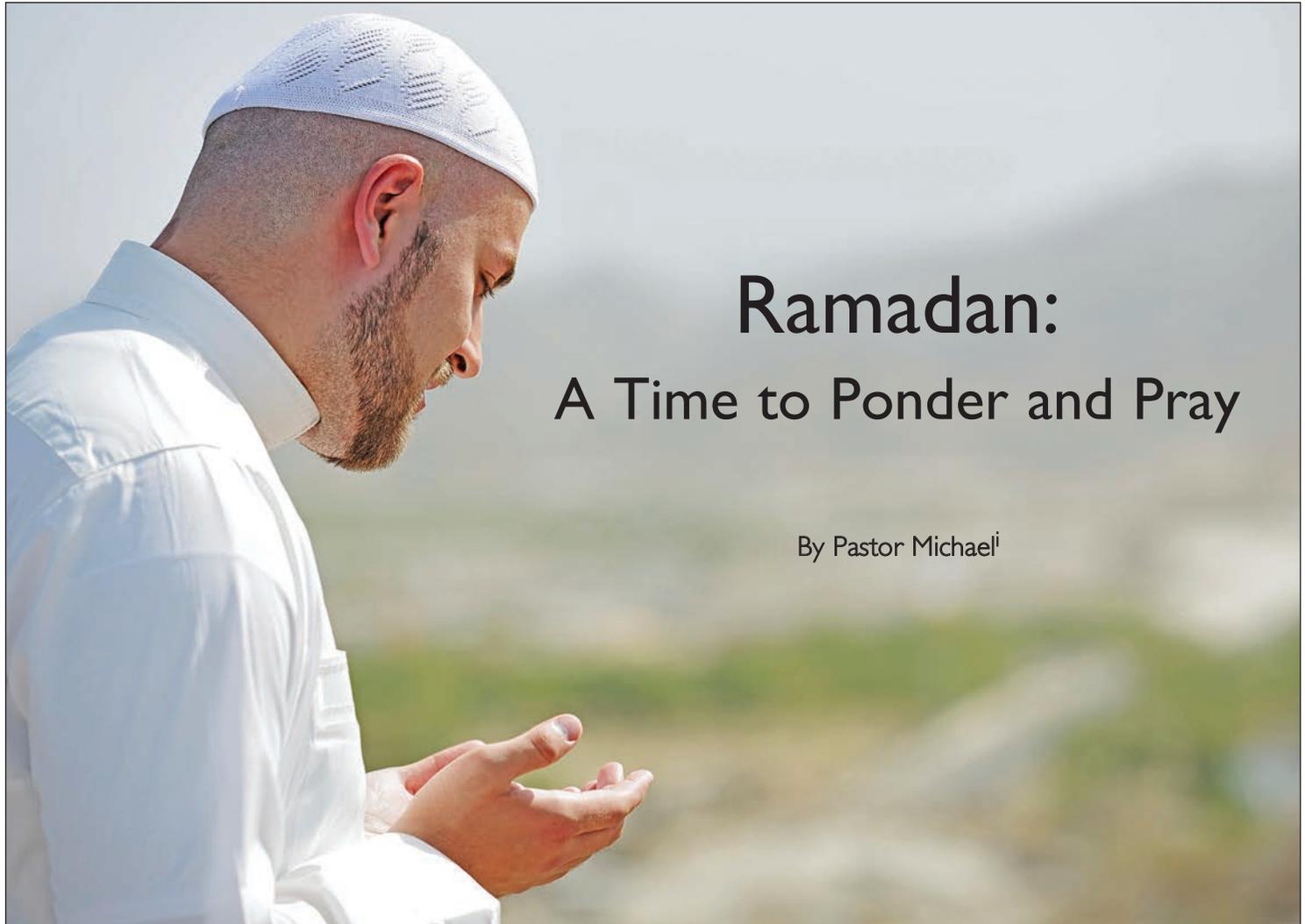


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Ramadan: A Time to Ponder and Pray

By Pastor Michaelⁱ

“It was the month of Ramadan and the time of *Tarabi*ⁱⁱ prayers,” says Rafiqueⁱⁱⁱ. “I had been fasting for more than three weeks and tonight was the special night called *Lailat-ul-Qadr*^{iv}, the night of a thousand nights to seek the special blessings of Allah. I was sitting lined up and ready to begin my prayers. I looked to see the imam who was going to lead the prayers that night, but found that none was in front. While I was in a trance-like state of consciousness, I wondered in my mind, ‘We are all ready for prayers, but where is the imam who will lead us?’”

“Someone from the crowd put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Look behind you.’ When I turned back to look I saw a bright white light shining which almost blinded me —

and a figure with dazzling clothes spoke to me saying, ‘Rafique, I am Jesus, your leader, follow me!’ As soon as I saw Him, I knew it was the Lord and that was the turning point in my life. I left it all and followed Him.”

I had the privilege of teaching and baptizing Rafique — and today he is a strong disciple of the Lord Jesus, still following Him. Like Rafique, there are millions of sincere Muslims who earnestly pray and seek the special favor and blessings of Allah during the month of Ramadan.

The month of Ramadan bears high significance in the life of a Muslim. Fasting is one of the pillars of Islam and Ramadan is the dedicated month set aside to bring cleansing

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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Hausfeld
International Director
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



For nearly one month of the year around 3:30 a.m., a man would walk through our neighborhood in Islamabad, Pakistan, rhythmically and loudly tapping a metal ladle on the bottom of a tin pan. He took it upon himself to wake up faithful Muslims to begin preparations for breakfast before the sun broke the edge of night. Once daybreak officially begins during the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims are not to eat any food, drink beverages, smoke cigarettes or engage in sexual activity. Except for breathing, nothing can enter any bodily orifice. One friend of mine would not bathe during the daylight hours lest some water enter his ear and thus break the fast.

The month of Ramadan is a highly spiritual time for Muslims. According to Islamic tradition, during Ramadan,

their holy book — the Quran — was recited to the prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel. As you will read in Pastor Michael's article, it is a time that leaves Muslims empty of the Truth. Why? The Quran is “another gospel”, void of that which leads to abundant life on this earth and eternal life in Heaven.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Galatia: *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel — which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!* (Gal. 1:6-8)

Muslims believe in “another gospel” that came from “an angel” — falsely identified by Islam as the angel Gabriel. We cannot leave Muslim peoples locally and globally at this point of counterfeit truth. Why? Because every Muslim must know the Truth about Jesus.

Every evening in Pakistan during Ramadan, after the sun had dipped below the western horizon, a cannon would be fired to inform the *Ummah* (Muslim community) that food and drink could be received, and life could be normal again. This was a time when questions rang in my ear. Did participation in the rigid discipline of Ramadan ensure a place in eternity? Did true reconciliation with God occur? Was sin dealt with? And the obvious biblical answer to each question was “No.”

As you read Pastor Michael's article, rejoice in the powerful testimony of Rafique. This story exemplifies the hope and reality that Ramadan can be a means to the end of leading spiritually hungry Muslim persons to actual faith in Christ. Even in the midst of Ramadan the Holy Spirit can break through and reveal to them the truth about Jesus! Instead of seeking God's forgiveness through fasting, prayer and good works, may Muslims discover that God has paid the price for their sins through the blood of His Son Jesus.



Muslim World News



Christians targeted in college attack

Somalia

On April 2, 2015, Somalia's al-Shabab militants shot and killed more than 147 people, wounded dozens of others and held hundreds hostage at Garissa University College in northeastern Kenya.

The gunmen reportedly arrived at the university at 5:30 a.m., killed the guards at the gate and began shooting indiscriminately before taking hundreds of students hostage. The Kenyan military tried to end the siege and rescued hundreds of the hostages during a shootout.

Most of the hostages were believed to be Christians. More than 80 percent of Kenyans are Christian. But in northeastern Kenya, nearly 90 percent are Muslim.

The Muslim militant group al-Shabab took responsibility for the attack and confirmed it had taken non-Muslims hostage. "When our men arrived, they released Muslims. We are holding others hostage," *AFP* quoted Ali Mohamud Rage, an al-Shabab spokesman, as saying.

In December 2014, 64 Christians were killed in Mandera town, further north of Garissa, in two separate incidents. The gunmen spared Muslims but shot Christians at close range. In September 2013, al-Shabab attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, killing 67 people and wounding 175. Those who could recite the Quran were spared. Al-Shabab was launched in Somalia in 2006 with the aim of establishing a government led by Shariah. Recently, it spread in East Africa, establishing networks across the region. — *RNS*

Five children arrested for blasphemy

Egypt

Five Egyptian Christian children have been arrested for making a prayer video, which angry Muslim mobs deemed blasphemous because they were seen making fun of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) with their

Coptic teacher, who was earlier arrested. Their teacher was detained for four days but the children weren't, so Muslim mobs stormed their houses in Minya village of Nasreya and threw rocks in order to prompt their parents to hand over the children to authorities, which they later did.

Mina Thabet, a Coptic activist and researcher at the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms, told *Fox News* that apart from the five children, there are a lot more Christians who have been victimized by Muslim assaults. "We have five Coptic children charged with blasphemy and insulting Islam. We still have other open cases where Christians are charged with inciting violence as if they were the perpetrators, but where they were the victims." — *Christian Today*

Controversy over Quran-shaped cake

Turkey

Turkey's top religious body, the Diyanet, has opened an investigation over a Quran-shaped cake made by a Quran class in the Black Sea province of Tokat in 2013, stating that the cake did not comply with the spirit of the birth of Muhammad and the Quran.

The Diyanet denounced the cake as "unacceptable," even if it had been prepared by Quran course students. — *Hurriyet Daily News*

Man killed for insulting Muhammad

Somalia

Al-Shabab has publicly executed a man for "insulting the prophet Muhammed", witnesses have told the BBC. Crowds watched as the man was shot by a firing squad in the southern town of Jamame in the Lower Juba region.

A BBC Somali service reporter says al-Shabab have previously killed people accused of spying or apostasy. Witnesses say that the man was shot by firing squad after he pleaded guilty in a Sharia court trial. — *BBC*

Ramadan: A Time to

Continued from

and nearness to God. All Muslims believe that their Holy Book was revealed to their prophet in this holy month.

The Arabic word for fasting is *sawm* which literally means to “abstain or refrain.” During Ramadan a good practicing Muslim not only abstains from food and drink, but also from all thoughts of evil in words and deeds.

Muslims believe God places high importance on fasting in this month. In the Islamic collections of the sayings of their prophet, Muhammad once quoted Allah as saying, "Allah, the Mighty and Exalted said, 'Every action of the son of Adam is for himself except fasting, for that is sole-



ly for Me. I give the reward for it.” Therefore Muslims observe the month of Ramadan zealously and with religious fervency because they believe they are fasting for God and that He will reward their good deed.

In the month of Ramadan Muslims become serious about their *iman* (faith) and seek Allah with the hope of forgiveness and cleansing of their sins. Not every Muslim observes the fast for the whole month. Some may fast for a few days at a time; others are exempt from fasting due to various health problems or other valid reasons.

My early memory as a former Muslim — who was dedicated to fasting at the early age of eight or nine — is how sincerely and religiously I fasted for the whole month of Ramadan. I faithfully prayed five times a day, then did special *Tarabi* prayers which included recitation of the whole Quran within a period of 27 days. I did not fully understand the true significance of this month, but did it because Allah would be pleased and reward me, and per-

haps take me to heaven. I must admit that a wonderful part of each day was rising up early before dawn as the whole family got together to eat special food to sustain us throughout the day. The time of breaking the fast at the end of each day was even better. We got to eat choice foods with friends and family, both in our home and through invitations to *iftar* (breaking of the fast) parties. We fulfilled God's requirement and equally managed to enjoy special times with friends and family.

In many predominantly Muslim nations much of the normal activity and official work slows down during this month. Under the burden of fasting and the heat of the day, some may lose their tempers, and some wish to impress on others the fact that they are fasting. Others pretend to be good while eating behind shutters put on in different eateries. But I also recognize that within all the pretensions and religiosity, there is a form of devotion unleashed which is unparalleled by any other time of the Muslim year. Despite all the rituals, a serious quest for something more of God is sought after during this month. Muslims are sincere in desiring to seek the favor and merits of Allah.

The Church has a tendency to look down on many Muslims during these times and consider their Ramadan practices as a false front. But I would like to challenge the Church to look within and see how much of their own year is spent in fasting, coupled with prayer. I believe the Church needs to seriously pray and seek the Lord in this month for themselves, as well as for all their Muslim friends and neighbors. I believe the Church has a special God-given role to live up to in this month of Ramadan.

Whatever the reasons Muslims may have for fasting, and whatever our perception may be of their fasting, the month of Ramadan reminds us that there is a sincere, God-fearing group of Muslims who are earnestly seeking to find divine mercy, grace, and a hope for their eternity. We hear of so many testimonies from former Muslims that it was in the month of Ramadan that their spiritual journey towards Jesus began. Some received dreams and revelations, while others read something in their own scriptures only to be confirmed from the authority of the Bible. It is all happening in this month again.

Sometimes the Church is like Simon Peter when he had resigned himself to the fact that Gentiles were not in

to Ponder and Pray

from Page 1



God's plan of salvation. But it was in Acts 10 when Peter was fasting and praying on the roof — that God gave him a special vision. God revealed to him that the Gentiles were very much a part of His plan of salvation. We must also remember that at the same time as God was preparing Peter, He was also providing a revelation to a Gentile called Cornelius. Cornelius was a devout and godly man without knowing the True God. While praying God gave him a vision to send for Peter, and it was Peter who brought to him the powerful life-changing gospel of grace. God in His mercy had prepared both Peter to go — and Cornelius to receive — at about the same time.

God is gracious to Muslims. I see Cornelius as a type of a good Muslim, praying, fasting, giving alms to the poor during the month of Ramadan; then God in His mercy breaks through and reveals the straight way to Truth. Are the 'Simon Peters' in the Church ready to accept the invitation and do something for the salvation of Muslims during this time of Ramadan? If so, what can we do? How can we serve them in this month? How can we

make this month a spiritually uplifting month, both for ourselves and our churches?

First of all, set aside designated days during the month for times of prayer and fasting. Pray that the Lord will give you a love and burden for Muslims. Pray for many Muslims like 'Rafique,' that the Lord will give them a special vision, dream or revelation. There are millions of them who will line up for prayers in this month. Also ask the Lord to put on your heart specific Muslim nations — for whom you can intercede.

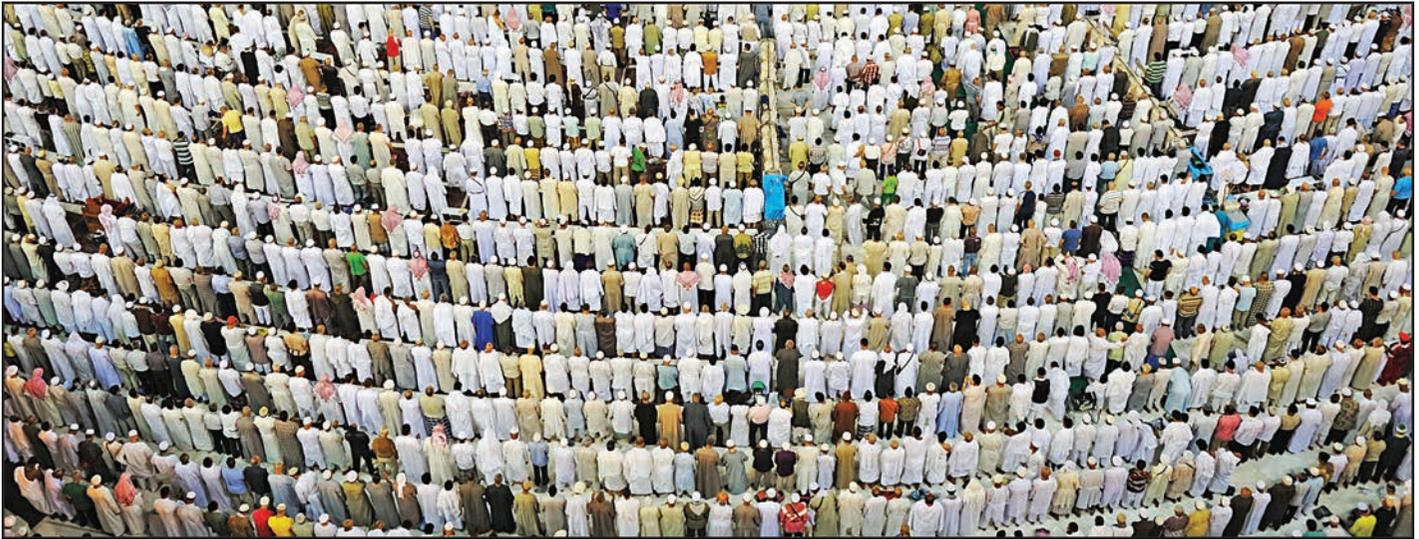
Second, make some friends from among them. They are desperately in need of your relationship. Sharing the gospel with Muslims is best served within the realms of a vibrant relationship.

Third, respect their celebration at this time. Do not look down on them. Be sensitive to their traditions. It is in respecting them and what they believe that we build a

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Ramadan: A Time to Ponder and Pray

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bridge that will allow them to open themselves up to the truth that we have to offer.

Remember that Muslims derive their lineage from Ishmael; a name that means “God hears”. In Genesis 21:17 we read “God heard the boy crying” — and God sent an angel to guide him. In Verse 19 we are reminded that God opened the eyes of his mother to see the provision of living water that God had made for Ishmael. I believe the children of Ishmael will be crying out to the Lord during Ramadan, seeking favor from God. As the Church prays for them, our loving God will hear their cry and send a word or revelation to them in answer to our prayers. God will open their eyes and let them see the provision that He has made for them through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Muslims address God as *Rahman-ur-Rahim* (the Merciful and Compassionate) in every prayer they pray throughout the month of Ramadan. I believe the Merciful God will bestow His undeserved grace and mercy on them. God loves Muslims and He is more interested to reveal the truth to them than we ever will be. It is our privilege to partner with Him in reaching out to the Children of Ishmael. Let us do our part! 

- i Pastor Michael is a shepherd to many in a Muslim nation.*
- ii Tarabi or Tarawi — refers to the special prayers performed during the 27th night of Ramadan.*
- iii Rafique is a pseudonym.*
- iv The 27th night of Ramadan, when Muslims believe the Quran, their holy book, was bestowed upon Muhammad.*

Prayer Profile: Shuwa Arabs — Chad



The nearly 2 million Shuwa Arabs are a cluster of nomadic tribes related to the Baggara of Sudan. Though concentrated around Lake Chad, they migrate throughout the Eastern Sahel desert region. Their unique dialect is Chadian Arabic. The Shuwa are Sunni Muslims, and most participate in the Tijaniyya Sufi brotherhood. At least four mission agencies now work among them; still the Shuwas are 99.9% Muslim.

1. Pray for discipleship training efforts among the few Shuwa believers.
2. Pray for Shuwa leaders to be raised up.
3. Pray for the handful of missionaries who labor to reach the Shuwa.



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Friday, July 3, 2015. Please pray

...for seeking **Muslims**, who are in the midst of Ramadan, which began on June 17 and ends July 17.
...for **Iraqi and Syrian Christians** experiencing unspeakable persecution at the hands of ISIS.
...for **Global Initiative equipping classes** at a U.S. seminary, which began June 29 and end July 10.

Friday, July 10, 2015. Please pray

...for **Muslims** as they continue their daylight fast during Ramadan.
...for **Yemen**; 99.6% of its 25 million people are Muslims. A sectarian war has generated chaos for millions of innocent people.
...for **Dr. Ali** (a pseudonym), a Shia medical doctor who is seriously considering Jesus as Savior.

Friday, July 17, 2015. Please pray

...for **Muslims in the midst of Eid ul-Fitr** (breaking of the fast) celebrations, closing the Ramadan month of fasting.
...for **Say Hello ministries** as they inspire Christian women to engage Muslim women.
...for **“the seed to bear fruit”** as a result of Global Initiative training programs in Asia and Central America.

Friday, July 24, 2015. Please pray

...for the **large number of Romanian missionaries** who minister in Muslim countries.
...for a **harvest** among Muslims in Pakistan; 98.6% of its 186 million people are Muslims.
...for the **youth of Iran**. Under-30s make up 55% of the population of 78 million; 98.7% Muslim.

Friday, July 31, 2015. Please pray

...for **Christian witness in Afghanistan**, a country with no public churches. 99.8% of its 32 million people are Muslims.
...for **compassion ministries to Muslim refugees**. By far, Muslims constitute the largest number of refugees in the world.
...for **Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples leadership** as they engage key pastors and leaders during early August in Orlando, Fla.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



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Friday, August 7, 2015. Please pray

...for SAT-7 TV, broadcasting programs in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish across 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

...for Latino missions groups who are increasing their missions efforts in Muslim countries.

...for the country of Brunei; 66% of its 420,000 people are Muslims. The government faces increasing influence from Islamic extremists.

Friday, August 14, 2015. Please pray

...for church planting efforts among Muslim Unreached People Groups in northern India. Most of India's 150 million Muslims live in the north.

...for the many Christians from Muslim backgrounds in Bangladesh who face discrimination and persecution. Bangladesh has 158 million people; 88.5% are Muslim.

...for Christians groups who are witnessing to the 300,000 Muslims in Australia.

Friday, August 21, 2015. Please pray

...for outreaches to Muslims in London, England. 1 million of London's 11 million residents are Muslims. Greater London has 700 mosques.

...for recently arrived Muslims in the West. Pray that the Church will effectively engage them with the gospel.

...for Azerbaijan; 83% of its 8 million people are Muslims.

Friday, August 28, 2015. Please pray

...for the Institute of Islamic Studies in Brussels, Belgium during Aug. 31 - Sept. 11.

...for Global Initiative team members who will conduct an Institute of Islamic Studies for the Andean Area of South America during Aug. 31 - Sept. 11.

...for outreaches to diaspora Muslims in the Netherlands. 1 million of the Netherlands' 16.8 million people are Muslims, served by 400 mosques.

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