



March 2016 Newsletter

CONGREGATION
B'NAI ABRAHAM

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FROM THE DESK OF THE RABBI

I remember one congregant mentioning to me, *“I think it’s important to have a full-time rabbi in Hagerstown.”* As most of us take this as given, his comment made me consider the deeper wisdom of his words. What I came to understand is that the particular focus was on the value of having a rabbi in an area where we live in a very non-Jewish community. I continue to work hard to take that mantle of responsibility seriously. Just this past week, I was honored for the second year in a row to be asked to give the invocation and blessing for the annual Hagerstown-Washington County Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Banquet with hundreds of business leaders present. This invitation demonstrates not only our active role in the community, but also the wider embrace that seeks to nurture a pluralistic religious environment.

The same importance came into sharp focus a few months ago within the religious community itself. The Interfaith Coalition of Washington County, working with a member of the Islamic Society of Washington County, suggested language to be developed in a Statement of Peace. The original intent was to create a document suggesting that we do not speak in derogatory ways of faith traditions different than our own. Despite good intentions, a late stage draft had language that did not reflect inclusive language and also maintained Christian undertones that did not embody Jewish teachings. I spoke up and suggested alternative language which, after some explanation and advocacy, was very well received and incorporated. The concluding language is below:

“The original unity of the human family is an essential principle in most religious traditions. This unity is revealed in our sacred writings and practices. It is love for others that is the key practice that promotes our unity. We come together to address the recent escalation of fear and hostility which threatens to tear the fabric of our community. We, the clergy and laity of the faith communities of Washington County, Maryland openly and boldly declare: We cherish the freedom of expression in our country, which allows all of us to speak what we believe; We believe peacemaking is the responsibility and work of the faith community; Acknowledging our diversity of cultures, religions, traditions, and practices, we believe that living together peacefully must be our goal; We believe that all people are to be shown love regardless of religious or cultural differences. And because of these beliefs, we now call upon all people of faith to: be mindful of how certain language can lead to hurt and misunderstanding; encourage language that promotes respect and civility and discourage language that demeans others’ beliefs or incites violence; seek to understand and love one another. We take these actions with the hope that this statement will be a sign of our unity and mutual commitment to peace.”

Already, there are many signatories to the statement above, including myself. If you wish to be added to such a list, you may email Kathy Powderly of the Hagerstown Religious Community and simply say you wish for your name to be added to the “Statement of Peace.”

Her email is: kathy.harc@gmail.com

Why is it important to have “full-time” rabbi in Hagerstown? To represent you - the “full-time” Jews in the broader area in which we dwell.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A few weeks ago I began planning for my newsletter article and the major theme was to be volunteerism. With the passing of my beloved mother on February 19, that subject has risen even higher in my mind.

How fortunate that, by their very nature, volunteers gravitate to places and causes that already hold an interest for them. Others are looking for ways to help their communities or fill a social void left by retirement. The reasons we volunteer are as myriad as our individual personalities.

It is highly likely that you interact with a volunteer at least once every day. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it is also likely that 25% of people reading this article are either volunteers or are considering becoming a volunteer. Of the approximately 63 million people who volunteer, most are of service in their houses of worship, just like many, many of you now reading this article. I would go so far as to say that in our congregation the 25% statistic cited above is considerably higher, perhaps closer to 80%. It's a Jewish thing.

The February Board meeting gave me an opportunity to recognize those around the table who have poured their hearts into the running of Congregation B'nai Abraham. In fact, there wasn't anyone there who hasn't at one time or another made significant contributions of their time and talent as Temple leaders, committee chairs, school administrators and teachers, builders, musicians, planners and more.

My parents, of blessed memory, modeled that same spirit for my sisters and I. My dad, Ray, was Beth Tikva's "Ben Chlebnikow" and was a docent at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, and my mother, Pearl, led the all-volunteer choir and served as the youth group advisor there and later was a tour guide at the Kennedy Center. That just scratches the surface. Volunteering was their lifelong career.

Even as recently as three months ago, Mom approached the activities director at Somerford Place about developing a program to welcome and orient new residents in order to ease their transition into the different environment. It was in her nature to be welcoming and to make others feel at ease.

Perhaps empathy is one of the vital components found in those who readily volunteer. In the Bible and numerous prayers we are reminded to treat strangers well, to not oppress them for we were once strangers in Egypt. This was the spirit with which our Congregation welcomed Pearl when she arrived in Hagerstown ("My daughter made me come up to this God-forsaken place.")

But, she quickly learned this place wasn't God-forsaken at all. You embraced her, making sure she had a siddur, helping her with physical challenges, taking time to talk with her after onegs. Rabbi Plost's visits gave her great comfort, not to mention a patient ear and great bragging rights at Somerford. These were true acts of lovingkindness.

In that same spirit, my sister, my son and I received tender concern following Pearl's passing. Of particular note are Rabbi Plost and the Caring Committee and their enlistees.

With do-gooding being the overwhelmingly tenor here, I have high hopes for our future; very high hopes, indeed.

Shalom,

Rachel



DONATIONS

General Fund

In memory of Pearl Kruger from Sandi Gagliardi

Endowment Fund

In memory of Pearl Kruger from Sharon Wagshal

In memory of Pearl Kruger from Gerald & Lieba Cohen

In memory of Pear Kruger from Carol & Howard Mendelsohn

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sunday	March	6	Brunch: Bill Hollin	10:30 am	Social Hall
Sunday	March	13	Books & Bagels	1:30 pm	Location TBA
Friday	March	18	Purim Festivities	5:30 pm	Social Hall
Sunday	March	20	Purim Carnival	11:30 am	Social Hall & Baer Room
Sunday	April	17	Jewish Food Festival	We will need EVERYONE'S help!	
Sunday	May	1	'90 for'90 A Tribute to Jeanne Jacobs" Gala		
Friday	May	8	Yom HaShoah Commemoration & Shabbat Service: Holocaust survivor Mark Strauss will be speaking; not to be missed.		

FROM THE PULPIT COMMITTEE

As required in our Constitution, the Pulpit Review conducted our rabbinical review last month. We sought a pulpit review process that reflects the covenantal relationship between the rabbi and the congregation. Our process was undertaken with the spirit for how the congregation and the rabbi are working together to carry out the mission of the congregation. Although the report submitted to the Board of Trustees focused solely on the role of the rabbi, we believe that an important step has been taken towards developing a culture of an ongoing mutual review process. A mutual review may ultimately help not only identify where our rabbi can grow, but also may focus on areas where the congregation can be accountable for itself. Both the rabbi and committee are deeply appreciative and grateful for the meaningfulness of the sacred relationship that is embodied and supported by these efforts.

The pulpit committee has spent many hours discussing the methods to achieve its obligation to evaluate the Rabbi. It has spent even more hours in preparing the actual evaluation.

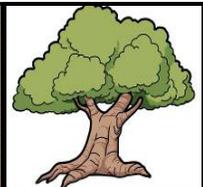
The methodology involved meeting with Rabbi Plost, discussing our collective knowledge of the rabbi's performance, soliciting input from the congregation and reviewing both written and oral feedback from the membership.

The results of our evaluation are for the most part extremely positive with some areas open to improvement. These have been discussed with Rabbi Plost and we feel confident that progress has been made.

In closing, we concur with the following quote from one of our congregants: "He (Rabbi Plost) embodies the values, ideals and direction that our Temple needs to thrive. His warmth, knowledge of Torah, leadership and ability to counsel will drive our congregation forward."

Respectfully submitted by Lew Metzner, Pulpit Committee Chair

In order to save a tree or two, printed calendars are only available upon request.
Contact Michelle in the office to arrange to pick up a copy.



NOTES FROM THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

Despite cold weather and Winter Storm Jonas, we still managed to learn about planting trees in springtime ("AVIV" in Hebrew). Under direction of guitarist and vocalist Dr. Doug Becker, during our Family Activity Day, the youngest children learned a song and dance routine about "Olive Trees are Growing", in Hebrew.

They also studied why trees ("ETZIM") are so important for us as Adonai's partner protecting Planet Earth.

And it's not just the trees! Animals seek protection and food all through the year, so our students made fully edible feeders to hang on tree branches until leaves and berries reappear.

Mazel tov to Ashley, David, Cohen and Elodi Rosenthal on the birth of their baby girl, and many thanks to Lisa Schiffman for so ably stepping into the role of lead preschool teacher!

Now we look forward to Purim...

"90 FOR 90: A Tribute to Jeanne Jacobs"

Mark your calendar! May 1, 2016

Congregation B'nai Abraham will be hosting a Gala to celebrate our beloved congregant, Jeanne Jacobs on her ninetieth birthday. There will be delicious food, drinks and special entertainment.

Additionally there will be exclusive auctions (live and silent) to help raise funds to support our synagogue. We are asking members of the congregation to donate items for the auction that will help us to raise money for the sustainability of our synagogue.

Here are some suggestions of what you might donate:

- Restaurant gift certificates
- Bed and Breakfast gift certificates
- Wine tasting gift certificates
- Theatre tickets
- Sporting event tickets
- Original art: paintings, photos, sculptures, pottery
- Hand-knit items: scarves, afghans, baby items, etc.
- Judaica items
- Themed gift baskets such as wine, food or pet
- Spa/beauty certificates
- Designer handbags, totes or travel bags

Thank you for helping with this important fundraiser. If you would like to discuss your donation, please contact:

Robbie Greenberg
[301-797-7265](tel:301-797-7265) robbieg56@gmail.com
 or Barby Weiss
[301-791-6098](tel:301-791-6098), Barby@myactv.net

We will be happy to discuss your generous contribution. Items may be dropped off at Robbie Greenberg's house.

We are able to keep our annual support low because the congregation supports our fundraisers and we know you will love this one. The tickets will be sent out on March 16. If you know anyone who is not a member of the temple but who was a student, colleague or friend of Jeanne's please let them know of this opportunity to celebrate Jeanne's contribution to the community.

PURIM



SAVE THE DATE:
 Purim festivities will begin Friday March 18 at 5:30 The Oneg Committee is providing hors d'oeuvres. We urgently hope you will make reservations and pay before the

event. However, we want everyone to come, so if you forget to pay ahead of time, you can come at 5:30 and someone will collect your money. No money or reservations for the cabaret portion of the evening will be accepted after the Megillah reading starts at 6:15. The cabaret starts at 7:30. Syd has lined up a wonderful group of acts for your entertainment. On Sunday morning there will be a Megillah reading especially for the children and a carnival in the afternoon. Children are encouraged to bring their friends.



Yahrzeits

March 4, 2016

- * Helen Pashen
- * Pearl Rosen
- * Fabian Kline
- * Sylvia Kurtz
- Margarete Fifield
- Robert Rosen
- Samuel Henry
- * Ethel G. Albert
- Rachel Cohen
- Jettie Cohen
- * Richard Grumbacher
- Leonard Rosenbloom

March 11, 2016

- Jacob Meyers
- Bertha Miller
- Dora S. Nathanson
- Frieda Behr
- * Fanny Green
- * Meyer Lahn
- * Archie Robert Cohen
- Jacob Greenberg
- Catherine Kozak
- Lillian Metzner
- David Weidenfeld
- Hank Becker
- * Gisela Holzer
- * Esther Goodman
- * Rose Greenberg
- Joseph Sirni
- * Caroline Harris

March 18, 2016

- * Sarah Weidenfeld
- Harry Macht
- * Sara Leslie Goldman Fite
- * Frederick Ungar
- Sylvan Silverman
- * Moses Saltzman
- * Isaac H. Taylor
- Ann Eldridge Hall
- * Simon Berkson
- Ruth Dolinsky
- * Samuel Granet

March 25, 2016

- Julius Amper
- Beth Armel
- * Eugene Baer
- Jesse Greenberg
- Jack David Kanter
- * Sani Tehrani
- Eva Nora Lyon Schwartz
- * William Herbert Smith
- Henry Cramer
- * Rae Ruben
- * Dr. Isadore B. Lyon

*** Denotes
Yahrzeit Plaque
in Sanctuary**

THE POTTER'S BOWL IS MOVING

The 2016 Potter's Bowl has a new date. This year it will be held on November 6, 2016. Tickets will go on sale in October.

Please save the date and tell all of your friends about this change. We hope to see you all there for another wonderful evening.

Remember: All proceeds benefit the Community Free Clinic.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Sunday	March	6	Brunch	10:30 am	Social Hall
Sunday	March	13	Books & Bagels	1:30 pm	Location: Sybil's home
Friday	March	18	Purim Festivities	5:30 pm	Social Hall
Sunday	March	20	Purim Carnival		
Sunday	April	17	Jewish Food Festival		
Saturday	April	23	Passover Community Seder		
Sunday	May	1	'90 for'90 A Tribute to Jeanne Jacobs' Gala		
Friday	May	8	Yom HaShoah Shabbat Service & Presentation		

Recently, there was a documentary about Jewish film producers, writers, musicians in which it mentioned at length the significance of the words to “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” written by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg and the majority of people had no idea of the significance of the lyrics. Honestly, this interpretation of the song would never have occurred to me.

Simcha Jacobovici is a Canadian-Israeli filmmaker and journalist. He is a three-time Emmy winner for “Outstanding Investigative Journalism” and a New York Times best selling author. He’s also an adjunct professor in the Department of Religion at Huntington University, Ontario.

At the 2014 Oscars, they celebrated the 75th anniversary of the release of the “Wizard of Oz” by having Pink sing “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” with highlights from the film in the background. But what few people realized, while listening to that incredible performer singing that unforgettable song is that the music is deeply embedded in the Jewish experience.

The film came out on January 1, 1939. This was less than two months after the notorious Krystalnacht – night of the crystal – when Jewish businesses were looted, synagogues attacked and Jewish storefronts had their windows smashed by the Nazi regime in Germany. WWII was exactly 8 months away. In other words, the Holocaust was about to begin. Six million Jews would be murdered – one million of them children – for no other reason other than that they were Jews.

In the prelude to this orgy of murder, three great revolutionary movements were incubated in the Jewish towns and villages of Germany & Eastern Europe: Communism, Zionism & Americanism. The Communists tried to avert the impending destruction of European Jewry by doing away with all Nationalism and creating a utopian Communist society where Jews would not be persecuted because no one would be persecuted. There would be no nations and no religions. Kind of John Lennon’s Utopian “Imagine”. The Zionists attempted to overcome Jewish powerlessness by empowering Jews. Nations would not disappear right away, they said. Rather, the only way to avert the destruction of world Jewry was for Jews to go back to their ancient homeland and establish themselves as a People. Only that way, when the great melding of humanity would happen, Jews could join the Community of Nations. For their part, those Jews that emigrated to America – especially in the great waves at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century – believed that the solution to the “Jewish question” had already been invented – America!

Whereas Communists wanted to assimilate in the lands that they lived in, and Zionists wanted to assimilate on a National level i.e., let’s create Israel so we can be a “nation like any other nation”, for millions of imperiled Jews assimilation was possible only in America. In America, they argued, everyone assimilates. Of course, many came to America to physically survive. They had no desire to give up their identity. But many others saw America not as a land of refuge or opportunity, but as a dreamland that exists “somewhere over the rainbow.” In that land, they thought, “skies are blue and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true”.

When the clouds of anti-Semitism were gathering over Europe – as they are once again gathering now – out of the collective Jewish angst that the immigrants brought to America, a handful of Jews translated their assimilationist fantasies onto a new medium – film. As Neal Gabler has so remarkably documented in “An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood”, all the Hollywood studios were created by Jewish immigrants. Columbia Pictures was founded by Adolph Zukor from Hungary, Universal was founded by Carl Laemmle from Germany, MGM by Louis B. Mayer from Belarus, Warner Brothers by Polish immigrants Harry, Albert, Sam and Jack Warner (Jack was the only brother born in North America). The list goes on. The genius of these “moguls” was that they were able to translate shtetl dreams into American feature films. Suddenly, their fantasies of white picket fences, strong fathers, loving neighbors and a society where race and religion didn’t matter became everyone’s fantasies. “Americanism” morphed into “Hollywoodism”, and Hollywoodism replaced the real America with the America of the films. For example, the American army was segregated up to and including WWII. But in Hollywood films, the American army was integrated and that’s how we remember the Second World War – blacks and whites fighting together in platoons that never existed. Similarly with the Westerns, bad guys with high boots terrorized religious townspeople until a new sheriff rode into town didn’t actually happen in the American West. But the Hollywood Jews managed to take the experience of Eastern European Jews terrorized during pogroms by Ukrainian Cossacks and converted it into the classic American Western.



The fantasies of immigrant Jews wanting to be “real” Americans were popularized not only by Hollywood producers – there were also the Broadway and Tin Pan Alley Jews. It is no accident, for example, that the greatest Christmas songs of all time were written by Jews. For example, “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer” was written by Johnny Marks and “White Christmas” was penned by a Jewish liturgical singer’s (cantor) son, Irving Berlin.

But, perhaps, the most poignant song emerging out of the mass exodus from Europe was “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”. The lyrics were written by Yip Harburg. He was the youngest of four children born to Russian-Jewish immigrants. His real name was Isidore Hochberg and he grew up in a Yiddish speaking, Orthodox Jewish home in New York. The music was written by Harold Arlen, a cantor’s son. His real name was Hyman Arluck and his parents were from

Lithuania. Together, Hochberg and Arluck wrote “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” which was voted the 20th century’s number one song by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). In writing it, the two men reached deeply into their immigrant Jewish consciousness – framed by the pogroms of the past and the Holocaust about to happen – and wrote an unforgettable melody set to near prophetic words.

Read the lyrics in their Jewish context and suddenly the words are no longer about wizards and Oz, but about Jewish survival:

Somewhere over the rainbow
Way up high,
There’s a land that I heard of
Once in a lullaby.

Somewhere over the rainbow
Skies are blue,
And the dreams that you dare to dream
Really do come true.

Someday I’ll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are far behind me.
Where troubles melt like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That’s where you’ll find me.

Somewhere over the rainbow
Bluebirds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow.
Why then, oh why can’t I?

If happy little bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow
Why, oh why can’t I?

The Jews of Europe could not fly. They could not escape beyond the rainbow. Harburg was almost prescient when he talked about wanting to fly like a bluebird away from the “chimney tops”. In the post-Auschwitz era, chimney tops have taken on a whole different meaning than the one they had at the beginning of 1939.

Pink’s mom is Judith Kugel. She’s Jewish of Lithuanian background. As Pink was belting the Harburg/Arlen song from the stage at the Academy Awards, I wasn’t thinking about the movie. I was thinking about Europe’s lost Jews and the immigrants to America. I was then struck by the irony that for two thousand years the land that the Jews heard of “once in a lullaby” was not America, but Israel. The remarkable thing would be that less than ten years after “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” was first published, the exile was over and the State of Israel was reborn.

Perhaps, “the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true”.

IN SEARCH OF A HOST FAMILY

After a year in the United States living with us and going to BISFA to further her art & advanced academic education and receiving much more advanced academics, our high school student, Hannah Levi, a Jewish student from Honduras, would like to stay in the US, and specifically at BISFA to complete her HS degree.

As this year comes to an end, Hannah has told us that she would like to graduate from BISFA, and so we are now actively seeking a family willing to give Hannah the chance to do that. She is currently in 11th grade. Such an opportunity would have to be provided by a Washington County resident.

Hosting an international student like Hannah means more than providing a bed and meals. As her new American family, you'll welcome her into your home, bringing her to synagogue with you, share your everyday lives, and grow as you get to know one another. Her Mom is very eager for Hannah to stay with a Jewish family, and provides about \$300.00 a month in food costs.

This is a unique opportunity for any family.

Please contact Bill or Robin Hollin or Rabbi Plost for more information.

Bill: Montanahornplayer@yahoo.com 406-546-4049
Robin: robinhollin@yahoo.com 406-546-4050

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The Religious Practices committee met on February 2, 2016. We are fortunate to have Josh Muyderman join our Committee.

Purim: We decided to have the corn beef cabaret on Friday night, March 18. The evening begins at 5:30. Come then to begin a fun-filled evening with a social hour and hors d'oeuvres. If you have not already paid, you can still pay at that time but, not once the service begins. So, please be sure to come at 5:30 if you have not yet paid. The service and Megillah reading will begin at 6:15 end at 7:15 respectively.

The Oneg Committee is making delicious hors d'oeuvres for the 5:30 social hour and the Lachman's are making the corned beef meal.

ONEGS - MARCH SCHEDULE

Friday	March	4	Liz Krell, Chair; Ed Marks
Friday	March	11	Hanna & Jeff Pearlman, Chairs; Jim Oppenheim
Friday	March	18	Susan & Alan Levin, Chairs; Leah & Tom Neveil, Stacie Noll, Vic Kronstadt
Friday	March	25	Sarah Gamerman, Chair: Jackie & Alex Betke, Joan & Doug Becker, Laura Croft & Tim Rohrer

CARING COMMITTEE

The Caring Committee provides care, companionship and assistance to members of our congregation and their immediate families in need due to ill health, age or non-financial crisis or catastrophe.

Chair: Sharon Metzner - receives initial calls from the rabbi: sharonmetz@aol.com (301) 739-2972
Robbie Greenberg - for meals, as needed: robbieg56@gmail.com (301) 797-7265
Barby Weiss - for transportation needs: barby@myactv.net (301) 791-6098
Sharon Wagshal - for home visits or outings: sharwag@aol.com (301) 797-3220

MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TODAY

Donations to the Congregation are a meaningful way to congratulate friends on Simchas or to show that you care in times of sorrow.

Contributions may be designated to any of our funds (see below). If a specific fund is not designated, the money will go into our General Fund.

For a minimum contribution of \$10.00 a printed card is sent. An individually hand-calligraphed card will be sent for any contribution of \$18.00 or more.

The minimum contribution to the Endowment Trust Fund is \$10.00

To make contributions to ANY FUND, including the CHAI CAMPAIGN, please mail or call:

*Mrs. Renee Kramer
1102 Oak Hill Avenue
Hagerstown, MD 21742
(301) 733-2093*

General Fund, Endowment Fund, Cemetery Fund, Rabbi's Discretionary Fund, Young Adult Fund, Harold & Jeanne Jacobs Fund, Youth Group Fund, Sharon Wagshal Religious School Fund, 'Tree of Life', and the Adolph & Hannah Baer Trust Fund

PLANT A TREE IN ISRAEL



Planting a tree in Israel is the perfect way to show you care. You can plant trees for all occasions and help green the land of Israel while sending a special gift to a friend or loved one. For each order, a beautiful certificate of your choice is mailed to the recipient with your own personal message. Plant trees for all of these occasions: birth, Bar or Bat mitzvah, graduation, wedding, birthday, get-well wish or in memory of someone special. Over the past 100 years, JNF has planted over 250 million trees in the land of Israel. The cost per tree is \$18 with the check made out to Congregation B'nai Abraham. We have an EZTree account at JNF and Carrol will place the order for your tree(s).

For more information & to order a tree, contact Carrol Lourie at: (240) 818-7555 (cell phone) or email her at: cglourie@gmail.com

Contact Rachel Nichols to learn how you can plan a self-sustaining gift to B'nai Abraham. (240) 308-1740 or HRDNichols@centurylink.net

REGULAR OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, Friday 8:30am - 1:30pm

Michelle Jardine, Office Administrator Email: bnaiabraham1@verizon.net Office phone: (301) 733-5039

DIRECTORY - WHO TO CALL

CONTRIBUTIONS

Renee Kramer (301) 733-2093
terrace708@myactv.net

PULPIT FLOWERS / TREES

Carrol Lourie (240) 818-7555
cglourie@gmail.com

TREE OF LIFE

Jerry Falke (301) 739-8456
falkeq@hotmail.com

Yahrzeit Plaques

Ben Chlebnikow (301) 791-6590
bchleb77@aol.com

DOR L' DOR

Joan Becker (301) 791-7175

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ariplost@gmail.com

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