# THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

# OHRNET

SHABBAT PARSHAT PINCHAS · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 19 TAMMUZ 5759 · JULY 3, 1999 · VOL. 6 NO. 38

# PARSHA INSIGHTS

# STATUS SIMPLE

"Pinchas...son of Aharon the kohen" (25:11)

ot so long ago, a member of a royal family died a violent and tragic death. There was an outpouring of unparalleled grief at this event.

That people should mourn a life cut off in its prime is understandable. Remarkable, however, was the spectacle of a world rending its clothes and beating its breast at the demise of a self-confessed adulteress. Youth, beauty and royalty apparently can gild marital treachery and turn it into the stuff of true life romance.

This singular flood of tears, however, was not a mere aberration of public sense and sensibility. From time immemorial there has existed such a double standard in society. Throughout history, kings have exercised what the French in their exquisitely delicate manner call the droit de seigneur — "the right of the master." This was the accepted custom of the ruler to claim the first night of any marriage.

In this week's Parsha, Pinchas puts an end to a plague which has killed 24,000. The cause of this plague was a spree of immorality with the women of Midian and Moav. Instead of applauding his action, however, the people accused him of murder. Interestingly, the accusation leveled at him was that: "This grandson of an idol-worshipper had the gall to kill a prince of Israel." If you think about it, what does the social status of Pinchas have to do with whether or not his actions were justified? And what does it matter that the man he justly executed was a prince?

"For when we seek to bring each other to a state of completion, to *shalom*, the world reaches its ultimate fulfillment."

What is considered adultery amongst the hoi-poloi is gilded as romance amongst the glitterati. Status makes everything permissible.

# PROCESSED PEACE

"My covenant of peace" (25:12)

person wants peace. Every person wants to sit under his fig tree, secure that no one will come and take away his family and his money. Yet almost since the beginning of time, peace has been

elusive, and often, illusory.

If there's one Hebrew word that everyone knows, it's *shalom*. "Peace." *Shalom* is the Hebrew form of greeting. Why *do* we greet others with *shalom*?

The Talmud tells us that it is forbidden to say *shalom* in a bathhouse, because *Shalom* is G-d's name, and thus not fitting to be uttered in a

bathhouse.

What does it mean that G-d's name is *Shalom*?

Real shalom doesn't exist in this world because shalom means perfection, completion. This world was created lacking. That's the way it's meant to be. This world strives to arrive somewhere beyond itself for its completion.

The Hebrew word for the "earth" is aretz, from the root "ratz," "to run," because this world is always running, moving towards its completion. However its completion can come only from above, from Heaven. The word "Heaven" in Hebrew is shamayim, from the root "sham" which means "there." This world is always "running" to "there" — outside and beyond itself.

This world contains many wonderful things, but perfection isn't one of them. Perfection is beyond the scope of creation.

continued on page three

ashem tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive Hashem's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action — executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. Hashem commands Moshe that the people must maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites because they lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. Hashem instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to Bnei Yisrael. The number of the Levites' families is recorded. The daughters of Tzlofchad file a claim with Moshe: In

the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks Hashem for the ruling, and Hashem tells Moshe that the daughters' claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. Hashem tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks Hashem to designate the subsequent leader of the people, and Hashem selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

### HAFTARAH

ivrei Yirmiyahu" is the first haftara of the "Three-of-Affliction" trilogy read between 17 Tammuz and 9 Av. It contains Jeremiah's ominous vision of Israel's impending ruin and first exile at the hand of Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar.



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 Submit your questions to ASK THE RABBI at www.asktherabbi.org or E-Mail info@ohr.org.il — set subject to "ASK THE RABBI." Yirmiyahu's vision of a menacing, almond-wood rod indicates that the time of Israel's punishment is ripening, like the hasty ripening of an almond; a cauldron boiling at its north lip warns that Israel's northern neighbor, Babylon, will wield that rod. Yet if they repent, G-d will remember their "youthful kindness" when, as a fledgling nation, they forsook a familiar Egypt and like a starry-eyed bride followed G-d into a frightening wasteland.

# SUPER VISION

albim, in his introduction to the Book of Yirmiyahu, notes that this book contains more "irregularities" in spelling and grammar than any other book of Tanach. This, explains Malbim, is due to the exalted nature of Yirmiyahu's vision, which can almost be compared to that of Moshe's. Just as the Five

#### УIRМIУАНU 1:1- 23

Books of Moses contain untold layers of meaning, many of them hinted through oddities of spelling and grammar, so too, the book of Yirmiyahu reaches beyond the normal bounds of expression due to Yirmiyahu's lofty grasp, above that of most other prophets.

The Sages sum up the Book of Yirmiyahu as "entirely destruction." Even in English "a jeremiah" is short for any predictor of gloom and doom. Why, indeed, did G-d specifically invest such a great Prophet, one of the very greatest, with the vision of Israel's destruction and exile?

"All G-d does is for the good," say our Sages. Perhaps Yirmiyahu's exalted perception was the very reason he was chosen to bring word of the exile; from his lofty vantage point, he — like no other in his generation — could perceive the joy hidden in the tears.

#### I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Moshe's prayer for G-d to appoint a leader in his stead (*Numbers* 27:16-17) contains exactly 28 words, corresponding to the 28 years which that leader, Yehoshua, led the people. Thus, in connection with Yehoshua's conquering the Land, the verse states (*Deuteronomy* 8:18) that G-d grants *koach*-power (*koach* = 28) to prosper in the Land.

• Ba'al Haturim

# PARSHA INSIGHTS

continued from page one

This is why G-d's name is Shalom. G-d is the Perfection of all the lacking of this world. Every single thing in this world finds its perfection, its fulfillment, in Him. It's not here. It's above. It's "there."

#### THE PEACE CONNECTION

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz greets the harvesters by using the name of G-d. From here we learn that a Jew may use G-d's Name as a greeting, and it is not considered taking Heaven's Name in vain. In fact, there is an opinion that we are *obliged* to greet each other with G-d's name by saying "Shalom." Why should we be obliged to greet each other using G-d's name? What's wrong with "Good Morning!" or "Have a nice day!"

Sometimes we look at other people and we think that we are a million miles from them. But no man is an island to himself. When two people meet, the essence of their meeting is to make each other more complete. The fundamental principle of interpersonal relationships is that when I meet my fellow being, I am coming to effect his or her *shleimut* (completion). That's what I'm doing in this world.

G-d placed us in a world which demands to be perfected. Our whole relationship with the world and everything in it is a "Peace Process" — a process of bringing every person and every blade of grass to a state of *shleimut* — the true definition of peace.

In Parshat Vayetze, Yaakov lays his head down to sleep on some stones.

The stones all vie to be the stone on which Yaakov will sleep. The result is that all the stones gather together and became one stone. What do we learn from this? The message of the stones is that completion results from the connection of disparate entities into a single whole.

When we connect with other people on whatever level, whether in business or in love, whether in school on the bus, our entire connection between ourselves and our fellow beings must be with the intention to bring the other person to a state of completion. That's why a Jew is obliged to greet others with "Shalom!" For when we seek to bring each other to a state of completion, to shalom, the world reaches its ultimate fulfillment.

And that's the real peace process.

# LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

# YAM KINNERET (SEA OF GALILEE)

Iso referred to in various cultures as the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Tiberias, this beautiful harp-shaped lake is one of the most beautiful sites of the Land, and one of its most important sources of fresh water and fish.

Some say that its very name comes from its similarity to the *kinor* (Hebrew for harp), either because of its shape or the musical sound of its waves.

Lying 212 meters below the level of the

Mediterranean, this lake is 13 miles long and 8 miles at its greatest width, with a circumference of 33 miles.

The beauty of the area and the swimming and boating that the lake affords have made the Kinneret region a popular resort area for Israeli residents as well as visitors from abroad. The city of Teveria (Tiberias) is the most important of the cities in the area and the site of some famous tombs.

לע"ג מרת לאה יהודית בת ר' נפתלי אריה ע"ה י"ט תמוז ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לע"ג מרת נחמה בת ר' אברהם ע"ה י"ט תמוז תש"מ ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. WEEKLY DAF

Вепта 34 - 40

# SHALL WE DANCE?!

ou are at a sheva berachot meal on a Shabbat or holiday and everyone is singing to bring joy to the chatan and kallah. Now you see them get up to dance and you are drawn to join them. Then you recall that you learned in the mishna that our Sages prohibited dancing and clapping hands on these holy days. So why are all these truly observant Jews doing so?

But you then try to recollect what the *gemara* states as the reason for this ban. If dancing and clapping hands will be permitted, say our Sages, one may be drawn into making musical instruments to supply the music which enhances such activities.

Now you have the key to the behavior of your dancing friends. Tosefot (*Beitza 30a*) explains that this decree was applicable in Talmudic times when many people had the expertise of making musical instruments. In our days, however, when such expertise is uncommon, there is no prohibition on dancing and clapping.

Rema in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 339:3 cites Tosefot's lenient opinion. However, the author of the Shulchan Aruch, the Beit Yosef, only quotes the mishnaic ban, with no mention of it not applying to our times. Therefore, some authorities discourage relying on Tosefot's lenient opinion except when such dancing is for a mitzvah purpose, such as in the case at hand (Mishna Berura 339:10).

Halachic authorities throughout the last centuries have gone to great pains to point out that even for the sake of a mitzvah it is forbidden to *play* a musical instrument on Shabbat, and certainly to conduct any form of

dancing involving men and women together. (See Biur Halacha, ibid, and Iggrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 2:100.)

• Beitza 36b

# A SAGA OF TWO SALTS

Sodom-salt is a mysterious ingredient which keeps popping up throughout the Talmud. In Mesechta Chulin (105b) it is described as a salt which can cause blindness if it contacts the eyes. This is why we wash our fingers before saying the blessings after a meal.

Rashi here describes this salt as being very thin and therefore capable of clinging to the fingers without being detected. Our gemara distinguishes between two kinds of salt regarding whether they become part of the food they flavor (and thus can be carried on the holiday only as far as the food can). Rashi concludes that the one which is considered assimilated is the thinner, more soluble Sodom-salt. (Maharim Shif points out that this apparently contradicts Rashi's commentary in Bava Batra (20b) where he describes Sodom-salt as "thick and hard as a rock.")

The salt with which Sodom-salt is contrasted both here and in *Bava Batra* is Astrokhanite salt. This name — explains the early Talmudic dictionary-type commentary Rabbi Natan the "Aruch" — is based on the area where this salt is found. Rashash suggests that this area is Astokhan (near the Asian part of Russia where the Volga River flows into the Caspian Sea) whose salt is distributed throughout Russia by way of the Volga River.

• Beitza 39a

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# PARSHA Q&A?

- I. Why was Pinchas not originally a kohen?
- 2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
- 3. What does the yud and hey added to the family names testify?
- 4. Korach and his congregation became a "sign." What do they signify?
- 5. Why did Korach's children survive?
- 6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
- 7. Who was Yaakov's only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
- 8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
- 9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the midbar. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one child, a daughter. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the daughter get?

- 10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na'aman all have in common?
- II. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
- 12. What trait did Tzlofchad's daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
- 13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad's daughters' names?
- 14. Tzlofchad died for what sin?
- 15. Why did Moshe use the phrase "Hashem of the spirits of all flesh"?
- 16. Moshe "put some of his glory" upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
- 17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
- 18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
- 19. Why is Shavuot called Yom Habikkurim?
- 20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

# PARSHA Q&A!

#### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

- 25:13 Kehuna (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born after they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon's grandson, was born prior to the anointing.
- 2. 25:18 For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
- 3. 26:5 That the families were truly children of their tribe.
- 4. 26:10 That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
- 5. 26:11 Because they repented.
- 6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.

- 7. 26:46 Serach bat Asher
- 8. 26:53 Seven years. Seven years.
- 9. 26:55, 27:8 Two portions.
- 10. 26:24,56 They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers' wombs.
- 26:64 In the incident of the meraglim only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter Eretz Yisrgel.
- 12. 27:1 Love for the Land of Israel.
- 13. 27:1 To teach that they were equal in greatness.
- 14. 27:3 Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter Eretz Yisrael after the sin of the meraglim.

- 15. 27:16 He was asking Hashem, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person's level.
- 16. 27:20 That Yehoshua's face beamed like the moon.
- 17. 28:3 At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
- 18. 28:15 For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
- 19. 28:26 The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
- 20. 29:18 The seventy nations.

# KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

#### **Sheldon from New York asked:**

Why does the Torah wait till this week's Parsha to tell us the names of the Israelite prince and the Midianite princess who sinned together? Why doesn't it say this in last week's Parsha when it happened?

#### **Answer:**

G-d is concerned even for the dignity of evildoers; He does not want to publicize their names for no reason. Therefore, when the Torah describes their sin, it omits their names. However, in this Parsha,

which describes Pinchas' reward, it is to Pinchas' credit that he courageously stood up against a wellknown Prince and a Princess. Therefore, for the sake of Pinchas, the Torah here tells their names.

• Ohr Hachaim

# Mezuzah Needlepoint

Gloria Weber from Sherman Oaks, CA <gloweb@usa.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am making a needlepoint cover case for a mezuzah and there are two inserts available. One is handwritten, the other one is reproduced. Is there a religious difference, or just a price difference?

Dear Gloria Weber,

The "insert" is the actual *mezuzah* and it must be handwritten.

The laws of *mezuzah* are precise and complex. For example, the *mezuzah* must be written by a knowledgeable, qualified Jewish scribe; it must be written with special ink upon animal parchment set aside expressly for this purpose. Only certain erasures are allowed.

All these conditions and more make a valid mezuzah considerably more expensive than an invalid one. This plus rampant ignorance has opened the mezuzah market to a flood of bogus mezuzahs. A recent study found upwards of 90 percent of all mezuzahs were invalid. "ludaica" dealer who sells photocopied "mezuzahs" is either totally ignorant about mezuzahs or is simply dishonest. Either way, any mezuzah he sells, even a handwritten one, is certainly not going to be valid. The only way to get a valid mezuzah is to buy it from a qualified, knowledgeable, G-d fearing scribe or retailer.

# **Locust Focus**

Impoverished <fowl@gte.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi, With the 17-year locusts in the news, a question has popped up, the answer to which has always eluded me. I've always heard and read in the Bible that locusts are "clean." But it's never been explained HOW TO EAT A LIVE LOCUST! Are the legs, head, and/or wings removed first, or is nothing wasted? And as for the "pickled locust," is there a recipe? Signed: Impoverished.

Dear Impoverished,

I hope you're not so impoverished that you have no bread and you need to eat locusts!

Although some types of locusts are kosher, we no longer eat them because we have lost the tradition for how to distinguish which ones are kosher and which ones aren't. Yemenite Jews do still have this tradition, and therefore they can eat them. They don't eat them live, however, as this would transgress "don't be disgusting," just as we don't eat live fish.

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 13:1
- Leviticus 11:43

# THE HOUSE THAT RUTH BUILT

Anonymous from Singapore <romans5@singnet.com.sg> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I'm involved in a musical production called "Fiddler on the Roof" by Singapore Lyric Theatre. I require the information below in order to portray accurately Jewish customs and traditions: I)During a wedding, is there a special container that is used to contain the Holy water? 2)During the Sabbath Friday night, what do the Jews normally eat? Will there be Holy Communion? 3)When will the head of the house-

hold pronounce blessings over his children? For blessings on daughters, does the father bless them to be like Rachael and Leah or Ruth and Esther? Thank you very much for your answers!

Dear Anonymous,

There are no "holy water" or "communion" rituals in Judaism. Traditional Sabbath foods are braided bread, wine, fish and meat and potato kugel (pudding).

Before the Friday night meal, the father blesses his daughters to be like Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. The "Fiddler" lyrics "May you be like Ruth and like Esther" are one of that show's many inaccuracies.

# DOG GONE

Alan Novak from Raleigh, NC <zayden@intrex.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I am a volunteer at the North Carolina State Veterinarian school. One of the vets is minister also, who is with people when they have to put an animal to sleep. She asked me if there is a specific prayer for lewish people when their animal has to be but to sleep. Please advise if there is something in the Torah or elsewhere in the Bible. Thank you for taking the time to answer this ques-After we had to put our Labrador to sleep, who we had for over 13 years, we went to shul (synagogue) on Shabbos and said kaddish for a special member of our family.

Dear Alan Novak,

Although it can be traumatic putting a pet to sleep, there is no special prayer that one recites, and saying "kaddish" for a dog would not be appropriate. But a person can always pray to G-d for any of his needs, and in any language.

# Favorite Jewish Wine

Baruch Greenbaum from Brooklyn, NY <farblungrd@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Why does wine have such a significant role in Judaism?

Dear Baruch Greenbaum,

To answer your question, I have to tell you a joke:

A leader of a house of worship was giving a fiery sermon: "If I had all the beer in the world," he said, "I'd take it and throw it in the river; and if I had all the wine in the world, I'd take it and throw it in the river! And if I had all the whiskey in the world, I'd take it and throw it into the river." He sat down. The choir leader then stood and said with a grin, "All please rise for the singing of Hymn #258: 'We Shall Gather at the River.' "

The above story illustrates two ways to look at wine: The

sermonizer believes that wine is intrinsically evil and must be totally avoided, while the choir leader implies that hedonistic immersion in wine is not so bad. The Jewish view is far from both of these views. We believe that the enjoyment of wine, like other physical pleasures, can and should be used in the service of G-d.

Wine is mentioned in Psalms as something that "gladdens the heart of man," and hence it is used to gladden and inspire us at various times — like *kiddush* on Shabbat (sanctification of Shabbat), at a circumcision and a wedding.

Wine symbolizes a completed and perfected human life. It starts off as an inferior product (grape juice = childhood, immaturity) but must go through fermentation (struggle = challenge of evil) and only then does it become the superior product, wine. We drink it on occasions where we have passed a certain fermentation process (marriage) or at times, like Shabbat, which represent the final product of human life, the World to Come.

#### Sources:

- Psalms 104
- Sefer Hachinuch 31

# **PUBLIC DOMAIN**

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

#### Re: Too Far Side (Parshat Shlach):

To the question: "Are comic strips and cartoons depicting G-d as a human (such as The Far Side) against Rambam's Third Principle of Faith?" You answered "Yes." But when a humorous strip like the "Far Side" draws G-d, I don't think he means to say that this is really what G-d looks like. Nor do I think he expects people to think that this is his message. For example, once he drew a cartoon captioned "Inside the Sun" that showed a man inside a shed with a giant switch on the wall labeled "Rise" & "Set." I doubt if he meant to claim that this is really what the inside of the sun looks like.

• Haim [Howard] Roman < roman@avoda.jct.ac.il>

#### **Ohrnet responds:**

Our intention was that the concept of G-d's having a physical form contradicts our belief. Depicting "G-d" in a cartoon is at best highly irreverent.

#### Re: Jurassic Judaism (Ohrnet Beha'alotcha):

While the existence of dinosaurs does not in any way affect our belief in G-d, I once heard an interesting concept that is overlooked by many people: The Torah (Bereishet

1:21) states that G-d created the "taninim hagedolim" — giant serpents or reptiles [which then G-d, according to the Midrashim, caused to go extinct. - Ed.] This may be a reference to dinosaurs. Thank you for your wonderful service!

• A. Avruch <aandpsgang@juno.com>

Great and awesome is your reply about "Jurassic Judaism." It requires courage and open-mindedness, but alas it is necessary to tell the world that the secrets of "ma'aseh Bereishet" are multiple, and that the account of Creation, although meaningful literally (whatever "literally" means) is not a child-like narrative without depth, G-d forbid. Hatzlacha!

Arie Folger, Yeshiva University <afolger@ymail.yu.edu>

#### Re: Heal and Soul:

I think "Ask the Rabbi" is a mitzvah (can I say that?) in itself. I hope all the scholars are aware of the peace and comfort your honest answers give to people. Not to sound cheesy — but what I study is how to heal the physical, while what you study is more meaningful — how to heal the soul and allow it to grow to its full potential.

Med Student@Anonymous.edu

It is indeed "bad luck" when others misjudge you; if they do, perhaps you deserve a...

# SHLAMAZEL TOV

e had the zechus (merit) of making a bar mitzvah celebration for our son last summer. My brother came from New York to participate in the celebration. My brother and I, although he is 6 years my junior, have similar facial features and are both approximately 5' 10" tall.

At the bar mitzvah, a certain relative said "Mazel Tov" to my brother twice. He apparently ignored her; he either did not hear her or thought she was talking to someone else. (He never met her before because she is actually my wife's relative, not mine.)

Several weeks after the event, we heard from the family grapevine that our relative was very upset at me and never wanted to talk to me again because I ignored her at the bar mitzvah. It took some convincing that I have a brother, that he came in from New York, and that we look alike. We are again on speaking terms.

The moral of the story: Never assume it's really him even if he looks like him...or...always respond to "Mazel Tov" even if you do not recognize the person greeting you!

• An Ohrnet reader, Har Nof, Jerusalem

Got a story to share? Send it to info@ohr.org.il

# **YIDDLE RIDDLE**

Last week we asked: Who didn't eat or drink for upwards of 60 years?

**Answer:** Choni Ham'agel. The Talmud recounts the events whereby Choni Ham'agel slept for seventy years. Hence, he neither ate nor drank during that time.

• Tractate Ta'anit 23a

#### RECOMMENDED READING LIST

	RAMBAN		SEFER HACHINUCH
26:57	Counting the Levi'im	400	Inheritance
27:9	Inheritance	401	The Daily Sacrifices
28:2	The Daily Offerings	405	Shofar



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