerly occupied by the children of Israel. How, then, could Jesus be born in Judah, and, moreover, in a particular little community so small and insignificant that it had to be distinguished from two other places carrying the same name by a second name—Ephratah?

But God caused the Persian to succeed the Babylonish King Cyrus of Persia was in complete control. Surely he was the last person who would be expected to make it possible for the Jews to return to Palestine so that Jesus might be born there! Yet God had predicted that Cyrus would reverse the decree and restore the Jews to Palestine: in general terms in Jeremiah 29:10; then more particularly in chapter thirty, verses ten and eleven; but most positively in chapter thirty-three, verses seven to fourteen. But the most astounding passage is at the end of chapter forty-four and the beginning of chapter forty-five of Isaiah's prophecy, which was given more than a century before Cyrus was born, yet called him by name. But how could this be done? The answer is found in two records: ii Chronicles 36:22, 23; and Ezra 1:1-4. Cyrus, King of Persia, for no accountable human reason issued a decree that the Jews should return to Palestine and that those who did not desire to do so should give material help to those who, in fulfilment of the decree, returned to the Promised Land. This is only explicable by divine prompting and power, which can only be explained as the fulfilment of prophecy in the terms used in the records referred to: "Now in the first year of Cyrus King of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus King of Persia."

So the Jews returned to Judah and occupied the region surrounding Bethlehem Ephratah. Now we begin again with the little Book of Ruth, in which we read that Elimelech, a native of Bethlehem-Ephratah, because there was a shortage of food decided that he would take his wife and his two sons down to the land of Moab, where apparently there was plenty. The two sons went the way of all flesh and married two Moabitish women. In due time the three men went the way of all flesh and died, leaving behind three widows. Then Elimelech's widow, Naomi, informed her two daughters-in-law that she was returning to her homeland and town. They decided to go with her, but one, Orpah, returned while Ruth continued until she met a kinsman of hers named Boaz of Bethlehem, and the ultimate issue was Jesus of the house of David and of the tribe of Judah. But we do not call Him "Iesus of Bethlehem." In three-quarters of a century I have never heard anyone give Him that title. We always call Him "Jesus of Nazareth." Why? Luke 4:16 will do as well as any other passage, for it states that "He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up, and as His custom was, He went up into the synagogue on the sabbath day."

Well, how did He get from Nazareth to Bethlehem, or Bethlehem to Nazareth? I can remember when scholarly critics were rather contemptuous of conservative Christians who believed in the record of the Historian Luke in chapter 2 and the opening verses. They claimed that it conflicted with secular history, though why those who profess and call themselves Christians when it comes to a divergence between secular and sacred history take it for granted that the secular history must be right and therefore the Bible wrong, puzzles me! But what Luke records actually happened. Caesar Augustus had issued a decree that all the world should be enrolled. The Jews objected for reasons found in the Old Testament. The Roman governor of Syria was not competent to deal with their objection that they should not have their census taken. He therefore referred the matter to Rome, and it took four years before the answer could reach Palestine. The Roman Emperor rejected the petition and this resulted in the Jews having their census taken four years later than the rest of the inhabitants of the Roman world. Sir William Ramsay discovered this as the result of his own personal research work in Asia, and now this opening paragraph in Luke 2 is the Waterloo of the sceptical scholars and the Gibraltar of the Christian Church.

Now we have to start again, for there was a humble carpenter named Joseph, whose birthplace was Bethlehem-Ephratah. According to the customs and methods of those days, a member of a family had to go to the family head-quarters to make his census returns. So Joseph went to Bethlehem accompanied by his espoused wife, great with child. She was overtaken with pain and gave birth to her Babe in the cave beneath the Khan in Bethlehem-Ephratah. So God controlled empires and emperors and governors and priests and leaders to take the people back to their own land; a family and the individuals thereof, and then a Roman Emperor and governor and a carpenter and his espoused wife, all to bring to fulfilment His word given 750 years before, that He who was to be the Leader of God's people Israel should be born in Bethlehem-Ephratah.

This assurance of the reliability of God's Word; this confidence in fulfilment of prophecy is yet another debt we owe to the Jew!

And, finally, and briefly because of considerations of space, the debt we owe to the Jew includes the penning of most of the New Testament, the Gospel which historically came "to the Jew first," the Church and its beginnings as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. While giving all glory to God and rejoicing in the Sovereign and Divine aspect of the theme, from the purely human angle we are "shut up" logically to the admission that, apart from the Jew, these glorious things would never have been ours. Our Lord came primarily to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Pentecost, the formation of the Church, the proclamation of the Evangel, the early expansion of the Church, all came to "the Jew first."

What a debt we owe to the Jew! With Paul of old may we each and all say in sincerity and act in service in harmony therewith—

"I am debtor"

"I am ready"

to prayerfully and carefully and consecratedly to pay my debt.

THE AUTHOR

of this booklet is a world-wide traveller, lecturer, Bible teacher and Conference speaker. During recent years in North America he has ministered at the Moody Bible Institute Founder's Week (three years); Montrose Ministerial Institute (three years); three Conferences at the American Keswick, more frequently at the Canadian Keswick; at Erieside; Atlantic City Boardwalk; Medicine Lake; Winona Lake and other Conferences. He has preached in leading pulpits such as Calvary Baptist, New York; Church of the Open Door, Los Angeles; Moody Memorial Church, Chicago; for Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse, Philadelphia, etc. He is now in the British Isles (1946) and visiting Europe for the rehabilitation of R.M.S. Ministry. "If the Lord tarry" he will (D.V.) be in North America during 1947 and in Australia and New Zealand from January, 1948, for six months.

His services are available without financial stipulation, either with or without reference to the work of the Russian Missionary Society, Inc., of which he is the International Secretary, and into the Treasury of which he pays all fees and the profits from the sale of his books.

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