

# A Light from LUBAVITCH

HATOMIM—OUR HISTORY, HERITAGE, AND SCHOLARSHIP

*In today's day and age, when the Jewish street is filled with daily and monthly newspapers from all spectrums and parties, filling the minds with new ideas and aspirations, it is essential that the truth—the clear, authentic voice of Torah be sounded in the public sphere.*

*But more importantly, our new periodical serves a purpose especially for us, alumni of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim of Lubavitch. After the chaos brought on by the most recent war [World War I] as a tumultuous world has been disoriented, our brothers and friends the temimim find themselves scattered about in various countries across the whole world, far away from one-another.*

*Friends who spent their best years basking in Torah and Chassidus in Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim, bound together in love, are now far apart. By Divine decree, one resides in the United States, another in Great Britain, another in Eretz Hakodesh. There is little contact between them and no opportunity to discuss the most important mission we have, to spread Torah and Yiddishkeit.*

*It is this situation that calls for the creation of this medium—a periodical that can serve as a unifying voice; the voice of Torah, nigleh and Chassidus. It will serve as a place for inspiration and instruction about the work we need to do as temimim, strengthening Torah and spreading the teachings of Chassidus. Moreover, it will allow us to hear from all our friends around the world of their wellbeing and about their activities in strengthening Yiddishkeit in their respective places...*

*(Editors' introduction to the first issue of Hatomim)*

*In preparing this article we were greatly assisted by  
Rabbi Avraham D. Vaisfiche.*



## Between Two Wars

It was a pivotal moment in history. Chabad-Lubavitch was banished from its home with the outbreak of the first World War, and the Frierdiker Rebbe eventually had to leave the country due to the rise of Communism. Gradually, the center of Lubavitch laid its roots in Poland and a beautiful yeshiva with hundreds of *talmidim* began making its mark on the Jewish world.

As fate would have it, the glorious period would not last very long. With the Nazi bombardment of Warsaw and the start of World War II, the Frierdiker Rebbe was forced to flee yet again. It was time for Lubavitch to establish itself in the United States, where the final stage of transforming the world in preparation for the *geula* was to take place.

It was at this moment in history that the eight issues of *Hatomim* appeared.

To this day, they serve as testament to the profound learning of pre-war Europe, with novel *chiddushim* in *nigleh* and deep explanations in Chassidus. But most importantly, the issues of *Hatomim* were the first opportunity at a “בזבזו האוצרות”—dispersal of the precious gems of our rich heritage as Lubavitcher Chassidim.

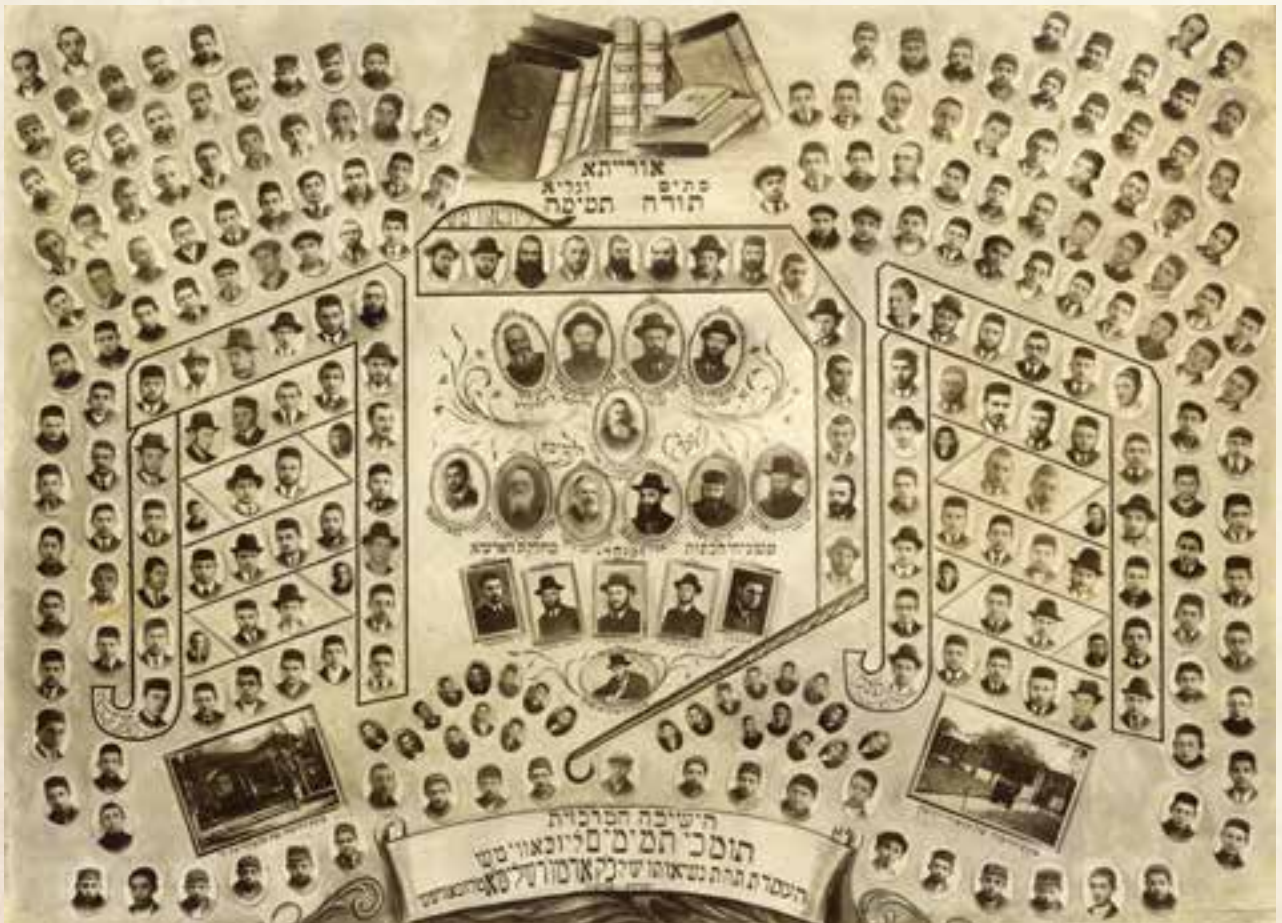
Valuable information of the story and history of Lubavitch grace the pages of *Hatomim* and a treasure trove of manuscripts and documents were published in these journals. Copies of *kisvei yad kodesh* of the Rebbeim, beginning with the Baal Shem Tov, were published in *Hatomim*, as well as pictures of the Alter Rebbe,

the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Rashab, and the Frierdiker Rebbe. It is fascinating to think that with the limited resources and technology available in those years, *Hatomim* set a standard of high-quality printing, even including these historic documents and pictures.

### “The Entire Work Is His...”

What sets *Hatomim* apart from an ordinary publication is the amount of energy imbued by the Rebbeim into its production.

The Frierdiker Rebbe notes in a letter to the Rebbe that, “I would have liked to write to you in greater detail but the many preoccupations, especially gathering the material for *Hatomim*—which all fall on me—do not allow me the time for many very important things...”<sup>1</sup>



POSTER OF BOCHURIM AND HANHALA OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM OTWOCK, 5697\*.

A fascinating fact: Though it was not known at the time, decades later it was learned that the Rebbe was intimately involved in all the preparation and publication of *Hatomim*, down to the last details. From the other side of the continent, the Rebbe edited all the material before it was published and worked tirelessly with the Frierdiker Rebbe on each issue. “The main editor of this journal is in another country,” the Frierdiker Rebbe writes, referring to the Rebbe.<sup>2</sup>

In an even more revealing letter, the Frierdiker Rebbe writes to his daughter, Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka:

“With Hashem’s help, through the work and devotion of your esteemed husband, my dear and cherished son-in-law *sheyichye*, a very important journal called ‘*Hatomim*’ will soon be published. While on paper the names of the editors will be other individuals, the entire work is really his. He is, *bli ayin hara*, a very distinguished *yungerman*...”<sup>3</sup>

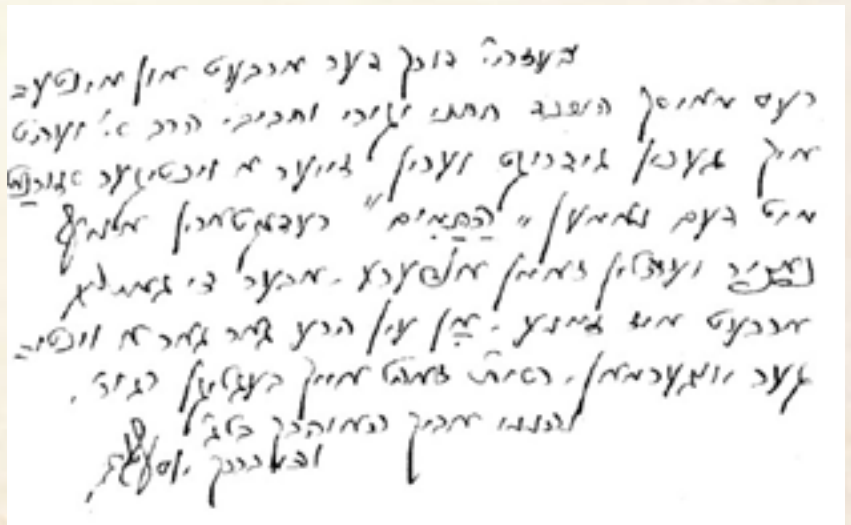
In the correspondence between the Rebbe and Frierdiker Rebbe from those years (only recently published in volume 15 of the Frierdiker Rebbe’s *Igros Kodesh*), one gets a taste of the depth and breadth of the Rebbe’s involvement in the production of *Hatomim*. The Frierdiker Rebbe wanted the Rebbe’s edits on each article and often asked the Rebbe his opinion about what and how much to publish on a given subject. Other times, the Frierdiker Rebbe asked the Rebbe for references on a subject to be used as sources for an article.

“I ask that you proofread everything,” the Frierdiker Rebbe writes in one letter. “Fix the mistakes, note where there are contradictions or incomprehensible points in the text, or where we would need to add footnotes...”<sup>4</sup>

“I am sending you a letter from my grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash,”



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“WHILE ON PAPER, THE NAMES OF THE EDITORS WILL BE OTHER INDIVIDUALS, THE ENTIRE WORK IS REALLY HIS”.

THE FRIERDIKER REBBE’S LETTER TO THE REBBETZIN, DATED 22 SIVAN 5695\*.



THE FRIEDIKER REBBE READING AN INSTALLMENT OF HATOMIM.

the Friediker Rebbe writes in another letter. “I had a thought to publish it in the Hatomim journal. What is your opinion; is it of enough significance to make it worth publishing?”<sup>5</sup>

### Contents

The issues of Hatomim contained several columns:

**Igros Kodesh:** A column where many letters of the Rebbeim were published, including some copies of manuscripts in their original holy handwriting. Also published in this column were letters written by the Friediker Rebbe to private people, containing information that could benefit the larger public (similar to

what would later be published in the “Igros Kodesh” sets of the Rebbeim).

**Shaarei Chassidus:** A column consisting of explanations and discussions in Chassidus. Additionally, it was where people were able to write in their questions on Chassidus and receive answers from the editors or from other readers.

The official editor of this section was the venerable *mashpia*, the Friediker Rebbe’s *mazkir*, Reb Yechezkel (“*Chatche*”) Feigin.

**Shaarei Torah:** A column dedicated to discussions in *nigleh*. The official editor of this section was the *rosh yeshiva*, the *gaon* Reb Yehuda Eber.

**Shaarei Yeshiva:** A column where the *talmidim* of the yeshiva could write their own thoughts and notes on the *sugyos* studied in the yeshiva at the time.

**Avos Hachassidus:** A lengthy series by the Friediker Rebbe, tracing the origins of Chassidus; the early years of the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid and the Alter Rebbe, and the first Chabad Chassidim. The goal of the series was to go through all seven generations from the Baal Shem Tov through the Rebbe Rashab. (However, the series was interrupted midway due to the outbreak of the war.)

As a preface to the series, there is a letter from the Friediker Rebbe to



A GROUP OF YOUNG BOCHURIM OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM OTWOCK, CIRCA 1897\*.



REB ZALMAN GURARY DELIVERS A SHIUR TO A CLASS OF BOCHURIM IN TOMCHEI TEMIMIM OTWOCK.

## Geniza HaChersonis

Perhaps the most famous and interesting section of the *Hatomim* journals was the publication of the *Geniza HaChersonis*—the hidden “Cherson Archive”—published in *Hatomim* for the first time.

In a preface to the first installment of this section, a letter from the Frierdiker Rebbe was published, explaining what the archive was:

“These letters were found after the fall of the old [Russian] empire in Kiev and Cherson...”

“In the summer of 5678\* (תרע"ח), a rumor spread in Odessa that during the revolution in Cherson, the Bolshevik archive was sold or looted, including many manuscripts, written on parchment and paper, along with printed *sefarim* used by the Baal Shem Tov...

“The items of this archive each bore the waxed signature of the Czar, indicating they were confiscated during the arrest of the Tzaddik of Ruzhin...”

“Living in Odessa at the time was the famous Chossid and *gvir*, Reb Shmuel Gurary, who bought a large portion of these items for a hefty price and sent them as a gift to my father, the Rebbe [Rashab], in Rostov...”

“My father spent three or four hours each day studying the manuscripts... In the winter of 5680\* (תר"פ), after examining and studying all the manuscripts and reading all the stories and writings, he praised the content and offered his holy opinion—that the manuscripts were only copies of the original *kisvei yad kodesh*. The content, however, is certainly accurate...”

“The archive includes many manuscripts, concepts of Kabbalah, explanations of *pesukim* and *maamarei*

*Chazal*, stories and letters. The letters are from Reb Adam Baal Shem, the Baal Shem Tov, students of the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid, students of the Maggid, from Reb Avrohom haMalach, from Reb Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and from the Alter Rebbe...”

(Additionally, the archive contained various old printed *sefarim*, old and empty lined *klaf*, silver *besomim* boxes used by the Baal Shem Tov, and other items.)



The letters of the *Geniza HaChersonis* contained very important historical information, especially pertaining to the life of the Baal Shem Tov and the process of his revelation to the world.

Immediately upon the discovery of the archive, collectors suspected the contents may have been forged (as the Frierdiker Rebbe notes in the letter). Nevertheless, after careful examination and tedious study, the Rebbe Rashab ascertained that the content written in the letters was historically accurate, though they were not original *kisvei yad kodesh*.

Over the years, various researchers and archivers put the validity of the *Geniza HaChersonis* into question. In lengthy letters, the Rebbe responded to many of their proposed proofs and explained that the content of letters were indeed authentic.

[The intricate back-and-forth discussion about this subject is beyond the scope of this article and will perhaps be addressed in a later issue. To read the Rebbe’s response see: *Igros Kodesh* vol. 8, p. 249; vol. 9, p. 31.]

“one of the Rebbe’s sons-in-law” [i.e. the Rebbe<sup>6</sup>], stating, “In answer to your question about the chain of events in the founding and evolution of *Toras Hachassidus*...”

#### Divrei Yemei Hachassidim:

Writings about the lives and stories of Chassidim of old—mostly culled from the writings of the Frierdiker Rebbe, though the name of the author was often not revealed.

In the preface to the first edition of this column, the editors wrote:

*“The history of Chassidim goes hand in hand with the history of Chassidus. In every generation, Chassidus gave birth to special individuals who dedicated their lives, fully and wholeheartedly, to the study and practice of Chassidus, earning their place in the history of Chassidus for generations...”*

**Sh’lom Achim:** A section that served as a “connector” for *temimim* around the world. In the first issue, this section announced the launching of “Igud Hatmimim,” a centralized organization to unite the *temimim* and offer assistance and encouragement in their holy work around the world. The column featured updates about the various branches of Tomchei Temimim, and at times also had noteworthy news from Chabad communities in Europe, Eretz Yisroel, and the United States. In an additional section called “*Shonos*,” readers were updated about the latest goings-on in the Frierdiker Rebbe’s court.

### Editorial Board

In addition to the Rebbe’s intense involvement behind the scenes, the official editors of *Hatomim* were:

**Reb Yechezkel (Chatche) Feigin** (1), who oversaw the *Chassidus* section.

**Reb Yehuda Eber** (2), who oversaw the *nigleh* section.

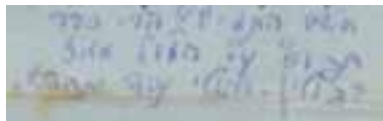
**Reb Shmuel Zalmanov** (3), who served as general editor of the journal.

### The Name “Hatomim”

This *ksav yad kodesh* was written by the Rebbe on the side of a letter (dated Erev Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5723\*) to Reb Alexander Sender Yudasin, one of the *talmidim* in Lubavitch who later became a distinguished *rav* in Eretz Yisroel.

He wrote to the Rebbe that he planned to publish a *sefer* of his *chiddushim* and he wished to call it “Hatomim.”

About the choice of this name, the Rebbe commented:



השם “התמים” הרי כבר תפוס ע”י המו”ל מאז בפולין. ואולי עוד יתחדש.

**The name “Hatomim” is already taken by the long-time publishers in Poland. Perhaps it will even have a revival.**

Ultimately, Reb Sender named his *sefer* “Tomchei Temimim.”



### The Pride of Lubavitch

The publishing of *Hatomim* made waves throughout the Jewish world and it served as a proud display of Chabad scholarship and inspiration.

Throughout the three years of the journal’s appearance, the Frierdiker Rebbe encouraged Chassidim to participate by sending in their Torah-*notes* or memories and stories of Chassidim.

In a letter to a friend, Reb Chatche Feigin notes that, “The [Frierdiker] Rebbe takes great interest in this. I just received a letter from the [Frierdiker] Rebbe from Paris about the fourth issue that was recently published, [in which] he writes that he enjoys it greatly. He writes: ‘Those who have the ability to write and to fill up all the sections of the *kovetz* and refrain from doing so, I am not happy with them. They should be reprimanded, admonished and persuaded to fulfill this obligation of theirs, furthering the spread of the teachings of Chassidus.’”

It seems that some Chassidim felt that a journal is not a befitting endeavor for Chassidim. They believed that the emphasis of such a publication

Managing the operation was **Reb Zalman Gurary** (4). The Frierdiker Rebbe attests in a letter to the Rebbe that, “I believe the latest issue [of *Hatomim*] is now being completed successfully. Only the patience and dedication of Reb Shneur Zalman [Gurary] could have made this an actuality. He received and collected all the material, put it all together in three or four printers—overcoming many obstacles...”<sup>7</sup>

When Reb Zalman eventually got engaged and prepared to move to the United States, the Frierdiker Rebbe commented that, “If he were here, we would be up to issue 10 or 11...”<sup>8</sup>

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is one of sheer *chitzoniyyus*, something Chassidim were always taught to shun.

But as Reb Chatche explained, “I will not attempt to measure all the ‘*chassidisher hergeishim*’ of each one of the *temimim*. The Chassidim here [in Poland] are not untrained peasants (לאו קטלי קניא באגמא) and there was much opposition to the fact that Chassidim will publish a journal. But it was decided that the positive outcome overrides the potential damage. The [Frierdiker] Rebbe made the decision, as a matter-of-fact, almost forcefully so. His ways and thoughts are greater than [the rest of ours]...”

After arriving in the United States, Reb Shmuel Zalmanov published a fascinating story about the impact of Hatomim in an article written for Kovetz Lubavitch:

“Five years ago, in the winter of 5700\* (ש"ת), I was escaping the horrors

of the World War when I arrived in the city of Vilna and met with the *gaon* Reb Chaim Ozer [Grodzinski]. During our conversation, he asked me to show him some of my written *chiddushei Torah*. (At that time his health was ailing and it was very difficult for him to speak and hold a conversation verbally.) I provided him with copies of the Hatomim journals that I had edited.

“When I was leaving Vilna a few weeks later, I came into his room again to receive his blessing and I saw him lying very ill—this was his final illness—reading Hatomim. I asked him what he thought of Hatomim, imagining that he’d comment on the *nigleh* section of the journals. Instead, he replied, “The Torah section is good and fine. But that is not novel to me. The real novelty for me is the Chassidus and stories of Chassidim.

This is an incredible novelty that I never knew about before!”

“Then, with a slight smile, he continued: ‘I’m afraid that reading all this Hatomim, I myself am becoming a bit of a Chossid!’”

## Wake Up Call

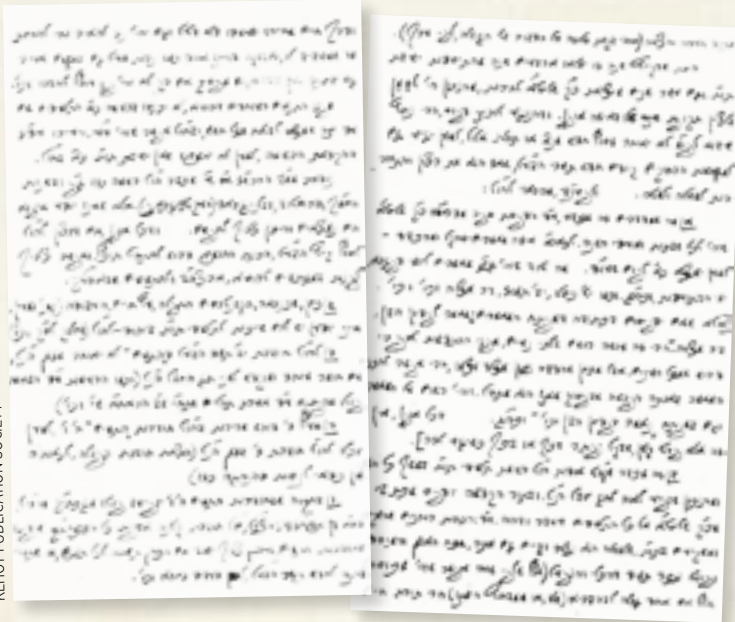
Perhaps above all else, Hatomim served as the medium to awaken the hearts and souls of *anash* and *temimim* around the world, placing front and center the most important goals of their lives as Chassidim: To constantly reconnect with *Ilana D’chayei* the “Tree of Life”—the Rebbeim and their Chassidus; remembering where they came from, and how privileged they are to be a part of such a great mission.

It is fascinating that in one issue of Hatomim, the editors published a recent picture of the Frierdiker Rebbe, explaining that this was, “In response



ONE OF THE DORMITORY HOUSES OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM IN OTWOCK.





THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN LETTER TO THE FRIERDIKER REBBE, WITH SUGGESTIONS OF HOW TO MARK 40 YEARS SINCE THE FOUNDING OF TOMCHEI TEMIMIM AND 10 YEARS SINCE THE FRIERDIKER REBBE'S LIBERATION.



to the request of *anash* and *temimim* from faraway places overseas, who are unable to come and spend time in the Rebbe's holy presence and long to see the Rebbe's holy face..."<sup>10</sup>

Nowhere is this more evident than in a detailed letter written by the Rebbe to the Frierdiker Rebbe during the time of the publishing of *Hatomim*.

The Rebbe begins with an apology for "speaking relatively freely" to the Frierdiker Rebbe, then notes that this summer (Tammuz 5697\* [תרצ"ז]) will mark 40 years since the founding of Tomchei Temimim and 10 years since the Frierdiker Rebbe's liberation.

"It would be appropriate," suggests the Rebbe, "that we mark these milestones somehow..."

The Rebbe then continues with a long list of suggestions for how to properly mark these dates, one of them being:

"We have long spoken of publishing a list of all the *temimim* from over the years. It would be appropriate that this list be published in time for these milestone dates.

"As a preface, there should be a letter from the [Frierdiker] Rebbe to all past and present *talmidim*, about the spiritual energy that was—and is still—invested "in Tomchei Temimim, something that is eternal in the spiritual realms. The creative work of the founder and leader [of Tomchei Temimim] is always apparent in the fruits of his labor [i.e. the *talmidim* of Tomchei Temimim] (even though at times this may be covered up by external layers). Even if one is exiled to 'Barbarya' [i.e. to a distant place]—whether in the literal sense, or in his own internal ['Barbarya']—the living Torah and its way of life enlivens him in a manner that he is never lost to the background. He always has the ability to be a shining light and source of life to everyone around him..."<sup>11</sup>

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