



A Wonderful Insight from the Zera Kodesh

Eliezer Learned from Avraham Avinu the Vital Lesson that the Torah Should Be Accepted Anew Every Day

In this week's parsha, parshas Chayei Sarah, we read about the crucial mission assigned to Eliezer, Avraham Avinu's loyal servant. It was his task to find an appropriate wife for Yitzchak, who would beget Yaakov Avinu, who would complete the threesome of the holy Avos. Together they form the foundation of the holy pedigree of Yisrael until the end of time. Here are the pertinent pesukim that describe Eliezer's mission (Bereishis 24, 1):

וַיֹּאמֶר זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וְהָיָה בְרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל, וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל עַבְדּוֹ זָקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמּוֹשֵׁל בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ שִׁים נָא יָדְךָ תַּחַת יְרֵכִי, וְאֶשְׁבִּיעְךָ בָּהּ אֱלֹקֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֱלֹקֵי הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִקַּח אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִבְּנוֹת הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּקִרְבּוֹ, כִּי אֶל אֶרְצִי וְאֶל מוֹלַדְתִּי תֵלֶךְ וְלִקַּחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי לַיִצְחָק.

Now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything. And Avraham said to his slave, the elder of his household, who controlled all that was his: "Place now your hand under my thigh. And I will have you swear by Hashem, G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth, that you not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaani, among whom I dwell. Rather, to my land and to my kindred shall you go and take a wife for my son, for Yitzchak."

Afterwards, Avraham adds the following (ibid. 7):
ה' אֱלֹקֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם אֲשֶׁר לִקַּחְנִי מִבֵּית אָבִי וּמֵאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתִּי וְאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לִי וְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לִי לֵאמֹר לְזֶרַעְךָ אֶתֵּן אֶת הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, הוּא יִשְׁלַח מַלְאָכּוֹ לִפְנֵיךָ וְלִקַּחְתָּ אִשָּׁה לְבְנִי מִשָּׁם. Hashem, G-d of the heavens, Who took me from the house of my father and from the land of my birth, Who spoke with me and Who swore to me, saying, "To your offspring I will give this

land"; He will send His malach before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. Rashi notes that initially Avraham depicts HKB"H as "G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth." Subsequently, however, he depicts HKB"H merely as "G-d of the heavens," omitting "G-d of the earth."

Rashi explains the discrepancy as follows: He (Avraham) said to him (Eliezer), "Now, He is G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth, since I have made Him familiar in the mouths of people; but when He took me from my father's house, He was G-d of the heavens but not G-d of the earth. For, the inhabitants of the world were not familiar with Him, and His name was not commonly mentioned on earth." Why did Avraham Avinu feel it necessary to point this out to Eliezer (that he was responsible for familiarizing people with HKB"H) as he embarked on the quest to find a wife for Yitzchak?

The Journey Was Miraculously Shortened for Eliezer

We will begin to unravel the profound intent of Avraham Avinu by scrutinizing the remarks of Eliezer as he recounts his journey to Lavan and Besuel (ibid. 42):

וַיָּבֹאוּ הַיּוֹם אֶל הָעֵיץ וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹקֵי אֲדוֹנִי אַבְרָהָם אִם יִשָּׁךְ נָא מִצְלִיחַ דְּרָכִי. I came today to the well and said, "Hashem, G-d of my master Avraham, if You would please make successful my journey on which I embark." Citing the Midrash, Rashi comments: "I embarked today, and I arrived today." We learn from here that the earth contracted for him. Rabbi

Acha said: The conversation of the slaves of the Avos is more pleasing before the Omnipresent than the Torah of their descendants; for Eliezer's episode is described doubly in the Torah, while many essential elements of the Torah were given only by allusion.

It behooves us to include the beautiful explanation of the Tzemach Tzaddik, authored by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vizhnitz, ztz"l. He explains the significance of Rabbi Acha's remark. In every generation, the descendants of the Avos continue to explore and expound on the profound words of Avraham's devoted servant, Eliezer. From his story, we reveal wonderful secrets related to HKB"H's supervision. In keeping with this tradition, let us explore why the earth contracted for Eliezer, miraculously shortening his journey? What lesson are we supposed to learn from this episode to help us better serve Hashem?

Simply understood, Eliezer was merely trying to impress upon Lavan and Besuel that HKB"H performed this miracle on his behalf, because the union of Yitzchak and Rivkah was ordained from above. In fact, they themselves admitted to this (ibid. 50): "וַיַּעַן"—**then Lavan and Besuel answered and said, "The matter stemmed from Hashem! We are unable to speak to you either bad or good."**

Notwithstanding, it behooves us to explore the deeper significance of Eliezer's account of his journey. Why did he specifically allude to the miraculous shortening of his journey by saying: **"I arrived today at the well"**? Note that he only mentions his arrival on that day; he makes no mention of his departure on that day. Additionally, what is the significance of his arrival **"at the well"**? As we endeavor to explain these things, we will also address the practical significance of the phrase Rashi cites from the Midrash: **We learn from here that the earth contracted for him.**

Avraham Avinu Treated Each Day as a New Opportunity

I had a wonderful idea! I would like to explain all of these matters by introducing an illuminating teaching

from the inspirational words of the esteemed Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy"a, in Zera Kodesh. He addresses the passuk quoted at the beginning of this essay: **"וַאֲבִרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים וְה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בְּכָל"**—**now Avraham was old, well on in years, and Hashem had blessed Avraham with everything.** He interprets the passuk by referring to that which is written in relation to the revelation of Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 1): **"בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי לְצֵאת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּיוֹם הַזֶּה בָּאוּ מִדְבָּר"**—**in the third month from the exodus of Bnei Yisrael from the land of Mitzrayim, on this day, they arrived in Midbar Sinai.** Rashi comments: **There was no need to write ("on this day") but only "on that day."** So, what is the significance of stating **"on this day"**? It emphasizes that the words of Torah should be new to you as if they were given today.

This important concept is reiterated in parshas Ki Savo (Devarim 26, 16): **"הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מִצְוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת"**—**this day, Hashem, your G-d, commands you to perform these statutes and the laws.** Here Rashi comments: **Every day, they should be new in your eyes, as if you were commanded regarding them that day.** Additionally, it is written (ibid. 27, 9): **"הִסְכַּת וּשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל"**—**Yisrael, be attentive and hear! This day you have become a people to Hashem, your G-d.** Here Rashi comments: **Every day shall be in your eyes as if you had entered into the covenant with Him that day.**

The importance of relating to the Torah and accepting it anew every day, as if it was given to us that day, is emphasized by HKB"H in the first two passages of Krias Shema, which we recite with love and devotion in our evening and morning tefilos. In the first passage, it says (ibid. 6, 6): **"וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוֶה הַיּוֹם עַל לְבָבְךָ"**—**and these words that I command you today shall be upon your heart.** Rashi comments: **They should not be in your eyes like an old edict (issued by the king in writing) to which a person does not attach importance, but rather like a new one, towards which everybody runs.** Similarly, in the second passage of Krias Shema, it is written (ibid. 11, 13): **"וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מִצְוֶה"**—**and it will be that if you adhere closely to**

My mitzvos that I command you today. Once again, Rashi comments: **That they should be as new to you as if you heard them on that day.**

In this vein, the esteemed Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy" a, teaches us that Avraham Avinu was the first person to serve HKB" H in this manner. From his perspective, every day was a unique, new day—as if it was his first day serving HKB" H. This is the message conveyed by the words: "ואברהם זקן בא בימים". Avraham approached every, single day with this perspective. Hence, at the end of his life, each day stood on its own merit, with its own acts of "chesed"; his service of Hashem each day was unique. This is the import of the words "בא בימים" (literally: he came with his collection of "days").

Eliezer Followed the Example of Avraham Avinu Treating Each Day as a New Day in the Service of HKB" H

The Zera Kodesh goes on to say that Avraham's servant, Eliezer, adopted this same exalted attitude; he also served Hashem in this manner. Hence, he announces: **"I came today to the well."** He emphasizes the word **"today,"** implying that he served Hashem as if he was just born **"today,"** and was just starting to serve Hashem. In this manner, he interprets Rashi's comment that Eliezer said: **"I embarked today, and I arrived today."** Eliezer was expressing the fact that he felt as if he had left Olam HaZeh and had been born anew every day.

It appears that this interpretation goes hand in hand with what Avraham Avinu attests regarding the character of his servant Eliezer (Bereishis 15, 2): **יבן משק: "ביתו הוא דמשק אליעזר"—and the steward of my house is Eliezer of Damascus.** In the Gemara (Yoma 28b), they provide an alternative interpretation of the term **דמשק**. Instead of meaning that Eliezer was from Damascus, it is interpreted as an acronym for **דולה ומשקה מתורת רבו** "לאחרים". The Gemara is teaching us that Eliezer **would draw from and give to drink from the Torah of his master to others.** In other words, he disseminated the teachings of his master, Avraham Avinu. In keeping with our current discussion, this implies that he also learned from Avraham to serve Hashem each day as a new day, as a new human being.

Let us embellish this thought. As explained, we deduced from the passuk: **"ואברהם זקן בא בימים"**—that Avraham approached each day as a new day in the service of Hashem. Similarly, when Eliezer announces: **"ואבוא היום אל העין, היום יצאתי והיום באתי"**—he, too, is stating that he serves Hashem the same way. So, why did the Torah choose to teach us this concept specifically in relation to this mission—Avraham Avinu sending Eliezer to find an appropriate wife for Yitzchak? It is because the union of Yitzchak and Rivkah would produce Yaakov Avinu, who was destined to father the twelve shevatim from whom all of Yisrael would descend. Thus, they would receive the Torah on the condition and premise that they would view each and every day as a new day—as the day on which Hashem gave them the Torah. Therefore, by teaching us that Avraham Avinu already adopted this attitude and served Hashem in this manner, the Torah is suggesting that every Jew has inherited this capacity from him.

With joy, we can now shed some light on the intriguing statement of Rav Acha: **The ordinary conversation of the servants of the Avos is more pleasing to G-d than the Torah of their children.** In other words, we see how pleased HKB" H was with Eliezer's statement: **"I arrived at the well today; I embarked today, and I arrived today."** Why was it so pleasing? Because it had a profound impact on **"the Torah of their children."** For, when Yisrael, the Omnipresent's children, received the Torah at Har Sinai, it says: **"On this day, they arrived in Midbar Sinai"**—implying that they should view the words of Torah with a fresh, new perspective, as if they were transmitted that very day.

HKB" H Coerced Yisrael to Accept the Torah Anew Each and Every Day

Following this line of thought, we will now proceed to explain why Avraham began his instructions to Eliezer as follows: **"And I will have you swear by Hashem, G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth."** Yet, he concludes his instructions as follows: **"Hashem, G-d of the heavens, Who took me from the house of my father."** Rashi notes that initially Avraham depicts HKB" H as **"G-d of the heavens**

and G-d of the earth.” Subsequently, however, he describes HKB”H merely as **“G-d of the heavens,”** omitting **“G-d of the earth.”** Rashi explains the discrepancy as follows: **He (Avraham) said to him (Eliezer), “Now, He is G-d of the heavens and G-d of the earth, since I have made Him familiar in the mouths of people; but when He took me from my father’s house, He was G-d of the heavens but not G-d of the earth. For, the inhabitants of the world were not familiar with Him, and His name was not commonly mentioned on earth.”**

We will begin by introducing what they expounded in the Gemara (Shabbas 88a) on the passuk related to Matan Torah (Shemos 19, 17): **“וַיִּתְּצֻבוּ בַתְּחִתִּית הָהָר, אָמַר: רַבִּי אֲבָדִימִי בֶר חֲמָא בֶר חָסָא, מִלְּמַד שְׁכַפָּה הָקֵב”**ה עליהם את ההר כגִּיגִית, ואמר להם אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם.” **“They stood beneath the mountain”:** Rav Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that HKB”H held the mountain over them like an upturned barrel. Then He said to them: **“If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there.”** Tosafos ask an obvious question (ibid.): Why was it necessary to coerce Yisrael to accept the Torah in this threatening manner? They had already demonstrated their willingness and eagerness to accept the Torah with the proclamation (ibid. 24, 7): **“כֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' נַעֲשֶׂה”**—**everything that Hashem has said, we will do, and we will obey!”**

In keeping with this discussion, let us propose an answer. Indeed, Yisrael accepted the Torah willingly. They believed, however, that it was sufficient to do so only once with the proclamation **“na’aseh v’nishma.”** This prompted HKB”H to coerce them by holding the mountain over their heads like an upturned barrel, so that they would accept the Torah anew on a daily basis (in keeping with the words in the first passage of Krias Shema: **אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצֻוֹר הַיּוֹם—that I command you today**—implying as if I gave it to you today). Hence, HKB”H said emphatically to Yisrael: **“If you accept the Torah”—on a continual, daily basis, “fine, but if not, your burial will be there.”**

It is with great pleasure that we will now elaborate. They expounded in the Gemara (ibid.): **“אָמַר חֲזִיקִיָּה, מֵאִי דְכֶתִיב: מִשְׁמִימִים הַשְׁמַעַת דִּין אֶרֶץ יִרְאָה וְשָׁקֵטָה, אִם יִרְאָה לְמָה שְׁקֵטָה, וְאִם שְׁקֵטָה לְמָה יִרְאָה,**

אלא בתחילה יראה ולבסוף שקטה. ולמה יראה? כדריש לקיש, דאמר ריש לקיש, מאי דכתיב ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום השישי, ה”א יתירה למה לי, מלמד שהתנה הקדוש ברוך הוא עם מעשה בראשית ואמר להם, אם ישראל מקבלים התורה אתם מתקיימין. **Chizkiyah said: What is the meaning of that which is written (Tehillim 76, 9): “From heaven You have proclaimed judgment; the earth became afraid and grew calm”? If it became afraid, why did it grow calm? And if it grew calm, why did it become afraid? Rather, the passuk means that initially (before Yisrael accepted the Torah by proclaiming na’aseh v’nishma), the earth became afraid (fearing that Yisrael would not accept the Torah), and in the end, it grew calm. And why did it become afraid? As per the teaching of Reish Lakish, for Reish Lakish said: What is the meaning of that which is written (ibid. 31): “And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day”? Why do I need the extra letter “hei”? It teaches us that HKB”H stipulated with the works of creation, saying to them: “If Yisrael accept the Torah, you will endure; but if they do not, I will return you to a state of total void and chaos.”**

The Maharsha explains that when HKB”H warned Yisrael by holding the mountain over their heads in a threatening manner: **“If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there”**—He was actually referring to the condition He had imposed on creation—that if Yisrael refused to accept the Torah, He would return all of creation to a state of **“tohu va’vohu.”** But if that is true, then why was only the earth afraid and not the heavens? After all, the heavens are also a part of creation, as it is written (Bereishis 1, 1): **“בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ”**.

HKB”H Renews the Work of Creation Daily by means of Yisrael’s Novel Torah Insights

It appears that we can explain the matter based on a fascinating concept gleaned from the incredible teachings of the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, in Ohev Yisrael (Toldos). He presents the elucidation in the Midrash (B.R. 49, 2) related to the passuk (ibid. 26, 5): **“עָקֵב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע אֲבָרָהָם בְּקוֹלִי, אִין יוֹם וַיּוֹם שְׂאִין הָקֵב”**ה מחדש הלכה: **“Because Avraham obeyed My voice”:** There is not a

single day that HKB"H does not introduce a new halachah in the heavenly court . . . Avraham knew even those halachos. According to the Ohev Yisrael, this can be understood based on the teaching elsewhere in the Midrash (ibid. 1, 1) that HKB"H used the Torah as His blueprint for creating the world:

"התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנתו של הקב"ה. בנוהג שבועולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטין, אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא מדעת אומן, והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו, אלא דיפתראות ופינקסאות יש לו לדעת היאך הוא עושה חדרים, היאך הוא עושה פשפושין. כך היה הקב"ה מביט בתורה ובורא את העולם, והתורה אמרה בראשית ברא אלקים, ואין ראשית אלא תורה, היאך מה דאת אמר ה' קנני ראשית דרכו."

The Torah says, "I was the craftsman's tool employed by HKB"H." Customarily, when a human king builds a palace, He does not build it or design it himself; he employs a craftsman. The craftsman does not build it without referring to blueprints and architectural designs. Similarly, HKB"H utilized the Torah as His guide and created the universe. The Torah said, "בראשית ברא אלקים" — "with 'Reishis' G-d created." There is no "Reishis" other than the Torah, as it says (Mishlei 8, 22): "Hashem made me at the beginning of His way."

Based on this understanding, the Ohev Yisrael asserts that just as HKB"H created the universe by looking in the Torah; similarly, he renews creation daily by means of the "chiddushim"—novel interpretations and insights—proposed by those who engage in Torah-study. To influence and inspire those who study Torah down on earth, HKB"H first introduces "chiddushim" on a daily basis in the yeshivah above. Thus, he inspires those of Yisrael below who study Torah diligently to propose these novel Torah insights.

He utilizes this concept to interpret the following statement in the Gemara (Niddah 73a): כל "תנא דבי אליהו, כל השונה הלכות בכל יום, מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא." **The Academy of Eliyahu taught: He who studies Torah laws ("halachos") every day is assured that he will be an inhabitant of Olam HaBa.** This means that anyone who strives to clarify the true meaning and implication of the Torah's halachos daily, in keeping with these new interpretations and insights, participates and assists in the daily renewal of creation. Therefore, "he

is assured that he will be an inhabitant of the World to Come." In other words, he has participated in the creation of the world that came about and was renewed that day. These are his sacred remarks.

This beautifully explains the formula of the berachah "Yotzer Ohr" in tefilas Shacharis: **המחדש בטובו בכל יום תמיד—מעשה בראשית—He renews in His goodness, every day, continuously, the work of creation.** For, we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 5a): **אין טוב—there is no "tov" ("good") other than Torah.** So, when we say: **המחדש בטובו—He renews with His "goodness"**—we are referring to the Torah, which is called "טוב". It is specifically with that "tov" that HKB"H renews creation every day, continually—"בכל יום תמיד מעשה בראשית". This feat is accomplished through the Torah-scholars, whose diligent study enables them to perceive the chiddushim of the Torah that HKB"H introduces daily above.

We can now begin to appreciate why HKB"H alluded to us at Matan Torah (with the words "On that day, they came to Midbar Sinai") and also in the first two passages of Krias Shema that we should view each and every day as if we had received the Torah that day. It is because the daily, continual renewal of creation hinges solely on the "chiddushim" proposed by Yisrael every day in their Torah-study. In truth, in order for Yisrael to innovate "chiddushim" every day, it is incumbent upon them to receive the Torah anew every day; they must believe sincerely that the Torah is infinite and that as a result of their daily, laborious study, they will be privileged to introduce new "chiddushim." In the words of the Gemara (Megillah 6b): **"געתי ומצאתי תאמן"—if a person says, "I labored and I succeeded," believe him.**

The Heavens and the Earth Were Created in the Merit of Avraham Avinu

We can now begin to comprehend why HKB"H held the mountain over the heads of Yisrael and gave them the ultimatum: **"If you are willing to receive the Torah"**—receiving it anew each and every day—then **"fine; but if not"**—if you are not willing to receive it anew each and every day—then **"your burial will be there."** Because HKB"H relies on Yisrael's "chiddushim"

in the Torah to renew the creation. Thus, we see that this goes hand in hand with the stipulation that HKB"H imposed on creation: **"If Yisrael accept the Torah, you will endure,"** since the creation is renewed solely on account of the Torah "chiddushim" introduced by Yisrael; **"but if they do not, I will return you to a state of total void and chaos."**

Now, we can return to the elucidation in the Gemara presented above: **What is the meaning of that which is written: "From heaven You have proclaimed judgment; the earth became afraid and grew calm"? If it became afraid, why did it grow calm? And if it grew calm, why did it become afraid? Rather, the passuk means that initially** (before Yisrael accepted the Torah by proclaiming na'aseh v'nishma), **the earth became afraid** (fearing that Yisrael would not accept the Torah), **and in the end, it grew calm.** Now, we asked why did only the earth become afraid and not the heavens. We now have an answer. The main fear existed down on earth where Yisrael exist. After all, only Jews alive on earth who engage in Torah-study possess the ability to renew the creation.

It is with great pleasure that we can apply what we have learned to interpret the following passuk (Bereishis 2, 4): **"אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות ה' אלה תולדות השמים והארץ—this is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, on the day when Hashem G-d made earth and heaven.** They expounded in the Midrash (B.R. 12, 9): **"בהבראם, באברהם, בזכותו של אברהם—**the word **בהברא"ם** employed in the passuk is an anagram for **באברה"ם**, **suggesting** that the world was created **in the merit of Avraham.** In keeping with this discussion, let us explain. Avraham

Avinu was the first person to receive the Torah anew every day. This was deduced from the passuk: **"ואברהם זקן בא בימים"**—Avraham approached every, single day with a new attitude. Thus, HKB"H renews creation every day, continually, in the merit of Yisrael who follow the example of Avraham; they inherited from him the ability to accept the Torah anew every day. Therefore, at the end of the passuk under discussion, the earth is mentioned ahead of the heavens: **"ביום עשות ה' אלקים ארץ ושמים"**. For, it is only on account of the Torah that Yisrael study on earth that the creation is renewed daily.

We can now rejoice! We can now appreciate the profound implications of the remarks of Avraham's loyal servant Eliezer. He informed Lavan and Betuel: **"I arrived at the well today; I embarked today, and I arrived today."** As we learned from the Zera Kodesh, he was implying that Eliezer adopted the attitude of Avraham Avinu. He approached each day with a new vigor and fresh perspective, as if he had received the Torah anew that day. Additionally, he specifies that HKB"H arranged for him to come to **"a well."** He was not referring to a simple well that merely holds water; he was referring to an artesian well or fountain that is a constant source of fresh water. Thus, he was alluding to the attitude of each day being a new day in the service of Hashem. This remark prompted Rashi to cite the Midrash: **It is evident from here that the earth contracted for him.** As we learned, at the time of Matan Torah, the earth was fearful. It was concerned that perhaps Yisrael would not accept the Torah; it understood that the "chiddushim" introduced by Yisrael daily on earth are necessary for the daily renewal of creation. Therefore, it contracted for Eliezer, so that he would learn from it to appreciate the importance of accepting the Torah anew each and every day.

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