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You've Wandered Long Enough

#1367-A

**Series: Possessing the Land:
The Process of Mentoring**

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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We men are the worst. We simply cannot follow directions, and we will not admit it when we're lost. If the sign says, "DEAD END", we have to prove it. If the sign says, "ROAD CLOSED", we try to open it.

Imagine being only a few miles from your destination but being so hard-headed and unwilling to follow directions that you drive and drive and drive until you run out of gas in the desert and die there. No water, no food, no fuel, no nothing, *and still to the end, you refused to admit you were lost.* (Wives, you are permitted to smile now, and an elbow to the ribs might even be appropriate.)

If you can grasp that kind of needless futility, you are beginning to see the backdrop for where we are in Scripture and where our story begins. The children of Israel had been within eleven days of their God-appointed destination. God had painted huge signs on the roadside of life which said:



Not ones to take maps or signs for granted, however, the wary Israelis asked their tour guide, a kindly, somewhat bashful chap named Moses, if they could send a search party up ahead to scout out the terrain and be sure there were big enough Holiday Inns for the thousands of weary travelers in their tour group. They sent a dozen guys (no gals, that was perhaps their first mistake) and you all know what happened.

Forty years have passed now. The shoe business has been

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boycotted by a God who turned sandals into “eversoles”, but the local mortician has been busy indeed. In fact, an entire generation has died, and their hero, this miracle-working man named Moses, is about to crawl up into the arms of His God and spend eternity wrapped in a mantle of love.

He won't be going with them into the land. He will, however, precede this generation into glory, and this mild-mannered example of godly leadership, is the one speaking as the curtain is drawn, the lights are dimmed in the auditorium of life, and the dialogue opens in the theater of Deuteronomy. Listen, He is about to speak,

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

(There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadeshbarnea.)

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;

After he had slain Sihon the king of the Amorites, which dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, which dwelt at Astaroth in Edrei:

On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying,

The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.

(Deuteronomy 1:1-8)

THE BOOK

And so begins the book of Deuteronomy. It is the fifth book in the Bible, the last book in the Pentateuch. It contains 34 chapters, including 519 commandments and 230 verses of

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fulfilled prophecy.

The word “Deuteronomy” comes from two words, “Deuteros” (second) and “nomos” (law). It is the account of the second giving of the law, or the law repeated.

The forty years of wandering were over. Moses was preparing the people to enter the land that God had promised to give them—the land their parents could not enter for lack of faith. The book is, in essence, a record of Moses looking back, Moses looking up, and Moses looking ahead. In the process the meekest man in all the earth shares with them a Bible lesson or two their parents had a part in writing: lessons in leadership, lessons in obedience, and simple reminders of what a God of faithfulness had done for a faithless people in days gone by.

The entire book takes place in a period of time only a few days in length, but the beauty of its prose and the depth of its insight is virtually unsurpassed in any of the great works of literature, or even in the rest of Scripture. But far beyond its beauty, and far beyond its insight, lies a series of history lessons shared by the man who had firsthand knowledge of the things whereof he spoke.

God was the author; Moses was the speaker. The time of writing is not known for sure. Some place the date as early 1645 B.C. Others see it as having been written much later. For us its beauty and its importance lie not only its power as a book of history, not only in its clarity as a book of law, not only in its emotional depth as a clarification of the penalties of sowing and reaping, but much more as a picture book of truth, for truly

...these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.
(I Corinthians 10:11)

Every incident is accurate; every story is true. In fact, much of it is simply history beautifully retold. It is, however, more than a history book written with the pen of grace. As God's Holy Word, each syllable has spiritual significance and each serves as a portrait in living color, etched in the heavenlies, of the spiritual truths God was weaving into the fabric of His relationship with fallen man. There rise to the surface, even as we will see in these opening verses, physical portraits of spiritual realities that further illuminate the consequences of failing to enter into all that God has promised us, simply because we would rather wander than obey.

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Lessons on Biblical leadership, the consequences of disobedience, and the spiritual shadows cast by the law onto the pages of the New Testament all bear witness to the two-fold power in these passages. Like a gloriously beautiful diamond, its brilliance catches rays of light from the past, from the present and from the future; and every ray seems more beautiful than the one before. So as we stand on the banks of the Jordan, ready to enter God's Majestic Time Machine and be transported to that awesome moment in history, we must do so, not simply with an eye to Israel's fate, but with an eye to the prophetic unfolding of the Coming One, even our Lord Jesus Christ. All of history is His Story. And this chapter in Israel's history is, indeed, a foretaste of what members of the body of Christ would one day experience if they took their Savior at His Word.

THE BACKGROUND

God, true to His passion for accuracy, paints the entire backdrop with pertinent information. He tells us who is speaking, where he is speaking, when he is speaking, to whom he is speaking, what he did prior to this event that helps verify its time in Moses' pilgrimage. Having done all of that, He makes one statement that is enough to set the tone for the entire book. And all of that He does in the first six verses.

Moses is doing the speaking, and he is speaking to all of Israel. We seem to think that "mega-churches" are a new phenomenon, but truly this one would win the prize. Not only was the congregation huge, the Senior Pastor was well respected. When Moses spoke, the people knew that God was speaking through him. There was no doubt at this point about the authenticity of his position. He was Jehovah's mouthpiece, the wise, yet meek one who, like the Master who would one day come in person, spoke with a kind of authority that defied human reasoning.

And it wasn't because he told them what they wanted to hear. *He told them what God wanted them to hear.* In this case, it included a series of reminders so graphic they could not escape the message. These, according to verse one, were the *words of Moses*. He wasn't giving a speech, he was giving an exhortation. This was a *sermon* given by Moses to one gigantic congregation, *and he had their attention.* It wasn't the special music. It wasn't the testimony time. It was the one thing that will always get man's attention: *a word from God.* Moses was no youngster, he

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was ready for retirement, but he was so attuned to God's heart that when God said, "Thus saith the Lord unto Israel", Moses called the nation together, and they listened.

So the person was Moses, and the place was clearly defined, as well. It was "in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab". That may not mean much to you. That's okay. It meant a lot to God. It was important for several reasons.

1- It reinforces God's attention to details. Look at His plans for building the ark. Look at the plans for building the temple. Every detail is clearly outlined. And God, who pays so much attention to details, that the very hairs of your head are numbered, takes great pains to outline the location of so many things in Scripture, including this address by His servant, Moses.

2- It also shows that where you are at any given time is important to God. He has a specific place you need to be at a specific time if you are going to fulfill His plan for your life. Just as Elijah had to be in Zarephath to save that widow's son, (the last place he wanted to be), and just as Paul had to be in that particular jail cell to lead that Roman guard to Christ, so God has an intricate plan for you that often involves the split second timing of His sovereign grace which places you in that grocery store line or in that clerk's office or at the neighbor's house *exactly at the prescribed time and place for His perfect will to be done*. Look for God's attention to where and when you are where you are. The detail with which He records such things amplifies its importance to Him.

3- It places an exclamation mark on the authenticity of Scripture. By giving precise information, God verifies on the timelines of His Word that what went before and what comes after makes perfect sense.

Where Moses was when he spoke to Israel on this occasion may well mean very little to you. But it means a lot to God. That is why He included it in such detail in His Word. Therefore, it ought to be a blessing to us.

Perhaps, however, verse two is the summation of it all. There Moses tells us how far it is to Kadesh-Barnea if you take the Interstate. The children of Israel took a slight detour. The eleven days journey took 14,400 days instead, and they find themselves at the far end of that long, bumpy side trip at this time. Their

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parents have all died. It is important that this new generation get the “big picture” before they enter the city limits of the land of promise.

They needed a history lesson to understand why they had to wait so long. They needed the law reviewed, because so much time had passed since first it was recorded, hence this “deuteronomy”, this second giving of the law. And they needed to hear a fresh message from God; they needed to know intimately, personally, experientially, just who He was and what He was like.

The law would be their schoolmaster. It would serve to reveal the principles that emanated from heaven’s impact on earth. But the law would not be enough. At some point, the law had to be swallowed up in grace. This second giving of the law would begin the process of revealing the true nature of why God gave the law, and of what He was going to one day give that would make the law dissolve in an ocean of mercy and grace. This “second” expression would reveal the nature of God in a new, fresh way. It has been said that you can portray the first five books of the Bible this way:

Genesis	God calling Israel
Exodus	God delivering Israel
Leviticus	God sanctifying Israel
Numbers	God disciplining Israel
Deuteronomy	God expressing His love for Israel

The key word in this book may well be “love”. Sixteen times it appears, like a beautiful flower planted amidst the rows of commandments to remind us that the very essence of God’s expression to man, *even and including the commandments*, is the love of God, and man’s very response of obedience to God was nothing more than our opportunity to return that love. Look at just a few of those passages:

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

(Deuteronomy 6:5)

The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you,
because ye were more in number than any people; for ye
were the fewest of all people:

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But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. (Deuteronomy 7:7-9,13)

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:12,19)

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. (Deuteronomy 11:1)

Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 13:3)

If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three: (Deuteronomy 19:9)

And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, *and* that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he *is* thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy

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fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.
(Deuteronomy 30:6,16,20)

This second giving of the law is all about love, and that love as it is described has a two-fold meaning. On the one hand, it is transitional. It transcends the law, yet it explains the law. It adheres to the law, yet it captures out of the law the root expression of God that required the law. It digs down into the heart of God and we begin to see that behind these seemingly unbending commandments lies both a purpose and a Person. The purpose is the restoration of a relationship that has disintegrated through sin. The Person behind the restoration is not a Divine Master Sergeant who resides on a throne in heaven with a thunderbolt in each hand, waiting for the opportunity to repay sin with judgment.

The Person is One who longs to have His children return to a kind of fellowship with Him that once existed in the garden. He grieves over their sins. He weeps over their self-inflicted wounds. He captures their every tear in a bottle, longing for that day when tears will be no more. He sees them not as a wayward nation, though that they are. He sees them as individuals so unique that the very hairs of their head are numbered.

He sees them as sheep in need of a shepherd, yet knows that they would rather stray than follow. He sees them as wanderers, but not worthless; as restless, yet worthy of redemption. And beyond all that, He sees them as so valuable, that *whatever it costs, ultimately, to buy them back, He will do it*. No price will be too high. If it means that He who thought it not robbery to be equal with God must make Himself of no reputation and be made in the likeness of man, it will be worth it. Whatever it takes, it must be done, for God's love for these rebellious children of His knows no bounds. It is endless. It is limitless. It is His very nature revealed.

Is it any wonder that this incredible book seemed to be such a favorite of Jesus? Indeed, He quoted more from Deuteronomy than from any other Old Testament treasure. And if you want to know how The Master felt about the relevancy of the promises and the principles in this book, go with Him into the wilderness where He was eye to eye with Satan in one of the greatest examples of spiritual warfare ever recorded. Three times the enemy attacked. Three times The Lord responded: "It is written". Compare Matthew 4:4,7, and 10 with Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:6, 6:13, 6:14, and 6:16.

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The power of God's word struck Satan in the heart and he fled, while angels came and ministered to Jesus. And it was the truths recorded by Moses so lovingly, yet so powerfully in this "second recording of the law" that God chose to use against the evil one.

And so can you. God has recorded in this wonderful grouping of Moses' messages at the end of his life, a kind of depth out of which truth simply flows into the life of the believer, and the realities of the Old Testament come alive, when wrapped in a mantle of love.

In verse three, Moses makes it plain exactly when this took place in the pilgrimage of God's people. They had been wandering for thirty-nine years and eleven months. It was the first day of the month, and Moses called a congregational meeting of the whole church. He had a lot to talk about. Not only that, (and we will look at this more fully later) we know what had just transpired that set the stage for "moving day".

It was a series of confrontations with God's enemies and the people had just witnessed afresh God's incredible intervention and the resulting victories that followed. The children of Israel left the wilderness and headed to Mattanah and then to Nahaliel, and finally to Bamoth. They camped in the valley and sent messengers to King Sihon of the Amorites. They said, "Let us pass through your land. We will not turn from the road into any of your farmlands, fields, or vineyards. We will not drink water from your wells. We only want to pass through your land."

King Sihon said "no", however, and assembled an army to go out against Israel, but the Jews routed them, then went after Jazer and defeated the Amorites who lived there. Next, King Og of Bashan decided he would take on the suddenly aggressive Israelis, only to be soundly defeated by Moses and his revitalized military forces. So they now occupied those lands and this second generation of wanderers now had a personally fresh experience with the power of God.

THE CHALLENGE

According to verses 4 and 5, it was at this time that Moses made the first address to his people as recorded in Deuteronomy, chapter one. His message began the way most messages end. He let them know before he started, that it was time to get on with the program, and that the decision would be up to them, just as

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it had been to their faithless parents. No three points and a poem first. Just a gentle but clear word from God. It was this:

The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them. (Deuteronomy 1:6-8)

Four phrases or words jump out at us in those three verses. They are:

- 1- "dwelt long enough"
- 2- "turn you",
- 3- "possess", and
- 4- "to give unto them".

Those four phrases form the basis for the entire future of a generation of Israelites whose parents had refused to heed the very same message.

It is that first phrase that we will focus on for a few moments. Moses had a word from God. It was this: "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount". More than that, they had dwelt long enough in their current state as a wandering herd of displaced persons. They had an inheritance and they were acting as though they were penniless. They had a homeland, but they were acting as though they were homeless. They had a heritage, but they were acting as though they had been disinherited. In a moment, Moses was going to begin to remind them of how all this happened.

First, however, he decided to arrest their attention with the simple facts. It was moving time. Enough was enough. Forty years had been the sentence, and the forty years was up. No time off for good behavior, just a simple sentence and a simple solution. Wander forty years; old folks die off; young folks get ready. God wants you to try this "inherit the land" program one more time. This time, let's get it right.

A simple statement. He literally said this:

"You've wandered long enough."

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They could spend another forty years like their parents did and end up with nothing, or they could wake up, smell the coffee, and possess that which was already deeded to them. All it required was a little faith and a big God. Remember, the inheritance was not the problem. It had already been given. In fact, the deed of trust had been in their safety deposit box for thirty-nine years and eleven months. They could keep walking around the bank wishing they had the land, or they could walk up the to Bank President, Jehovah God, and request what was already theirs. They had to do three things. They had to agree to stop their wandering, they had to turn around, and they had to actually go in and possess what was theirs.

THE MESSAGE

Sounds simple enough. *"You've wandered long enough"*. Wandering, beloved, is not a disease, it's a choice. In this case, their parents started the pattern. They, however, had the ability, by faith, to end it. The word translated "dwelt" means to "sit down and abide in a given condition". They had wandered so long they thought it was natural. They had been nomads so long, they thought it was their calling. They had been without a homeland so long, they thought the desert was home. They had wandered long enough.

At some point in time, they either had to accept the fact that they did not expect life to be any different than it already was, or they had to make a life-changing decision to follow Jehovah wherever He led, and to go in and possess that which was rightfully theirs. It would mean additional warfare. That would be their choice. If they chose not to, or simply chose not to choose, they would then become the judges at their own trial. They would sentence themselves to the same lot in life they had experienced thus far, and God would let them.

God builds the house, but He doesn't force us to live there. God wrote the book, but He doesn't force us to read it. God provides the power, but He waits for us to use it. God gives the comfort, but it's up to us to receive it. Grace means we don't deserve it, never did, never could. But grace is not a piece of machinery that the believer is forced into, it is a gift that the believer is allowed to receive. We can take it or leave it. When we don't take it, we leave it. And God is grieved, but He won't force us to the next level of spiritual growth. He will draw us. Patiently, He will call us. But if

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we would rather wander, grace demands that He let us.

The promises were clear. Moses would reiterate those again in a moment. They weren't the issue now. The issue was: "Are you satisfied to spend the rest of your days on this earth wandering aimlessly about in a desert, or are you tired of eating the dust and toiling under the scorching heat when there's more to life than you have experienced?"

You've wandered long enough. That was the message. Jeremiah reminds us:

O the hope of Israel, the saviour thereof in time of trouble,
why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a
wayfaring man *that* turneth aside to tarry for a night?

Why shouldest thou be as a man astonied, as a mighty man
that cannot save? yet thou, O LORD, *art* in the midst of us,
and we are called by thy name; leave us not.

Thus saith the LORD unto this people, Thus have they loved
to wander, they have not refrained their feet, therefore the
LORD doth not accept them; he will now remember their
iniquity, and visit their sins. (Jeremiah 14:8-10)

"They loved to wander." What a sad testimony. But the disease lingers on. And down through the centuries, Satan has said to so many believers, "*This is all there is to the Christian life. It is a life of wandering. There is no land of promise. There is no abundant life. There is no peace that passeth understanding. It is all a game, and you lose.*"

And by default, we listen. And by default, we lose. In the next few lessons, we will examine what God was offering Israel, what it cost, and who paid the bill. For now, simply ask yourself if you can put yourself for a moment in that huge congregational meeting where Pastor Moses is delivering his message. All you have ever known is the desert. You have been refugees, floating from disgusting situation to more disgusting situations. You're weary and you're worn.

Suddenly, your leader has a word from God. "You don't need to wander any more". Your heart begins to burn within you. Your mind races to word pictures you have seen of the land that once you heard could be yours. Your first response? "Lord, whatever it takes, let's take the land."

Please hold that thought.

YOU'VE WANDERED LONG ENOUGH

Somewhere along the journey
When life's hard times get tough,
A still, small voice but whispers,
"You've wandered long enough."

God understands your "balanced life"
And honors all your zeal,
He knows you love to worship Him
And that your walk is real.

He's seen you in the dark of night
When no one is around,
He's heard you cry out in the night
When no one heard a sound.

He knows that on the surface
You daily bear your cross,
But also knows the compromise
When you might suffer loss.

He loves you; oh, He loves you;
Yet His analysis
Is, "Child, I love you so much...
There's more to life than this."

"There is a deeper walk with Me
Let's just call Satan's bluff...
Go ahead and say to Me,
'I've wandered long enough.'

"I want to enter Canaan's gates
With all its plains and lakes,
I want whate'er you have for me;
Oh, God whate'er it takes

Lead me to that promised land
And may I ne'er return
Give me all there is of Christ
Oh, for that life I yearn

I've wandered long enough, dear, Lord
I want whate'er I lack,
Whate'er it takes, take Me I pray
And I will ne'er turn back.

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A Challenge to Further Study and Application

1- Do a study of the passages in the New Testament that were quotations from Deuteronomy. Do you see a pattern? Were they mostly promises? Commandments? Both?

2- How did Jesus use the words of Deuteronomy in His battle with Satan? How can that help you in “standing” against the wiles of the enemy?

3- Why do you think God is so detailed in His explanations and instructions? Can you give examples? How can that help you in your obedience? What lie has Satan told man concerning “partial” obedience?

4- Why is it so important to see the law in the light of God's love? Had the law never existed, what do you think would be missing in the kingdom?

5- Why do you think God allowed Moses to overpower those kings and their kingdoms just before he called the people to inherit the land?

6- Wandering is a natural thing to do. It is the line of least resistance. It requires no decisions, and inherits few challenges. It simply allows you to live out your days without having to think, all the while thinking there is nothing more to life than this. Finally, one day, you find your life is over, and the sand of the desert is all you have known. Have you been wandering in the Christian life? Are you living a life of defeat by default? Is that what God wants with your life? Ask God today to reveal any areas of wandering. Get ready to “turn”.

7- Memorize Deuteronomy 1:8.

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