

Yad Avraham Institute
WEEKLY TORAH COMMENTARY SERIES

Parshas Beshalach

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Sponsored in Loving Memory of:
Harav Avraham Dovid Mordechai z'tl
Ben Harav Yosef z'tl

Rabbi Avraham Perlow z'tl

And Honored Grandmothers

Tzeril Faiga Bas Shraga Feivel (Wachs) o'h'
And
Dvora Bas Sholom (Katz) o'h'

By
Joseph and Dvora Perlow
May Their Neshamos Have an Aliyah

Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

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About the Yad Avraham Institute

The Yad Avraham is a Torah learning institute located in midtown Manhattan. Classes are offered every day during the week starting at 5:50am and throughout the day. Classes in Chumash, Halacha, Hashkofa, Gemara, and general topics are well attended by businessmen, professionals, and students. The Yad Avraham invites you to participate in our extensive offerings of classes and events.

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Parshas Beshalach

Presented by

Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita*

Dean

1. The Ultimate Opportunity

The Midrash states, "Why does the Portion begin, **'It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people...?'** It is because the same mouth that had said, 'I will not send them out' now had said 'I will send them out.' What was the reward (for this change of position)? The Jewish people were given the mitzvah of not being permitted to harass the Egyptian. The mouth that initially rejected G'd by saying, 'Who is Hashem... I do not know Hashem' retracted and said during the plague of hail, **'This time I have sinned; Hashem is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones...'** What was his reward? G'd gave his people internment (a proper burial). As the Torah tells us that when the Sea closed upon the Egyptian army, they were buried (and not left to be devoured by the fish). "

Initially, Pharaoh was not willing to send out the Jewish people. However, he ultimately acquiesced and sent them out, not because he chose to do so, but rather he was compelled by the devastating plague of the killing of the firstborn (tenth plague). Although Pharaoh's decision to release the Jewish people was under coercion and not truly his free choice, he merited reward - the negative commandment not to harass an Egyptian. When Pharaoh recognized G'd and claimed, "Hashem is the Righteous One," although he did so under duress, he still merited the reward of having his people receive a respectful burial. Why should Pharaoh and his people, receive reward for actions that are not attributed to their free choice? Whatever had transpired was under extreme duress.

There is a principle, "G'd brings merit to those who are meritorious." This principle usually applies when G'd presents a unique opportunity to one to be able to make the proper choice - ultimately meriting its reward. However, regarding Pharaoh, he was not in a position of making a choice. He behaved as he did only because he was forced to do so. Nevertheless we see that G'd does not withhold reward from anyone - regardless if the positive outcome is attributed to his choice or not.

Pharaoh was the monarch of the most powerful and advanced pagan civilization in the world. When he declared his recognition of G'd by saying, "...Hashem is the Righteous One..." regardless of the fact that he was compelled to do so, it was a kiddush Hashem (sanctification of G'd's Name) that such a powerful and renowned pagan should recognize and extol the Omnipotent One. When one is the vehicle through which G'd's Name is sanctified, regardless of the circumstance, he is deserving of reward. Although Pharaoh was compelled to send out the Jewish people, the fact that he was the one through which the Name of G'd was sanctified, he was rewarded.

The Gemara in Tractate Sanhedrin tells us, "The grandchildren of Sancherev studied Torah in Bnei Brak." Sancherev's grandchildren were Shmaya and Avtalyon, the teachers of Hillel and Shammai. Sancherev was the Assyrian king who exiled the ten tribes, thereby cutting off the majority of the Jewish people from one another - and perhaps to be lost forever. Sancherev had come with millions of troops to destroy the Temple and Jerusalem. In one night, the angel Gabriel, was instructed by G'd to destroy the entire camp of Sancherev, leaving only himself, his sons and another individual alive. He was the embodiment of evil until the very end when he was killed by his own two sons. How does such an evil person merit having such grandchildren such as Shmaya and Avtalyon? Sancherev was one of the few individuals in the history of mankind who had conquered the world. He ruled the world supreme. For a man of this profile to be obliterated in one moment by G'd was the ultimate kiddush Hashem. His destruction demonstrated to the world that G'd coronates kings but He is the true Almighty King. In the merit of being the object of this world renowned kiddush Hashem, Sancherev merited to have special grandchildren.

There is a negative commandment that a Jew is not permitted to aggrieve his fellow. For example, one is not permitted to remind a convert or one who has returned to Judaism of their past. Despite this fact, The Torah continuously refers to Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, as "The high priest of Midian." Although he had converted

to monotheism and rejected his pagan beliefs, nevertheless the Torah refers to him in this pejorative manner. How do we understand this?

Yisro the High Priest of Midian was recognized by the world as being proficient in all forms of paganism. He had explored and understood every form of idolatrous worship before choosing to convert to monotheism. Despite his level of achievement and renown in the pagan world, he renounced all of it to become a monotheist. Thus, by referring to Yisro as the High Priest of Midian, who was in fact a monotheist, it is the ultimate kiddush Hashem. When one realizes Yisro's past renown and understands his present belief in monotheism, it will refute any consideration for paganism. Thus, it is to Yisro's merit not to his disgrace to be identified in this manner.

If one is a party to kiddush Hashem, because he is associated with something that is the ultimate good, he is deserving of reward. Since the world at large does not recognize truth, if one associates and identifies himself with the minority who is engaged in truth through the study of Torah (and its observance), he will merit reward because he identifies with something that causes kiddush Hashem.

2. *Converting Torah into A Perspective*

The Torah states, **“It happened when Pharaoh sent out the people that G'd did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines because it was near...”** The Midrash explains, “G'd did not lead the Jewish people by the way that was near to them because He had said, ‘If I take the Jewish people to the Land by way of the direct route, each person will take possession of his field and vineyard to be occupied with it. They will be distracted from their Torah study. Rather, I will take them into the desert and they will eat of the Manna and drink of the Wellspring. As a result, the Torah will be settled in their bodies.’” G'd did not want the Jewish people to enter into the Land of Israel immediately because they would become consumed with their material responsibilities. They needed to wander the desert for forty years in a spiritually insulated environment in order to allow the Torah to become integrated into their essence. During their trek in the desert G'd provided for every need of the Jewish people, thus enabling them to be fully immersed in their Torah study.

The generation that left Egypt and stood at Sinai is referred to as the *“dor deia* – the generation of understanding.” They witnessed many revealed miracles

and came face to face with G'd at Sinai. At the splitting of the Sea, the lowly maidservant had a level clarity and revelation to which even Yechezkel the prophet was not privy. If this was the level of revelation of the maidservant, one would think that the sages of the generation had a dimension of clarity that was beyond. Yet despite this, their experience with G'd was not sufficient to spiritually sustain the Jewish people and allow them to enter the Land. However, after spending forty years in the desert, they were sufficiently spiritually developed to enter the Land and assume its responsibilities without being distracted. Did the Jewish people gain a greater proficiency in Torah during the forty years in the desert, or did the experience in the desert cause a greater integration and internalization of the Torah itself?

Although it may be true that the Torah had “settled” within the generation that had wandered for forty years in the desert; however, regarding the future generations who were to be born into the responsibilities of the mundane, how could the Torah be secure within them?

The only way information can be transmitted in an effective manner is if the recipient truly appreciates the transmitter of the information and the information itself. When one assumes for himself a Torah mentor the impact of his teaching is not only based on his proficiency and ability to transmit the Torah to the student, but rather, it is because the rebbe becomes an inspirational role model. When the student perceives his rebbe as one who lives his Torah teachings in every aspect of his life and has internalized them, the student will value and revere the Torah to be the most important pursuit of his own life. The Torah becomes a primary focus of the student. Because of the spiritual dimension of the role model, the student is inspired and will subsequently integrate and internalize what he receives from his rebbe at a special level. In order for Torah to impact upon the student, it must be experienced within the context of reality and not limited to intellectualism (which is abstract).

The concept that one must make his Torah study primary and all other considerations secondary can only be applied if the individual recognizes that Torah itself is the ultimate accomplishment. By being fully engaged in Torah for forty years in the desert, with the consumption of the Manna (spiritual sustenance) and drinking from the wellspring, the Jewish people were able to engage in the mundane upon entry into the Land without being distracted. Because they had internalized the Torah to such a degree, they had recognized it to be the objective of life, and the mundane was only to facilitate that objective.

Consequently, the generation of the desert was able to impart this value and understanding to the future generations.

It is interesting to note that the Torah can only be integrated and internalized to the degree of being “settled” within one’s body, if one is not distracted to any degree. If there is any distraction, one cannot attain this sense of value to live one’s life solely dedicated to spirituality.

Yaakov, our Patriarch, had established a partnership between his two sons Yissachar and Zevulon in which Zevulon was responsible for providing every material need to Yissachar so that he should be fully engaged in Torah study without distraction. Chazal tell us that Zevulon did not merely financially assume the needs of Yissachar; rather he literally “placed the bread in their mouths.” Meaning, their physical needs were addressed and maintained continuously by Zevulon to the point that all Yissachar needed to do was to partake of the material that was provided for them. Therefore the tribe of Yissachar was able to attain a special level of clarity that no other tribe was able to attain. The experience of the Jewish people in the desert was identical to that of Yissachar because their material needs were fully maintained by G’d.

The Gemara tells us that Rebbe Akiva, one of the greatest members of the Tanaic period, had studied Torah uninterruptedly for twenty-four years. He achieved a level of proficiency and clarity that he could (intellectually) “uproot mountains and grind them together.” Because he embodied Torah to such a degree his ability to disseminate It was unique. When his students witnessed the Romans scathing the flesh off of his body, they wept. However, he said to them, “I was pained for this moment my entire life to demonstrate my love for G’d by giving my life for Him.” Rebbe Akiva viewed his death, despite the cruelty that was being brought upon him, as the ultimate opportunity and privilege to sanctify G’d’s Name. His students were not able to appreciate this, because Rebbe Akiva had integrated the Torah into his being at a unique level.

We are now able to understand the serious consequences of interrupting one’s Torah study. The Gemara in Tractate Nidarim tells us that one of the reasons the Jewish people were exiled to Egypt was because Avraham, our Patriarch, had interrupted his students from their Torah study to go to war against the Four Mighty Kings. If Avraham needed to go to battle against the Four Kings and required his students to participate, then why this was considered his failing? Since Avraham’s victory

against the Four Kings was not possible without Divine intervention/miracle, it was considered unnecessary to interrupt their Torah study and consequently, they could not achieve their ultimate level of clarity and internalization. Therefore he was punished.

3. The Power of Untainted Speech

The Torah tells us that when the Jewish people had seen the Egyptian army pursuing them, they raised their eyes and prayed to G’d. The Midrash states, “The Jewish people took hold of the craft of their Forefathers. As the verse in Yishaya states, ‘Fear not you, worm Yaakov...’ Why are the Jewish people compared to the worm? Although the cedar tree is mighty, when it is attacked by the worm it will be toppled by the gnawing of its mouth. Although the worm is soft, it is able to penetrate something that is hard (the cedar). Similarly, the only power that the Jew has is through his mouth – the power of tefillah (prayer). The nations of the world are compared to the cedars. As it states, ‘The Assyrians stood like the cedars of Lebanon. G’d smashed the cedars of Lebanon.’ When the Jew is overwhelmed by the nations of the world, he repents and then cries out to G’d in prayer.” As the Torah states regarding the blessing given by Yitzchak, our Patriarch, “The voice is the voice of Yaakov...” This is referring to the power of prayer and Torah study.

The Midrash does not state, “When the Jew is overwhelmed by the nations of the world he prays to G’d” rather it states, “he repents and then cries out to G’d.” The Jew first repents by reflecting and introspecting upon his own failings and then he prays. Meaning, the voice is the voice of Yaakov only if it had been purged from sin. If an evil person were to pray to G’d, his supplication would not be as effective as that of a righteous person. The mouth of the Jew only assumes the characteristic of the worm, to penetrate the mighty cedar, when it is pure (through repentance). It is then that G’d will respond to those prayers.

The Midrash concludes, “The Jewish people took hold of the craft of their Forefathers and cried out to G’d. Then He availed Himself to them. As its states, ‘You will seek out Hashem from there and you will Find Him.’” The Gemara in Tractate Rosh Hashanah cites a verse, **“Moshe said to the Jewish people – who is as great as our G’d? Whenever we call out to Him, He responds.”** However, the Prophet Yeshaya said to the Jewish people, “You should seek out G’d when He is found. Call to Him when He is close.” From the words of the Prophet it is indicated that one cannot beseech G’d at any time that one chooses.

How do we reconcile the words of the Prophet with the words of Moshe?

The Gemara answers that when a *tzibur*/quorum (a minimum of ten men) supplicates G'd, He responds to them whenever they call out to Him. However, regarding the individual, G'd responds during the time that He is closest and found – which is during the Ten Days of Repentance. Thus, the Prophet is referring to the individual beseeching G'd, while the Moshe is referring to communal prayer.

During the Ten Days of Repentance, the individual is able to beseech G'd effectively because He is close. However, regarding the community, G'd avails Himself by coming close to them when they repent and cry out to Him. Chofetz Chaim writes in the introduction to his work, Chofetz Chaim, that the power of speech of the Jew, regarding prayer and Torah study, is most effective only if it is pure. If one were to taint and vulgarize his mouth by speaking critically about his fellow (when it has no constructive value), lying, or speaking subject matter that is inappropriate, his power of speech will be minimized, thus, causing his prayer and Torah study to become ineffective. Although his prayers and Torah will be acknowledged by G'd, because they are emanating from a damaged and tainted source, they will be minimized. This is the reason the Midrash tells us that the Jewish people only assume the characteristic of a worm (to have the ability to penetrate something that is impregnable) when they first repent before they pray.

4. Sensing G'd in Our Lives

The Torah states, **“I shall sing to Hashem for He is exalted above the arrogant, having hurled horse with its rider into the sea.”** The Midrash states, “The verse tells us that G'd hurled ‘horse with its rider into the sea.’ (in the singular) Was there only one horse? Rather, they were considered as one horse before Him. ...Pharaoh had taken 600 of his elite chariot corps and his army, but they were destroyed as if they were only one. When is it considered as if they were only one? It is when the Jewish people do the Will of G'd, then all the nations of the world are valued no more than one chariot with its horse.” What does it mean to “do the Will of G'd?” Is it sufficient to fulfill the mitzvos as prescribed by the Torah?

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos cites an argument between Reb Yishmael and Reb Shimon Bar Yochai regarding how a Jew should invest his life. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai is of the opinion that one must invest

his life totally in Torah study without any degree of involvement in the attainment of the material. When one is engaged in Torah study at this level, his material needs will come through the labors of others. Reb Yishmael argues by citing the verse from the second paragraph of the Shema, **“If you will adhere to My mitzvos that I command you...you will bring in your harvest.”** Based on this, Reb Yishmael concludes that one must approach life in a conventional manner. One must do the Will of G'd and concurrently take the initiative for one's material needs. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai argues that the verse in the second paragraph in the Shema **“...you will bring in your harvest”** is actually referring to when the Jewish people are not doing the Will of G'd.

Although the second paragraph of the Shema begins with, **“If you will adhere to My mitzvos that I command you...”** evidently one's fulfilling the mitzvos meticulously is not necessarily doing the Will of G'd. Therefore one must bring in his own harvest. The act of doing mitzvos with proper intent (*l'shema*) is not sufficient to be considered doing the Will of G'd.

The Torah states in the portion of the curses (Tochachah) in the Book of Devarim that the reason the curses will come upon them (Jewish people) is because they did not serve G'd with joy and goodness of heart. The Torah is stating that although the Jew may have fulfilled the mitzvos meticulously and with the proper intent, nevertheless the person deserves to be punished. The reason for this is that when they performed the mitzvos, they did not express the joy and excitement that would indicate that they are truly privileged to fulfill the Will of G'd. Their performance of the mitzvos is viewed by G'd as being done in a begrudging manner. Thus, the position of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai can be understood as – although one performs the mitzvos meticulously if he does not do so with a joyous heart, he is not doing the Will of G'd. It is only when one is enthralled and inspired with the mitzvos that G'd provides all his material needs.

The Torah tells us in the Book of Vayikra in the portion of the curses that the Jewish people will merit unlimited bounty, **“If you will follow My Statutes and observe My commandments...”** Rashi cites Chazal who explain that this is when one “toils in Torah.” It is not sufficient to merely study Torah to merit bounty, but rather one must be dedicated to the point of “toil.” In essence this is similar to what is being said in the Tochachah (in the Book of Devarim) and the position of Reb Shimon Bar Yochai. If one truly valued Torah study as the ultimate opportunity/privilege it would be to him the equivalent of mining precious diamonds. It is without question that he would be motivated and excited to embark on this

opportunity. One will only merit the ultimate reward and blessing when one sees the mitzvos of G'd as a privilege. It is only then that the individual is considered to be doing the Will of G'd.

The verse states, "G'd said, "I gave you (the Jewish people) My most valuable commodity (the Torah)." If one does not recognize the Torah as such then he will not perform the mitzvos with a sufficient level of joy/goodness of heart nor will he toil in them. Chazal tell us that every Jew should aspire and state, "when will my accomplishments be as great as my Forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov."

Love for G'd is the only true catalyst to bring about full dedication and sense of privilege. If one truly loves G'd then the degree to which he will invest himself is unlimited. There is a positive commandment to love G'd. As it states, "**You shall love Hashem, your G'd...**" The following verse continues, "**Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them...**" Chofetz Chaim explains that the only way a Jew could have a true sense of love for G'd is through the study of Torah. By engaging in Torah one will gain an appreciation for who G'd is. There is something intrinsic in Torah study that enlightens and allows the Jew to internalize this reality. It is only then that he can truly feel privileged.

5. G'd Continuously Focuses on the Blood

(from Bo)

The Torah tells us that before the onset of the tenth plague (killing of the firstborn), the Jewish people were commanded to slaughter the Paschal lamb on the 14th and sprinkle its blood on the lintel and the doorposts of their houses. The verse states, "**I (G'd) shall go through Egypt on this night, and I shall strike every firstborn in the land of Egypt...The blood shall be a sign for you upon the houses where you are; when I see the blood I (pasachti alechem) shall pass over you (I will have mercy upon you); there shall be not a plague of destruction upon you when I strike in the land of Egypt.**"

Rashi cites Chazal, "What is meant by 'when I (G'd) will see the blood' – Everything is revealed before the Eyes of G'd? Rather G'd is saying 'I will focus upon you that you are engaged in My mitzvos. Because I will see that you are engaged in My mitzvos I will have mercy upon you and pass over your houses.'" What mitzvos are Chazal referring to when they explain that G'd will "see that you are engaged in My mitzvos?" Is it the initial mitzvah of sprinkling the blood on the lintel and doorposts

or is it engaging in the mitzvah of eating the Paschal lamb? Seemingly Chazal are referring to the eating of the Paschal lamb because it is that mitzvah in which the Jewish people were engaged at the time of the tenth plague. If so then what is the meaning of "When I will see the blood?"

Yechezkel the prophet states, "Then I (G'd) passed you and saw you wallowing in the bloods. I said to you: through the blood you will live, through the blood you will live." Chazal explain that the "bloods" to which the prophet Yechezkel is referring is the "blood of the Paschal Lamb (which was sprinkled)" and the "blood of circumcision." As a prerequisite to partaking of the Paschal sacrifice, the Jewish males in Egypt needed to be circumcised. G'd had seen the Jewish people in Egypt as "naked," meaning they were devoid of mitzvos (merit). In order to give them worthiness for redemption G'd gave them the mitzvos of circumcision and the Paschal sacrifice. Because they were "wallowing" in the bloods of these two mitzvos, G'd redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt.

It is interesting to note that G'd focused upon the "blood" of circumcision and the "blood" of the Paschal lamb, although it is only one aspect of these mitzvos. What is the significance of "blood?"

When one brings a sacrifice, the actual atonement takes place when the Kohen (Priest) sprinkles the blood. As the Gemara states, "there is no atonement – only through the blood." Although the Gemara in Tractate Pesachim tells us that when the Kohanim partake of the offering, their consumption of the sacrificial meat brings about atonement for the one who brought the sacrifice, their participation only brings the atonement to a more perfect level. The essence of atonement is facilitated through the sprinkling of the blood.

The Gemara tells us that if a sacrifice was slaughtered and the blood was received properly by the Kohen, yet the sacrificial meat was either lost or contaminated, the blood can no longer be sprinkled. The reason for this is, "If there is no flesh there is no blood." There must be a minimum amount of flesh to be eaten or burnt on the altar to allow the sprinkling of the blood. We see from this that there is a linkage between the blood and the flesh of the sacrifice.

The Torah tells us that there is a negative commandment that one is not permitted to eat blood because, "The blood is the life source (nefesh)." One's physicality is determined by the life source that lies within the blood. One's movement, emotion, and drive are rooted in the blood.

When G'd "saw the blood" of the Pascal sacrifice on the doorpost and lintel, it was a representation of the Jew's self-sacrifice and dedication to G'd. Despite his circumstance in Egypt as a slave, the Jew did not hesitate to slaughter the deity of Egypt and put its blood on the lintel and doorpost as G'd had commanded. The blood represents the feeling, sacrifice and dedication of the Jewish people to G'd. Thus, the blood revealed the pure intent of the Jew as he partook of the Pascal sacrifice. It was only to do the Will of G'd.

In addition, the fact that the Jewish males circumcised themselves, despite the pain and the counterintuitive aspect of mutilating oneself, was an indication of their self-negation to submit to the Will of G'd. When G'd saw the blood(s) as stated by Yechezkel the prophet, He deemed that the Jewish people should live due to the purity of these two mitzvos, which was expressed through the blood.

The Midrash tells us regarding sacrifices, that we only find the Name of G'd (Hashem YKVK) within the context of the Attribute of Mercy, as it states, "a sacrifice for Hashem (YKVK)." The appellation of Elokeem (Attribute of Justice) is never associated with the sacrifice. It is only through His Attribute of Mercy (YKVK) that the Jew can atone for his sins by bringing a sacrifice. Ramban explains that the sacrifice is received in place of the person himself. The sprinkling of the blood of the offering is the equivalent of the sinner's blood. The burning of the flesh of the sacrifice is equivalent to his remains being burnt. The blood is the source of life, feeling, and drive of the person. The body (flesh) of the animal is the receptacle for all that was experienced by the life source. If the flesh of the animal were to be contaminated or lost, one does not sprinkle the blood because the blood only has value within the context of the flesh. One only sins as a functioning human being.

YAD AVRAHAM DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

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Monday Through Friday

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| 5:50- 6:00 am | Chumash with Rashi |
| 6:00- 6:15 am | Pirkei Avos |
| 6:15- 6:30 am | Mishna Berurah |
| 6:30- 7:25 am | Halacha |
| 6:30 -6:45 am | Mussar |
| 6:45 -7:25 am | Talmud—Tractate Avodah Zorah |
| 7:25 - 8:20 am | Davening Followed by Breakfast |
| 8:20 - 8:45 am | Mishna |
| 9:00 -10:00 am | Daf Yomi |

2:00pm Mincha

Special Weekday Classes

Monday

11:15 – 12:15pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

12:30 – 1:30pm **Talmud: Pesachim**
Location: Shandholt 488 Madison Avenue
Between E.51st and E.52st

Tuesday

12:15 - 1:15pm **Torah Insight Based on the Parsha**
Location: Yad Avraham

Wednesday

11:30 – 12:30 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
Enter on 54th Street

1:00—2:00 pm Derech **Hashem**
Location: Yad Avraham

Thursday

10:30 –11:30am **Tehilim with Malbim**
Location: Yad Avraham

12:00 – 1:00 pm **Talmud: Sanhedrin**
Location: Sunrise Capital 641 Lexington (25th FL.)
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