

King Ahaz of Judah wanted peace. Instead he was surrounded by enemies. The kings of Aram and Israel had made a pact together to attack Jerusalem. The Philistines were raiding the towns of Judah. Edom was attacking him from the south. Many of his people were taken captive by the Arameans and 120,000 of his soldiers were killed. Ahaz was not like his forefather David, nor like his grandfather Uzziah and father Jotham. Instead of serving the one true God he worshipped the Baals and sacrificed his sons in the fires of Moloch in the valley of Ben Hinnom. In his troubles, instead of seeking help from the Almighty God, he tried to buy the help of the King of Assyria by sending him the gold and bronze from the Temple of the LORD. He also built altars for and worshipped the gods of Damascus thinking the idols would deliver him.

In the midst of all this turmoil, God sent Isaiah the prophet to Ahaz with a message. The message for Ahaz was not good. In fact he was told that worse things were coming:

Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? ... The LORD will bring on you and on your people and on the house of your father a time unlike any since Ephraim broke away from Judah — he will bring the king of Assyria." (Isaiah 7:13...17 NIV)

But the wicked are like the

troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. (Isaiah 57:20-21 KJV)

Isaiah was called to be a prophet at the end the reign of Uzziah, grandfather of Ahaz. He brought the message of God to Judah and Jerusalem through the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. Much had happened in Israel and Judah since the building of the LORD's Temple by King Solomon 200 years before. The northern ten tribes of Israel had rebelled against the ruling house of David and Solomon and had formed their own kingdom. During this time evil and wickedness had reigned in Israel and only a few kings of David's lineage in Judah in the south were true to God. This was now the time of God's judgment against Israel by the hand of the Assyrians and God sent his prophets including Isaiah, Micah, and Hosea to warn both Israel and Judah of the pending destruction.

The first five chapters of the book of Isaiah bring charges against the people of Judah and Jerusalem for their wickedness and call for their repentance.

Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. (Isaiah 1:4 NIV)

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is

detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations — I cannot bear your evil assemblies. (Isaiah 1:13 NIV)

"...wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. (Isaiah 1:16-20 NIV)

In these words the frustration of God with his people is heard. He wanted them to turn and do right. He would forgive them and cleanse them if they would just seek him and do justly. As Isaiah delivered these words to the people, he would marvel at God's patience and compassion with this sinful nation.

In chapter 6 of his prophecy, Isaiah records the vision of the glory of God that was given to him. He heard the seraphs declare: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." He felt the temple doorposts shake at the sound of their voices. He was filled with awe and at the same

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time knew that he was completely unworthy to see such glory. As Isaiah humbles himself before his God, God sends a seraph to remove his guilt and purge his sin. Now Isaiah is ready to be God's messenger. Through Isaiah, the glory of God is revealed to those who humble themselves and listen to his message:

The LORD is God and there is no other: "I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,

so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness,

I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things." (Isaiah 45)

God loves righteousness and justice and hates iniquity and evil:

"For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity... For as the soil makes the sprout come up and a garden causes seeds to grow, so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness and praise

spring up before all nations. (Isaiah 61)

The day of God's judgment against the wicked is coming:

"See, the day of the LORD is coming — a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger — to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it... I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless... Therefore I will make the heavens

tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the LORD Almighty, in the day of his burning anger." (Isaiah 13)

The LORD longs to be gracious to his people: This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it... Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! O people of Zion, who live in Jerusalem, you will weep no more. How gracious he will be when you cry for help! As soon as he hears, he will answer you. (Isaiah 30)

God is sending a redeemer—a messiah—one who would save his people from their sins:

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. (Isaiah 9)

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD — and he will delight in the fear of the LORD." (Isaiah 11)

"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (Isaiah 53)

"The Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins," declares the LORD. (Isaiah 59)

By God's plan and purpose the earth will one day be filled with his glory and power: In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. (Isaiah 2) They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea... In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. (Isaiah 11)

"...and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away." (Isaiah 35)

But Israel will be saved by the LORD with an everlasting salvation... For this is what the LORD says — he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited — he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45)

Isaiah lived in a time of horrendous wickedness and deceit but even at this time God reached out to his people. Through Isaiah God declares his righteousness and compassion, his plans and purpose to reveal his glory. Through the gift that was given to Isaiah in these prophecies, people throughout the ages have been able to see just a glimpse of the glory of the everlasting God. There is no peace to the wicked but God has plans for his people, for those who repent and come to him. His plans are plans of right-

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eousness and peace, of abundance and joy:

The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has

become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. (Isaiah 12)

You will go out in joy and be

led forth in peace...This will be for the LORD's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed." (Isaiah 55)

Bible Principles

“His faith was credited to him as righteousness”

“Hear, you *who are* afar off, what I have done; and you *who are* near, acknowledge My might.” The sinners in Zion are afraid: fearfulness has seized the hypocrites: “ Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?”

He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing bribes, who stops his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shuts his eyes from seeing evil:

He will dwell on high; his place of defense *will be* the fortress of rocks; bread will be given him, his water *will be* sure. (Isa. 33:13-17.)

In the days that Isaiah prophesied, as in our present day, there was apparently a great deal of confusion concerning the concept of righteousness as the prophet makes several statements at clarifying the subject. Today, righteousness tends to be an abstract idea, conjuring thoughts of absolute perfection and leaving us with the uneasy certainty that we can never attain to such a lofty state. If then, the God of the Bible is righteousness, meaning that He is absolute perfection, and He expects righteousness of us, we are doomed to disappoint Him and earn His

wrath.

Thankfully, these thoughts arise from a Greek worldview, and an examination of the Hebrew Scriptures yields an understanding that brings God’s revelation of righteousness into realistic focus and gives His children the ability to grasp their responsibility before a righteous God.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word *tsedaqah* is used to mean righteousness, and it is derived from the root verb, *tsadaq*. Hebrew is a language of action, and it is critical to understand the verbal idea that underlies this noun. We could examine many examples of this verb’s usage, but I will refer you to Deut. 25:1-3; 1 Kings 8:32; and Psalms 82:1-4. For illustration, let’s look at the case in Deuteronomy. Suppose an Israeli carpenter became deeply indebted and decided to sell himself into the service of a wealthy farmer in order to work off his huge debt. They contract together that the carpenter will refurbish and maintain the wooden structures on the farmer’s land for five years. After two years, however, the harvests produce bumper crops and the farmer informs the carpenter that he needs for him to help harvest the grain on top of his other responsibilities. The carpenter’s work load and familial responsibilities are heavy, however, and

he insists he cannot, and the farmer abuses him, attempting to force him into added labor. The carpenter takes his grievance to the elders of their community, witnesses are called who corroborate his claim, and the case is decided in favor of the carpenter. The farmer is given stripes as warranted for his abuse, and he is required to recompense the carpenter for damages.

Several points must be observed from this case. First, it is a given that these Jewish judges would have referred to the covenant that had been given through Moses as the guide in judgment. Second, the actions of the carpenter were examined and determined to be in accord with this law. The Hebrew refers to this as declaring righteous the righteous (reflecting the Hiphil, or causative, stem of *tsadaq*.) This is translated in English as to justify the righteous. (We should probably notice here, because of some modern theological confusion, that the judges did not somehow transfer their righteousness to the plaintiff, but made their declaration based on the behavior of the carpenter.) The actions of the farmer are also examined and he is found to have sinned, violating the covenant, and he is required to make restitution. The English translates this as condemning the

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wicked. The Hebraic concept of righteousness denotes thought, action, or more broadly, a life of obedience of a covenant.

The Creator of the universe and Father of His children has decided that relationship with Him be based on covenant, and He is always faithful to observe His covenants, and thus, He is righteous (cp. Neh. 9:7,8.) As for God’s people, Abraham is the exemplar for a central aspect of righteousness, that arising from faith. Upon hearing Yahweh’s confirmation of His covenant promises, Abraham trusted God, and God calculated, or concluded (the verb, *chashab*) this faith to be his righteousness. (Gen 15:6). This led Yahweh to formalize and guarantee His covenant as a perpetual one, and this, of course, is at the center of Paul’s arguments concerning the inclusion of Gentiles in the hope of Abraham in Romans and Galatians. Building upon this foundational aspect of faith, the Scriptures speak of acts of obedience as conferring righteousness as we observe in passages such as Deut. 6:25 and 24:13:

And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for

our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.

Deut. 24:10-13 deals with lending practices, especially regarding the poor:

And if the man *is* poor, you shall not keep his pledge overnight. ¹³ You shall in any case return the pledge to him again when the sun goes down, that he may sleep in his own garment and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the LORD your God.

Additionally, passages like Gen. 6:9 and Mal. 3:17, 18 summarize a faithful life as righteous. It should go without saying that though God’s righteousness is perfect for He always observes His covenants, man’s righteousness is not perfect, a fact that is demonstrated by the provision of sin offerings within the Mosaic Covenant (see also Isa. 53:1-12, where the Messiah is presented as a guilt offering for Israel who have, like sheep, gone astray.) It is faithfulness that is prized by

God, as is again exemplified by Abraham:

“You *are* the LORD God, who chose Abram, and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, and gave him the name Abraham;

You found his heart faithful before You, and made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites -to give *it* to his descendants.

You have performed Your words, for You *are* righteous.

Abraham was not perfect, but God could depend on Him to recover from his failures and walk in trusting obedience.

Clearly we have only touched on some basic principles concerning the concept of righteousness, but hopefully this article has begun to lay a foundation that will make us thankful for God’s faithfulness to His covenants while encouraging us to set aside any idea of expected perfection on our part and to seek instead to trust His promises and faithfully strive to obey His covenant commandments.

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Thoughts on the Daily Readings **Defining Moments in History**

As we read through Old Testament history and prophecy during the year, it's important to remember some defining moments in Israel's history. As with no other nation, these "defining moments" are all connected to covenants or promises that God made with his people.

Approx year	Defining Moment
2000 B.C.	God calls Abraham from his home country and brings him to the land of Canaan. Because of his obedience, God promises him blessings, the land he walks on to be his and his family's forever, that he would be a father of a great nation, and all nations on earth would be blessed through him. These promises are everlasting and not conditional.
1500 B.C.	Abraham's descendents became a great nation called Israel. They become slaves in Egypt but God rescues them. He leads them through the wilderness to the promised land. God gives them a law to live by and promises that he will be with them and bless them if they continue to obey and worship him. If they do not, then they would be taken out of the promised land and scattered to every country. The Mosaic covenant was conditional.
1000 B.C.	After more than 400 years in the promised land, David became the second king of Israel. Because he served God faithfully, he triumphed over the enemies of Israel and unified the 12 tribes. Also, because of David's faithfulness, God promised him that his lineage, his son, would rule over God's people forever. This was an everlasting promise and Mary was told that her son, Jesus, would be the son who would rule forever.
950 B.C.	Solomon, David's son reigned after him during a period a peace and abundance. He built the first temple in Jerusalem to replace the tent or tabernacle of worship. Solomon in his latter years was not faithful to God. Because Solomon broke the covenant with God, God caused a division in the kingdom. After Solomon the northern 10 tribes rebelled under Jeroboam. Because of David, Solomon's son Rehoboam retained the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south.
722 B. C.	During the 200 years after Solomon the northern kingdom of Israel continued to break God's covenant and worship other gods. God sent prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and Micah to warn the people to repent. Finally, the Assyrians came down and destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel and took the Israelites captive, scattering them to many places.
605 to 586 B.C.	The remaining southern kingdom of Judah continued to try to worship God but also worship other gods, again breaking the covenant. Finally, after sending many prophets such as Jeremiah to warn the people to repent, God brought the Babylonians against Judah. The final destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon's temple and the captivity of the Jews occurred in 586 B. C. Daniel and Ezekiel were two prophets who went into captivity in Babylon with the rest of the Jewish people.
520-400 B. C.	Jeremiah had prophesied that after 70 years God would bring the people back from captivity. The exile would end so that his covenant with Abraham and David would be fulfilled. Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, Malachi, and Haggai were all prophets that returned to the land and helped rebuild Jerusalem and the second temple.

The Old Testament (or covenant) refers to the covenant that God made with the nation of Israel through
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Moses. It was a covenant or promise that Israel would remain in the land and be blessed by God based on the condition that they continued to worship and serve him. But there was a covenant that came before the Mosaic covenant. It was an eternal covenant based on the faithfulness of God and Abraham's faith in God. This is the "new covenant" that the blood of Jesus confirmed. It is through Jesus that the eternal promises of blessings and the inheritance of the land will be fulfilled:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise...If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3)

Names--Names--Names What's in a name?

The Bible is full of unfamiliar hard-to-read, tongue-twister names of people and places. The names are many times unfamiliar because they are from another language—Hebrew, Aramean, Greek, or Chaldean. It is interesting to look at the names in the original language and find their meanings. This is especially so since names were many times given for a specific reason or purpose. Sometimes God specified a name or changed a person's name. Take a look at some Biblical names and their meanings:

Adam: This is the Hebrew word for "man". It could be ultimately derived from Hebrew meaning "to be red".

Eve: From the Hebrew name *Chawwah*, which was derived from the Hebrew word *chawah* "to breathe" or the related word *chayah* "to live". (Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. Gen 3:20)

Noah: Derived from the Hebrew name *Noach* meaning "rest, comfort".

Abram/Abraham Abram means "high father" in Hebrew. God changed Abram's name to Abraham. "No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations." Genesis 17:5

Sarai/Sarah: Sarai possibly means "contentious" in Hebrew. God changed her name to Sarah which means "lady" or "princess" in Hebrew. God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah." Genesis 17:15

Moses: From the Hebrew name *Mosheh* which is most likely derived from Egyptian *mes* meaning "son", but could also possibly mean "deliver" in Hebrew.

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Joshua: From the Hebrew name *Yehoshu'a* meaning "YAHWEH is salvation". The name *Jesus* comes from a Greek translation of the Aramaic short form *Yeshu'a*.

David: From the Hebrew name *Dawid*, which was probably derived from Hebrew *dwd* meaning "beloved".

Micah: Contracted form of MICAH. Means "who is like YAHWEH?" in Hebrew. This name occurs in the Old Testament belonging to both males and females.

Zechariah: From the Hebrew name *Zekharyah* meaning "YAHWEH remembers". This was the name of many characters in the Old Testament, including the prophet Zechariah. The name also appears in the New Testament belonging to the father of John the Baptist, who was temporarily made dumb because of his disbelief. In some versions of the New Testament his name is spelled in the Greek form *Zacharias*.

Daniel: From the Hebrew name *Daniyyel* meaning "God is my judge". Daniel's name was changed to the Chaldean name Belteshazzar meaning Bel's prince by his captors. (Daniel 1:7)

Isaiah: From the Hebrew name *Yasha'yahu* meaning "YAHWEH is salvation".

Saul/Paul: The Apostle Paul was first known as Saul which is from the Hebrew name *Sha'ul* which meant "asked for" or "prayed for". In Acts 13:9 we are told that he was also known as Paul which is from the Roman family name *Paulus* meaning "small" or "humble" in Latin.

Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz: This name is found in Isaiah 8:3 and is the name that God told Isaiah to name his son. It means: He speeds to plunder and to the prey.

How important is a name?

"They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels." (Revelation 3)



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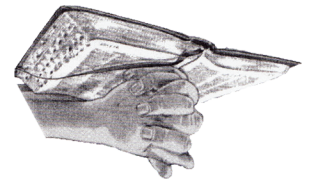
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Day	October		November		December	
	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa	Old Test	New Test/Psa
1	Hosea 11,12	Titus 1	Jerm 19-21	James 3	Eze 12-14	Psalm 139
2	Hosea 13,14	Titus 2	Jerm 22,23	James 4	Eze 15, 16	Rev 1
3	II Chron 1,2	Titus 3	Jerm 24-26	James 5	Eze 17, 18	Rev 2
4	II Chron 3,4	Philemon	Jerm 27-29	I Peter 1	Eze 19,20	Rev 3
5	II Chron 5,6	Psalm 110, 111	Jerm 30, 31	I Peter 2	Eze 21, 22	Rev 4
6	II Chron 7, 8	Psalm 112, 113	Jerm 32, 33	I Peter 3	Eze 23, 24	Rev 5
7	II Chron 9,10	Hebrews 1	Jerm 34-36	I Peter 4	Eze 25, 26	Psalm 140
8	II Chron 11,12	Hebrews 2	Jerm 37,38	I Peter 5	Eze 27, 28	Psalm 141
9	II Chron 13,14	Hebrews 3	Jerm 39-41	Psalm 120, 121	Eze 29-31	Rev 6
10	II Chron 15,16	Psalm 114, 115	Jerm 42,43	Psalm 122, 123	Eze 32, 33	Psalm 142- 143
11	II Chron 17,18	Hebrews 4	Jerm 44-46	Psalm 124, 125	Eze 34, 35	Rev 7
12	II Chron 19,20	Hebrews 5	Jerm 47,48	II Peter I	Eze 36, 37	Rev 8
13	II Chron 21,22	Psalm 116, 117	Jerm 49,50	II Peter 2	Eze 38, 39	Rev 9
14	II Chron 23,24	Hebrews 6	Jerm 51,52	II Peter 3	Eze 40, 41	Psalm 144
15	II Chron 25,26	Hebrews 7	Ezr 1, 2, 3	Psalm 126, 127	Eze 42-44	Rev 10
16	II Chron 27,28	Hebrews 8	Ezr 4, 5, 6	Psalm 128, 129	Eze 45, 46	Rev 11
17	II Chron 29,30	Psalm 118	Ezr 7, 8, 9	I John 1	Eze 47, 48	Psalm 145
18	II Chron 31,32	Hebrews 9	Ezr 10 Neh 1	I John 2	Dan 1,2	Rev 12
19	II Chron 33,34	Hebrews 10	Neh 2,3,4	I John 3	Dan 3,4,5	Rev 13
20	II Chron 35,36	Psa 119: 1-24	Neh 5,6, 7	I John 4	Dan 6,7,8	Rev 14
21	Lam 1,2	Hebrews 11	Neh 8,9	I John 5	Dan 9,10	Psalm 146
22	Lam 3,4,5	Hebrews 12	Neh 10,11	Psalm 130, 131	Dan 11,12	Rev 15
23	Jerm 1,2	Hebrews 13	Neh 12,13	Psalm 132, 133	Habakkuk 1-3	Rev 16
24	Jerm 3,4	Psa 119: 25-48	Esth 1,2,3	Psalm 134, 135	Zephaniah 1-3	Psalm 147
25	Jerm 5,6	Psa 119: 49-74	Esth 4, 5, 6	II John	Haggai 1, 2	Rev 17
26	Jerm 7,8	Psa 119: 75-96	Esth 7-10	III John	Zechariah 1-3	Rev 18
27	Jerm 9,10	Ps 119: 97- 120	Eze 1, 2, 3	Psalm 136	Zechariah 4-6	Rev 19
28	Jerm 11, 12	Ps 119: 121-144	Eze 4, 5, 6	Psalm 137	Zechariah 7-9	Psalm 148
29	Jerm 13, 14	Ps 119: 145-176	Eze 7,8,9	Psalm 138	Zechar 10-12	Psalm 149, 150
30	Jerm 15, 16	James 1	Eze 10,11	Jude	Zechar 13,14	Rev 20, 21
31	Jerm 17, 18	James 2			Malachi 1-4	Rev 22

See page 5 for some thoughts on the daily readings.
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