

hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 19 Jul 2011 04:33

I've been lurking here for a couple of months, and now it's time to introduce myself and share my story. I first would like to express my Hakoras Hatov to Hashem for giving me a second chance, and for leading me to GYE when I needed it most. Also my thanks to all of you here, who through your stories and struggles have inspired me to hang on when times are tough, and to strive to become the person that Hashem really wants me to be.

i apologize if this is a bit long-winded but I am not such a good writer and I have a lot to get off my chest. I also apologize to the mods if i get too graphic and you have to edit. So here goes....

I am in my 40's, what you would call a "working yeshivishe ben torah", grew up in a small frum community, went to the "best" yeshivas, and I am B"H married with a bunch of kids K"AH. That's what everyone sees and thinks..... they don't know about my dark, secret life.

I have been struggling with SSA since my teens. Actually "struggling" is the wrong word, because until recently I was just wallowing in it. B"H I never went as far as doing it with another person, though not from lack of wanting. My natural shyness saved me many times from following through when situations presented themselves. But the looking, the fantasies, the WANTING, and the acting out with myself totally consumed my life and made me miserable even as i was enjoying the momentary pleasures.

I grew up in a small town with very few other boys my age. I am a loner type and very shy and I really didn't have friends. At Bar Mitzva age I was sent out of town to Yeshiva as there was no Yeshiva high school where I lived. I found myself even more isolated there, as most of the other boys had come in groups from larger schools and had their own circles of friends.

I had always "played with myself" even at a very young age. I had no idea what it meant or that it was wrong, just that it felt good. I guess i began using it to soothe myself more and more. At the same time, as my body matured, I found myself fascinated more and more with looking at the other boys how they were developing. I had barely any idea what sex was at that point, and surely did not even know that there was such a thing as homosexuality. I attributed my fascination to "scientific curiosity".

At some point around the age of 15, I did MZ"L for the first time, also out of "curiosity". I cannot even begin to describe the way it was immediately addicting, probably like a first hit of cocaine (I have never done drugs). I am sure all of us here know what I am talking about. before i knew it I was doing it every chance I got, even 2-3 times a day. As I got older I realized that I was fantasizing about the other boys while I did it, and I began to realize that i had a "problem". But I couldn't stop, and there was nobody i felt close enough to talk to. So I went through life walking the walk and talking the talk, while in secret i wallowed in my sick fantasies. I learned, davened and did mitzvos, and most of the time I even believed in it, even as I knew deep inside that it was all a show and I couldn't tell anyone about what was eating me up. I would cry on Yom Kippur, promising to be good, while knowing full well that the Yetzer Hora was waiting right outside the Bais Medrash door and i probably wouldn't make it 12 hours before i did it again.

There were times when I got into situations with friends who i think had similar desires. We would be together alone and we each knew the other one wanted it. Once a friend was telling me about his bodybuilding and wanted me to feel how hard his stomach muscles were. I knew what he really wanted, and he knew that I wanted it too. My hand was literally inches from that first contact with another boy's skin. But I couldn't bring myself to make that final move. I don't know what held me back but i knew that if I took that step there was no going back. I remember literally shaking from the tension and the desire, but I pulled my hand back and said no. For years later I would fantasize about what might have been, what could have happened. Now I look back and am comforted that even at my lowest moments i still had some self control (maybe it was just shyness but it saved me from going all the way over the edge).

I got older and began to date, but my heart wasn't in it and it really didn't go anywhere. I am attracted to women also so that was not a problem. I just couldn't "connect" with anyone.

Then I met my wife. From our first phone call it just "clicked". We got married and have a great relationship and a bunch of kids. I hoped that when i got married my 'problem' would go away. I actually stayed "clean" for almost a whole year, but then i fell right back in. My mistake was that I only stopped doing MZ"L, but would still gaze at every boy I saw, fantasize, and mast***** but without MZ"L. I quickly discovered that there's no halfway, but I could not stop and fell back in. This went on for years, I would stop MZ"L for a few weeks or even a couple of months, and then flop right back into the mud.

Then I discovered the internet! first it was just some pictures, but more recently I found all the "goodies" that are available. Now I had even more material to satisfy my fantasies and cravings. I began to secretly look at g** po** more and more. as time went on i got bolder, even looking at it while my wife was in the next room. (I work in IT so I know how to cover my tracks). She still had no idea.

As I sank deeper into my "alternate reality" I would begin to think and question where I really belong. I felt like I was living a lie (I WAS living a lie, i just wan't sure which one). There were times when I would feel like an outsider waching myself acting in a play, davening, learning, raising my kids to be good Yidden, all the while knowing that i couldn't REALLY believe in it if i was acting the way i was. i began to identify myself in my mind as g*y, wondering if I really belonged in the community where i lived. I wondered if Hashem really knew and cared, if He was really there and didn't want me to be like this why did He play such a nasty trick on me and make me this way....(vlo sosuru....zu haminus). I couldn't take the conflict in my head and wanted out. There were times when i contemplated running away and joining "them", and even considered ending it all....

But Hashem sends the refuah not before the Makkah, but IN the makkah itself. I eventually was compelled to break free...

This past winter I discovered what to me was the most destructive form of porn. Stories. I found a site with literally thousands of stories of boys having relationships. Not just s*x, but friendship and romance. A video is just fun while you see it, and you can only watch it so many times before it gets boring. A story makes you think, and you get emotionally involved with the characters. The stories are serials, with a new chapter added evey few days. I would be checking 10 times a day to see what was new. I found myself getting so caught up in them emotionally that it started to affect my daily life.

I also started to realize that as I was getting older, my fantasies were becoming less likely to be fulfilled, what teenager was going to do anything with a guy old enough to be their father? This just increased my sense of emotional desperation. I realized that I was yearning for the friendships i had never had in my youth, and sexualizing them because I had no proper frame of reference due to my stunted social development. I was turning into an emotional train wreck, and that just made me act out even more.

Then hashem started sending me messages, things that would open up my feelings in ways I had never experienced. For a year or 2 now i have started occasionally davening in another shul, wher they daven with intensity and feeling. I thin my own davening started to improve then, and hashem hears it when it comes from the heart even when we don't deserve it....

There are 2 boys in the shul that I daven in that are extremely close friends for years. One in particular was a big "trigger" for me and i fantasized about him all the time. I always imagined

that the 2 of them had "something going" (i hope it's not true, I'd hate for them to suffer like this). This past year they went out of town to separate yeshivas and did not see each other for six months. i was in Shul the shabbos before Pesach when they greeted each other after their long separation. They hugged like brothers, and I burst into tears. I never had a FRIEND like that, that I could hug in public. I never felt more alone then in that moment.

Then over Pesach I had a terrible dream. i dreamt that I had a close friend that I had not seen in many years. he was on his way to meet me , and was killed in a car crash. I woke up sobbing, and could barely make it through davening that morning. I couldn't figure out at the time why i affected me that badly, but it was all the accumulated emotional junk starting to bleed out of me. Then by Birchas Kohanim, where we daven for Hashem to heal our dreamd, i totally broke down. i cried, i'm not even sure what i cried FOR. I just cried in pain. I knew i was a hopeless mess and at that moment, i knew that only Hashem could fix me.

At that moment I felt a calmness and resolve rest upon me. i knew that I must do whatever it takes to bring the two halves of my life together. I realized that i have to do something so shocking to me, that i would be forced to completely change my life. i resolved to "come out" to my wife and tell her everything, and take the consequences as they came. At that point I wasn't even thinking about doing teshuva, just to stop living in secret and to take whichever path presented itself. i was prepared for the ultimate rejection. I don't know where i would have gone or what i would have done if that happened, but i couldnt survive anymore with what had been bottled up inside me for so long.

So that firs Motzoei Shabbos after Pesach, i sat down with my wonderful wife and said "I have something to tell you about myself that i have been hiding from you all these years.....I'm gay.....". Her reaction stunned me; "That's not so bad, we will work on fixing it together". In that instant i knew it would be OK. I shared everything with her, all the desperation, all the filth, all the loneliness, all the hopeless yearning for things that cannot and will not be.

We resolved together to work on making it right. The very first thing we did was to install K9 on every computer in the house. From that moment on I have not MZ"L, I have not mast**** (except one slip recently), and I have not looked at porn (with one exception). I promised that any slips i would tell her immediately, and that I would see a therapist. I began from then on to daven with kavana and with tears, begging Hashem to give me the strength to hold on and continue, and to fight the Yetzer Hora for me because I cannot do it alone.

The first weeks were sheer hell. Just like starting was like a drug, stopping was like a physical withdrawal. i walked around in a daze, shaking from tension. i committed to making an effort not

to look and not to fantasize, but it's not that easy. My triggers are EVERYWHERE, in the street, in the store, in shul, at work (don't even mention the mikva). i don't even have a mechitza to hide behind. I constantly have to force myself to look away. i was literally whimpering with the desire for another look, another trigger to release that good feeling in my head. It's a little easier now, but still a constant struggle.

I had finally acknowledged that I am "gay" and i felt totally disconnected from reality. I would play with my kids in the yard and think to myself "What is this gay guy doing here, i don't belong here". My wife quickly set me straight (pun intended) on that one "You are not gay, you are a yid with a strange and powerful yetzer hora and you are finally fighting it!". I eventually realized that rejecting the label was one of the most important steps in recovery.

I also met with a frum therapist who deals with these issues. He helped me to understand how certain issues from my childhood cause the stunted social development that leads to this problem, and gave me some tips how to control and redirect my thoughts away from the dangerous fantasies.

Sometime during that first desperate week, ~~i discovered~~ Hashem led me to GYE. I had seen the ads before, and I always thought it was for a filtering service like JNet or Yeshivanet, which i was subconsciously resisting because i didn't want to lose access to my precious secret world... But then i was on another website, one that often mocks practices of the frum community. They had a post making fun of the GYE handbook (specifically the "rubberband snapping" thing). The post actually had a link back to the GYE handbook, and i was curious so i clicked it. It was like being transported to a new planet. Suddenly i was not alone anymore, there were so many others who were struggling with similar issues AND SUCCEEDING. I spent hours reading the handbook and browsing the forums, and got tremendous chizuk from it. I even discovered that i was not the only SSA addict out there, and that it can be successfully suppressed.

The entire secular culture is obsessed right now with being "Born This Way" and that it can't be changed and you should just "be yourself" and "it gets better" etc. as much as we strive to separate ourselves from the Goyish attitudes it seeps in like a poison and in moments of self-doubt the Yetzer Hora tries to convince us that they are really right. My weapon is to turn the slogans against them and use it to my own advantage. Yes i was "Born This Way", a member of Hashem's Chosen People, tasked with the mission of spreading His light in a world bent on ignoring Him. we each have our own mission and our own fight, and I have been tasked with a special job. I have a special and unique Yetzer Hora to fight, and although I was held captive by the enemy for 30 years, i have now escaped and i am fighting back! With sweat and tears (lots of tears) I try every day to resist the temptations placed in front of my eyes and the fantasies that linger in my mind. Eventually "It Gets Better", when the desires will fade away with time and it will be easier to resist. i know that just like I will have to pay and burn for each time I don't look away fast enough, so too i will receive infinite reward for each time I resist the urge for a second look, and each time i suppress the fantasies that constantly try to creep into my head.

I mentioned before that there was one exception to stopping to look at porn, and that was the stories (i found a way around the filter for those). I just couldn't. I needed that fix of knowing what happens next. For few weeks I unsuccessfully tried to quit, I would manage a day or 2 then I fell in again. I wasn't even interested in the s*x parts, just the storyline and the emotional buildup. But i knew it had to stop. Then one day i told myself "Enough! if you are serious about this there are no halfways anymore!" i went to Maariv that night and it was the 37th day of the Omer. The sefira of Gevura ShebYesod. I realized "that's what we are all about, Gevura, Kovesh es Yitzro, in the midda of Yesod, of self-control". I resolved that that day would be my personal Yom Kippur of sorts. I davened like never before, and promised that I would never go there again. B"H so far I have been successful. Hence my screen name.

I stayed clean until last friday. Then in the shower i suddenly found myself mast*** I stopped before anything worse happened, but i feell like i was teetering on the edge of a cliff. Then on shabbos i had fantasy dreams which i had not had in a long time. When i have these dreams they are so real that i experience every sensation. many times I would wake up wet, this time B"H I did not. but I need to strengthen myself over again. The events of the past week have affected me terribly and have left me emotionally drained, and maybe that's what made me vulnerable and in need of "soothing".

So here I am, trying to stay clean and to clear the bad thoughts from my head. It has its ups and

Once again I would like to thank all of you here on GYE who have shared your stories and your struggles, especially those of you who share my particular "flavor" of addiction. The chizuk i get from seeing how everyone encourages each other to get up and start again really inspired me in my darkest moments. Thank You.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by alexeliezer - 20 Feb 2012 15:53

It is sobering to hear how close to the edge we live, even when we may think and feel comfortable and secure in our sobriety. Which is why, every day, every time, we don't give in to lust "just this once."

I respect your referring to this as a fall, especially since it did open things back up for you. I'm not going to argue back and forth, but I would call this a bad slip (and a good lesson), and not a reason to reset the count. At the end of the day you turned it around. So the work you've done all these months was there for you.

But really, as you know, this is not a numbers game. It's not about counts, about 90 or any other number. It's about a commitment to a life without lust.

You're still my hero!

Alex

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 20 Feb 2012 16:18

After i did it the first time, I was debating with myself whether I needed to report it. I know it's sort of a gray area of the rules. But when I did it a second time I knew I had to count it as a real fall, because if I didn't I would be Moreh Heter to keep on doing it, and a full fall would not be far behind.

Being "comfortable and secure in our sobriety" is the most dangerous thing. Then we lose focus on the struggle, and the barriers weaken...

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Re: hello my friends....
Posted by alexeliezer - 20 Feb 2012 16:30

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 20 Feb 2012 16:18:](#)

Being "comfortable and secure in our sobriety" is the most dangerous thing. Then we lose focus on the struggle, and the barriers weaken...

I know. But sometimes I just want to be normal. Oh well. Fortunately we're frum. So even if we weren't addicts we still shouldn't be looking, fantasizing, lusting.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by gibbor120 - 20 Feb 2012 17:05

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 20 Feb 2012 16:18:](#)

Being "comfortable and secure in our sobriety" is the most dangerous thing. Then we lose focus on the struggle, and the barriers weaken...

Thanks for sharing Gevurah! We need reminders each day as to how slippery the slope really is for us. I wish you renewed ~~strength~~ powerlessness each day, one day at a time.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 20 Feb 2012 17:29

What I felt like 2 days ago...

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by alexeliezer - 20 Feb 2012 19:21

What you're gonna feel like soon...

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Blind Beggar - 20 Feb 2012 22:22

After reading a few Grapevine magazines I am so grateful that I am not an alcoholic. After reading some posts on the Forum I am so grateful that I am not a homosexual. I can go to the mikva and the beis medrash and I know I have no triggers. You guys are simply awesome - every day of sobriety is a double achievement/miracle.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by have2changeNOW - 21 Feb 2012 21:59

Dear Gevura ShebYesod,

This is the first time I'm writing on your thread – wanted to thank for all your sharing, its powerful and helpful. Before asking my question to you below, I first want give you 2 comments/yasher koachs:

1) Your particular challenge (i.e. men) is really tough – being in such a frequently triggering environment, that most of us in GYE find as safe haven, such as shul, beis medrash. Kol hakoved that you are able to focus correctly in these places.

2) Your story is amazingly powerful against the 'Born this Way' thinking, which seems to be taking root even in some orthodox communities.

Would likely be very helpful if somehow the frum world could hear your story to strongly counteract the 'Born this Way' thinking.

Not a suggestion – just a thought.

But Gevura – here is my really question for you:

I have read all about your recent fall, and shared your emotional reaction of disappoint and frustration, and then your charge up to stronger push to get back on the horse and try again harder (does that mean surrender better?). So what do you recommend for a guy like me – first time ever after 20 plus years – just tasting a bit of real sobriety (Baruch Hashem!) except maybe for some short lived inspiration around the Yomim Norayim. How do I keep the inspiration up? how do I fight human nature to drift down? Others have posted “keep my recovery active” which makes TOTAL sense to me – but if you have any further insights – about what happened and how we could steer clear, I for one would greatly appreciate your insights. Sorry if this question is too broad.

Thank you very much, and my prayers go out to you in general, and in particular: that your recent 'fall' gives you more lasting insights for complete success to not act out, and to become who you want to be.

Humble, scared, and hopeful,

Have2changeNOW

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Feb 2012 05:13

Hi H₂CN!

First of all thanks for the chizuk and the warm wishes.

In truth the last few days have been pretty tough. i've been writing encouraging and upbeat stuff

in an effort to be mechazek myself. But i think i'm going through a sort of "mini withdrawal" now that i took a sip of the poison again. And the perfectionist in me is disappointed ("If you ruined your perfect sobriety at least have a perfect fall" ???).

I had been getting kind of burnt out lately. For various reasons I will not be able to join an SA group or make personal or even phone contact with anyone. I am going to have to do this alone, with only my online friends for support. And i had been getting sort of down about that, and letting things slide. even my davening was losing it's intensity. And as you say on your thread, keeping recovery alive is so important.

So All I can say to you, and to me, is to work with all the tools that are available to you, as hard as you can. Daven hard. Extreme, conscious, shmiras einayim. Read and re-read the handbook, and whatever other seforim/books will inspire you. Keep in touch with the chevra, in whatever ways you can.

And dont get lazy and complacent. This is a fight that will never end, I am learning that the hard way.

I hope this helps you.

Gevura!

P.S. H₂CN is a molecule found in outer space, in interstellar clouds where new stars are formed.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Feb 2012 05:19

[alexeliezer wrote on 20 Feb 2012 19:21:](#)

What you're gonna feel like soon...

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Feb 2012 05:22

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 20 Feb 2012 15:30:](#)

Yeah, sometimes I feel like the flames are chasing me.... ??? :

Those buttons are not there. maybe my firewall is blocking it....

TZ,

Tried it from home, didn't work either. maybe K9 is blocking it too? Maybe i need to open my filter to diagnose it?...And once it's open...maybe i can take a little peek at..... :o :o :o :o :o

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I really shouldn't even joke like that. It's way past my bedtime and i'm punchy...

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by TheJester - 22 Feb 2012 10:42

Hi again, 37. I've not really been posting on here much recently, for various reasons (not bad ones).

One thought, from someone who can relate exactly to your predicament (see earlier posts).

You are doing this by yourself, which I think is insanely difficult, and shows a lack of desperation, but that's your choice. To a great extent, I had to work through an identical (perhaps more hands-on) issue as yours.

[Gevura ShebYesod wrote on 22 Feb 2012 05:13:](#)

I had been getting kind of burnt out lately. For various reasons I will not be able to join an SA group or make personal or even phone contact with anyone. I am going to have to do this alone, with only my online friends for support. And i had been getting sort of down about that, and letting things slide. even my davening was losing it's intensity.

You cannot do this by yourself. Because your urge is stronger than you. Yes, it is. It really, really is. You actually cannot "think" your way out of this. Yes, you can change your situation, but an urge is beyond reason. Reason with it, and it will twist you into knots. Just read through the forum - anything can be justified, and even turned into some hideous parody of a *Mitzva*. I know this - I do it all the time.

But you are not alone. I can't speak for the 12-step program, or any other method, but I know what helped me (incidentally, with a *frum* psychiatrist as my real-life contact) when I was younger. It consisted of not allowing the thought in, and battling with *Hashem's* help. It took ages, until it became a subconscious reaction to stimulus. You don't need to "blow it up" (that was my teenage brain), but you do need to leave it to Hashem, or dismiss it with His help. At least, that worked for me. I would always, ALWAYS say "Thank you *Hashem*" very quietly after He helped me to dismiss a thought (generally a male-leaning one). (*Edited to add: I would also say "please, no" to Hashem when I felt the urge - I didn't put that in beforehand because it*

sounds so pitiful. But I can't leave it out - not here. I probably looked like an idiot sometimes, walking down the street, although I'm sure that I hid the event tolerably well.)

I don't know if you can do it without another real human being. But I do know that you cannot do it alone. Hashem is indeed with you in *shul*, in the street, in the *mikva* and in your bathroom. Davening is about asking Him for what you need. Ask Him for help whenever you need it. It might not work for you, but He has never, ever let me down when I ask him sincerely and humbly. It is only when my pride gets in the way and I forget that He is with me (I am ashamed to admit) that things go wrong for me.

Even if *Shacharis* is uninspiring for you, don't let that stop you from asking Him at the time of the "test" to remove the urge from your mind (coupled with your own effort/vessel for help).

For the record, I don't believe that I am cured, but rather every day I get slightly further and further away from that awful place.

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by Gevura Shebyesod - 22 Feb 2012 15:06

Yossi,

I am desperate, but it's not my choice. For various reasons that's the way it has to be right now. It's hard and the loneliness hurts. But I have no choice.

But I do know that I am not alone. Hashem is with me, even when I don't feel Him. Even when I'm so miserable that I don't want to feel Him.

I actually do constantly ask Him to take away the thoughts when they come. I will walk down the streets mumbling "No no go away..." both as a prayer and as a reminder to myself to be strong. And when I am able to chase the thoughts away, or when I am able to hold myself back from looking when I see someone coming towards me, i say a silent "Thank you" to Him. I try to

thank Him verbally for all the small things in life, like finding a parking spot the first time around the block, or having the opportunity to give someone a ride or do a favor.

Davening has always been one of the most important parts of my effort. In the good times i can concentrate and I beg and plead, and I thank Him for whatever success He has granted me so far. But I got complacent and lazy, and I lost the cheshek for it, I let myself slip badly, and now I feel like He doesn't want me around. So far away....

I'm thinking of your poem and I'm starting to cry...

I know that you wrote it in a moment of deep despair. You ended it that you just want to stay there...I feel the same way. But that's the YH throwing us into Atzvus. Crying hurts, but it means that we are feeling, that we are still alive. And there is still hope. He will pull me out of it, I just have to want to let Him.

Gevura! (AKA 37)

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Re: hello my friends....

Posted by ZemirosShabbos - 22 Feb 2012 22:35

hi Gevura,

even though its a bit late i wanted to chime in about things. reading what you wrote about the fall and how you ~~kept~~ keep on (monster) trucking was a chizuk to me. thank you for sharing

re: doing it alone. that sounds so difficult. i don't know your circumstances and of course i cannot judge but it is so beneficial to have real people that you can email/chat/talk/meet with. the feeling of solitude magnifies whatever sounds the monsters make. if you have a friend along and the monsters sneeze you can turn to him and say "possums must be eating too much pepper in their apple sauce tonight" and laugh it off.

i guess the forum is doubly important for you.

keep on rocking and rolling

one of your big fans,

ZS

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