

Scripture Study



Looking Up to Zion: The Ancient City of Enoch Then and Now

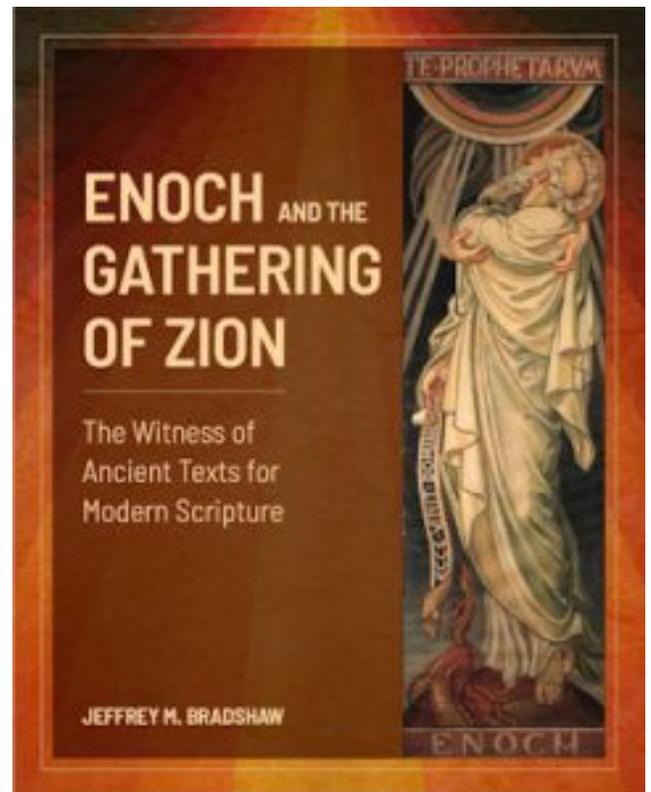
By [Jeffrey M. Bradshaw](#) · January 27, 2022

Cover image: Left: President Russell M. Nelson looks up in a photo included with his first message of 2022; Right: Enoch looks up as he is taken up to the presence of God. Frederick James Shields (1833–1911): Enoch (detail), 1910. Stained glass design for the Chapel of the Ascension, Bayswater Road, London.

*This series of articles introduces a new book entitled **Enoch and the Gathering of Zion: The Witness of Ancient Texts for Modern Scripture** (see review at: <https://latterdaysaintmag.com/a-new-biography-of-enoch-and-an-excellent-tool-for-the-book-of-moses/> . Digital and softcover copies of the book are available now in black*

and white or beautiful premium color. See <https://interpreterfoundation.org/books/>). *Though many Latter-day Saints will remember Hugh Nibley’s remarkable discoveries in ancient documents relating to the Book of Moses story of Enoch that were published nearly fifty years ago, they may not be aware of exciting new findings. For example, newly analyzed passages from the Book of Giants confirm the Latter-day Saint account of Enoch’s gathering of Zion and the eventual ascent of his people to heaven. In addition, based on the recent discovery of the Manichaean Cosmology Painting—a thirteenth–fourteenth century Chinese wall hanging that includes illustrations of Enoch’s story—we now have some idea of the symbolic geography of Enoch’s travels, likely portraits of individuals to whom he preached (including Mahijah), and what seems to be a depiction of the cities of Zion that ascended to heaven.*

With the help of these ancient sources, we are now in a better position than ever to assemble the most complete and detailed biography of Enoch to appear in modern times. In our day, when stories of scripture figures are often dismissed as fables or ignored altogether, Enoch’s story and message are more vital and relevant than ever. After all, Latter-day Saints have been called, like Enoch’s people, to more fully engage our hearts and accelerate our labors in a spirit of consecration until the Enoch’s vision of a true and permanent Zion becomes a reality.



When I first saw the photo that accompanied the inspiring New Year’s message and invitation for 2022 from President Nelson,[\[1\]](#) I could not help but think of the following

verses from the Joseph Smith Translation of Genesis about the city of Enoch (JST Genesis 9:21–22):

21 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant, which I made unto thy father Enoch; that, when men should keep all my commandments, Zion should again come on the earth, the city of Enoch which I have caught up unto myself.

22 And this is mine everlasting covenant, that when thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy;

I hope no one will take this as a hidden prophecy that President Nelson is soon to be translated. Rather my hope is that in reading and applying his message and the lessons of the story of the city of Enoch we will remember that the glorious day of the return of heavenly Zion to the earth depends on the degree to which each of us individually “embrace the truth and look upward” (JST Genesis 9:22).

In the previous article in this series, we saw how ancient texts combine with the Book of Moses to tell a more complete story of the gathering of Zion. In this final installment, we’ll continue the story with new details of the ascent of Enoch’s city to heaven and its return in the last days.

Detail of MCP.^[2] Ascent and transformation of *BG*'s thirty-two divinely prepared cities of earthly Zion to thirty-two palaces of heavenly Zion atop Mount Sumēru. The palaces surround a deity with two attendants in a thirty-third palace.

Zion Is Fled (Moses 7:69)

Are there any traces of the heavenly ascent of Enoch's people in the *Book of Giants (BG)*?
Yes, but the answer requires some explaining.

BG scholar Gábor Kósa sees the thirty-two palaces, shown “on the ‘foliage’ [at the top] of the tree-like Mount Sumēru,” as implying “a divine association; this is reinforced by the presence of three divine figures in front of the [much bigger] thirty-third palace, with the central figure seated on a lotus throne and the two [attendants] standing on either side. All in all, this seems to indicate the purely divine nature of this Manichaean Mount Sumēru.”^[3]

In addition, Kósa sees the description of the mountain with its tree-like iconography as resonating with the description of the mountain of God and the Tree of Life in *1 Enoch* 25:2–4:[\[4\]](#)

Then I answered him—I, Enoch—and said, “concerning all things I wish to know, but especially concerning this tree.”

And he answered me and said, “this high mountain that you saw, whose peak is like the throne of God, is the seat where the Great Holy One, the Lord of glory, the King of eternity, will sit, when he descends to visit the earth in goodness. And (as for) this fragrant tree, no flesh has the right to touch it until the great judgment, in which there will be vengeance on all and a consummation forever.

The scene also evokes the imagery of Nephi’s vision (1 Nephi 11:1, 3, 4, 8, 25):

I was caught away ... into an exceedingly high mountain ...

And I said: I desire to behold the things which my father saw.

And the Spirit said unto me: Believest thou that thy father saw the tree of which he hath spoken? ...

And I looked and beheld a tree; ... and the beauty thereof was far beyond, yea, exceeding of all beauty. ...

And I ... beheld that the tree of life was a representation of the love of God.

Going further, though Kósa recognizes an obvious correspondence of some kind between the visual depiction of thirty-two palaces at the *top* of Mount Sumēru and the report in the *BG* text of “thirty-two towns” for the repentant *gibborim* at the *base* of Mount Sumēru he

finds it difficult to reconcile the fact that the *palaces* shown at the top within *MCP* “are definitely not *towns*; [neither are they] at the *foot* of the mountains” as is described in the text of *BG*.[\[5\]](#)

In trying to unravel these anomalies, we should recall that the Book of Moses chronicles a transformation of the *earthly* Zion, symbolically located in the *foothills* of the “mountain of the Lord,” into a *heavenly* Zion, as shown in the annotated figure above. In this way, the redemptive *descensus* initiated by Jared and his brethren culminated in the glorious *ascensus* led by Enoch:

And Enoch and all the people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, *for God received it up into his own bosom*; and from thence went forth the saying, Zion is Fled.

The Lord Will Fulfill His Oath (7:59–60)

The last phase of Enoch’s vision begins with a plea, spoken after he witnessed the return of Jesus Christ to heaven after His mortal ministry: “Wilt thou not come again upon the earth?” (Moses 7:59).

In answer to Enoch’s question, the Lord declares that He will “fulfill the oath” He made to Enoch “concerning the children of Noah” (Moses 7:60). The Lord’s oath is made doubly sure by the use of a first-person reference: “*As I live*, even so will I come in the last days, in the days of wickedness and vengeance” (Moses 7:60).

Having sworn that He would return, the Lord at last addresses Enoch’s repeated, unanswered question with the solemn declaration that, indeed, the day would come when “the earth shall rest” (Moses 7:61).

Great Tribulations for Some; Preservation for the Lord’s People (7:61)

Jarringly, the Lord immediately followed His welcome promise with a terrible warning of “great tribulations” that would take place “before that day” (Moses 7:61). The first and perhaps greatest tribulation is that “a veil of darkness [would] cover the earth” (Moses 7:61). This seems to indicate that communication between heaven and the “children of men” would be severed due to wickedness.^[6] As to the righteous, Elder Neal A. Maxwell comments:^[7]

God preserved and prepared Enoch’s people in the midst of awful and enveloping evil, and, reassuringly, he has promised His people in our own time that though “great tribulations shall be among the children of men, ... my people will I preserve.”^[8]

The Lord Will Gather the Righteous (7:62)

The phrase: “And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of earth” recalls a similar phrase in Psalm 85:11. However, the sequence of the terms “truth” (*emet*) and “righteousness” (*tsedaqah*) is inverted, and, more importantly, different actions are indicated. In the Psalm, the personification of the divine traits is used to create a metaphor of peace and prosperity in the land, whereas in Moses 7:62, it depicts the coming forth of a united testimony from above and below of the Only Begotten—specifically of His resurrection and “the resurrection of all men.”

Moses 7:62

And righteousness will I send down out of heaven; and truth will I send forth out of the earth to bear testimony of mine Only Begotten; his resurrection from the dead; yea, and also the resurrection of all men.

Psalm 85:11

Truth shall *spring out* of the earth; and righteousness shall *look down* from heaven. Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

Latter-day Saint interpreters understand the imagery of Moses 7:62 as referring to the restoration of the Gospel.^[9] Heavenly messengers (perhaps meant to include the Savior, “the Righteous” Himself^[10]) are to be sent “down out of heaven” and “truth” (referring to the Book of Mormon and perhaps other “hidden” books^[11]) is to be sent “forth out of the earth.”^[12] The personification of “righteousness” in the Book of Moses is apt in light of the use of divine virtues as the names of heavenly messengers in *I Enoch* 40:8–9.^[13] Likewise, as George Mitton observes, the Book of Mormon as a testimony of the risen Lord is equally fitting since “the symbol of its *coming forth* from the earth is reminiscent of the Lord’s resurrection.”^[14]

Of course, in contrast to some other ancient religions, evidence for an early Israelite belief in a personal resurrection is controversial.^[15] Significantly, however, some of the earliest and most explicit of the extant descriptions of the resurrection in Jewish literature that *do* exist are found in the Enoch literature, in particular the *Parables of Enoch* which is so rich in its descriptions of the Son of Man:^[16]

And the righteous and the chosen will be saved on that day;

and the faces of the sinners and the unrighteous they will henceforth not see.

And the Lord of Spirits will dwell over them,

and with that Son of Man they will eat

and lie down and rise up forever and ever.

And the righteous and chosen will have arisen from the earth,

and have ceased to cast down their faces,
and have put on the garment of glory.

And this will be your garment, the garment of life from the Lord of Spirits;

and your garments will not wear out,
and your glory will not fade in the presence of the Lord of Spirits.

The description of the flood of righteousness and truth that will result in the gathering of the elect in the last days is in deliberate counterpoint to the account of the flood of water that brought about the destruction of the wicked in Noah's day. Noah's flood brought destruction, whereas this flood will bring salvation. The Prophet Joseph Smith explained:

[17]

Men and angels are to be co-workers in bringing to pass this great work, and Zion is to be prepared, even a new Jerusalem, for the elect that are to be gathered from the four quarters of the earth, and to be established an holy city, for the tabernacle of the Lord shall be with them.

The Lord told Enoch that His people would be gathered “unto a place which I shall prepare.”^[18] Jewish tradition echoes these words. For instance, in *4 Ezra* 13:35 we read:^[19] “Zion will come and be made manifest to all people, *prepared* and built, as you saw the mountain carved out without hands.” Similarly, *2 Baruch* 4:2–3 reads:^[20] “[I]t is that [city] which will be revealed, with me, that was already *prepared* from the moment that I decided to create Paradise.”

The nature of the gathering place of God's elect as a “Holy City” is described in *1 Enoch's*

Book of the Parables 45:5:^[21] “And my chosen ones I shall make to dwell on it, but those who commit sin and error will not set foot on it.” Jewish tradition also describes a “New Jerusalem.”^[22] According to the *Testament of Levi* 10:5:^[23] “For the house which the Lord shall choose shall be called Jerusalem, as the book of Enoch the Righteous maintains.” This account may be citing *1 Enoch* 90:28–29, which tells of how the old house (that is, the old city of Jerusalem) is removed and replaced with a new house (that is, New Jerusalem).^[24] Moreover, in one version of *2 Enoch*, the seer calls the place of his ascent “the highest Jerusalem.”^[25]

Linda McCarthy (1947–): *The City of Enoch*, 2002. [\[26\]](#)

The Lord and Enoch’s City will Receive the Righteous (7:63)

N. T. Wright, the well-known Anglican bishop and New Testament scholar, described the uniting of heaven and earth as follows: [\[27\]](#)

God made heaven and earth; at last he will remake both and join them together

forever. And when we come to the picture of the actual end in Revelation 21–22, we find not ransomed souls making their way to a disembodied heaven but rather the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, uniting the two in a lasting embrace.

Again, the ancient Enoch literature echoes the themes of the Book of Moses. In the *Parables of Enoch* 45:4–5 we read:^[28] “On that day, I shall make my Chosen One dwell among them, and I shall transform heaven and make it a blessing and a light forever; and I shall transform the earth and make it a blessing. And my chosen ones I shall make to dwell on it.”

For a second time in this passage, Moses 7:63 shares similar imagery with Psalm 85—and this time *I Enoch* does the same. However, as in the previous instance, there is an important difference. In Psalm 85 and *I Enoch*, two divine attributes meet and kiss, whereas in Moses 7:63 it is Enoch’s city and the Lord Himself that fall upon the necks of the righteous and kiss them, as they would a returning prodigal.^[29]

Moses 7:63

And we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other.

Psalm 85:10

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

***I Enoch* 11:2**

Truth and peace will be united together.^[30]

Robert Alter, writing of Psalm 85, captures the commonality of spirit with Moses 7:63:^[31] “This bold metaphor focuses the sense of an era of perfect loving harmony. Rashi imagines a landscape in which all Israelites will kiss one another.”

The Earth Shall Rest, and Enoch Receives a Fulness of Joy (7:67)

Differing with the Lord’s previous instruction to Enoch, He delivers His word as a monologue—there is no reply from Enoch this time, only an epilogue from the narrator.

After having seen and heard “all things,” Enoch’s questions were answered and he “received a fulness of joy.”

Original City of Zion Plat Drawing (detail), with twenty-four numbered temple sites located in the center, June 1833. [\[32\]](#)

Latter-day Zion

Whether or not by sheer coincidence, the symbolic geography shared by the Manichaean *BG* fragments and Manichaean Cosmology Painting (MCP) are mirrored in a general way in the itinerary of the gathering and the layout for Joseph Smith's City of Zion in Missouri. This latter-day city is described in modern scripture in close connection with descriptions of Enoch's ancient city (see, for example, Doctrine and Covenants 45:11–14). As the righteous of Enoch's day were remembered by *BG* as having been divinely led westward, so the early Saints were told by the Lord: “gather ye out from the eastern lands” and “go ye forth into the western countries” (Doctrine and Covenants 45:64, 66).

Moreover, in both cases the destination of the western movement of each group is identified as a unique hierocentric location: for Enoch's people that location was Mount Sumēru in the middle of the world map, while for the early Saints that location was “Mount Zion, which shall be the city of New Jerusalem” (Doctrine and Covenants 84:2, emphasis added), a relatively central location on the North American continent. Significantly, the city of New Jerusalem envisioned by the Saints is expressly called in revelation, “the center place” (Doctrine and Covenants 57:3) or “center stake.”^[33]

Finally, while MCP depicts Mount Sumēru with thirty-two or thirty-six palaces at its summit, the plat for the city of Zion prominently featured twenty-four numbered temple sites at its center. Thus, in the MCP depiction of *BG*, in the Book of Moses, and in the envisioned latter-day City of Zion, “God ... dwelt in the midst,” literally and symbolically central in the eyes of His people.

Conclusion

What a blessing it is to live in a day when we are preparing for the return of Zion. May each

of us “embrace the truth and look upward” (JST Genesis 9:22) so that we may be ready for that day is my prayer.

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Endnotes

[1] <https://www.thechurchnews.com/leaders-and-ministry/2022-01-01/president-russell-m-nelson-suggests-3-resolutions-in-his-first-message-of-2022-238652> .

[2] Z. Gulácsi, *Mani’s Pictures*, p. 470.

[3] G. Kósa, *Book of Giants Tradition*, p. 172.

[4] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 25:2–4, p. 312.

[5] G. Kósa, *Book of Giants Tradition*, pp. 171–72.

[6] Moses 7:61. We make this interpretation of “veil of darkness” being spiritual in nature based on similar phrases elsewhere in scripture, for example, Moses 7:56 (“the heavens were veiled”) and Doctrine and Covenants 38:8 (“the veil of darkness shall soon be rent”), which imply that this veil will cut off direct communication from heaven. Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 110:1: “The veil was taken from our minds.” See also a phrase added to the end of Genesis 9:26 in the JST: “and a veil of darkness shall cover him” (S. H. Faulring *et al.*, *Original Manuscripts*, OT1, p. 118; OT2, p. 632. See also J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God’s Image 2*, *Commentary Genesis 9:26*, p. 323).

[7] N. A. Maxwell, *One Heart*, p. v.

[8] Moses 7:61.

[9] E. T. Benson, *Teachings* 1988, October 198.6, p. 105 quoted Moses 7:62 with specific reference to the Book of Mormon.

[10] R. D. Draper *et al.*, *Commentary*, p. 146:

Because one of the titles for the Savior is “the Righteous” (Moses 7:45, 47), this prophesied event may well refer to the coming of the Savior in the latter days, perhaps to the youthful Joseph Smith, thereby anticipating the restoration of the Gospel. It seems also to refer to renewed revelation in the last days.

[11] For examples, see J. A. Tvedtnes, *Hidden Books*; H. W. Nibley, *Prophetic*, pp. 274ff; G. L. Mitton, *Book of Mormon As a Resurrected Book*.

[12] Moses 7:62. Cf. R. D. Draper *et al.*, *Commentary*, p. 146. Joseph Smith himself wrote, commenting on the parable of the mustard seed (J. Smith, Jr., *To the Elders*, p. 227, emphasis added. Reprinted in J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, December 1835, p. 98; J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings* 2007, p. 301):

Let us now take the Book of Mormon, which a man took and hid in his field; securing it by his faith, to spring up in the last days, or in due time; let us behold it coming forth out of the ground, which is indeed accounted the least of all seeds, but behold it branching forth; yea, even towering, with lofty branches, and God-like majesty, until it becomes the greatest of all herbs; and *it is truth, and it has sprouted and come forth out of the earth; and righteousness begins to look down from heaven;* and God is sending down his powers, gifts and angels, to lodge in the branches thereof.

Later, referring to the publication of the Book of Mormon, the Prophet wrote (J. Smith, Jr. *et al.*, *Histories, 1832-1844, History Drafts, 1838–Circa 1841, Draft 2*, p. 386, emphasis added):

It had now come to pass that, *Truth had sprung out of the earth; and Righteousness had looked down from Heaven*, so we feared not our opponents, knowing that we had both Truth and righteousness on our side.

[13] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 40:8–9, p. 130. See Nickelsburg’s comments on p. 134 n. 9.

[14] G. L. Mitton, *Book of Mormon As a Resurrected Book*, p. 131.

[15] See, for example, J. H. Charlesworth, *Resurrection Beliefs*, p. 223, who writes: “In the history of the theologies of Israel, resurrection belief is clearly found only in very late literature. The patriarchs and those in the monarchy, as well as those who lived in ancient Palestine before the sixth-century BCE Babylonian exile, did not imagine that the dead would be raised.”

However, N. T. Wright (N. T. Wright, *Resurrection of the Son of God*, pp. 85–128) and others (for example, J. Paulien, *Resurrection and the OT*) see a much earlier idea of a personal resurrection present earlier in Hosea, Isaiah, and elsewhere.

[16] G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, *1 Enoch 2*, 62:13–16, pp. 254–255. George Nickelsburg and James VanderKam see this passage as a “compelling” reference to resurrection (*ibid.*, p. 268).

[17] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, November 1835, p. 84.

[18] *Moses 7:62*.

[19] B. M. Metzger, 4 Ezra, 13:35, p. 552, emphasis added.

[20] A. F. J. Klijn, 2 Baruch, 4:2–3, p. 622, emphasis added.

[21] G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, 1 Enoch 2, 45:5, p. 148.

[22] Moses 7:62. See Hebrews 11:16; 12:22–24; Revelation 3:12; 21:2; 3 Nephi 20:22; 21:23–24; Ether 13:2–10; Doctrine and Covenants 42:67; 133:56.

[23] H. C. Kee, Testaments, Levi 10:5, p. 792.

[24] See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 90:28–29, p. 402. See also pp. 404–405 n. 28–36. Cf. Hebrews 9:8.

[25] F. I. Andersen, 2 Enoch, 55:2 [J], p. 182.

[26] With permission of the artist.

[27] N. T. Wright, Surprised, p. 19.

[28] G. W. E. Nickelsburg *et al.*, 1 Enoch 2, 45:4–5, p. 148.

[29] Terry and Fiona Givens comment (T. L. Givens *et al.*, *God Who Weeps*, p. 106):

The beauty and power of this image is in its concreteness. God and His people, the living and the departed, heaven and earth, embrace. The immense distance between the spiritual and the mundane collapses, and we find holiness in the ordinary. Luke’s tale of the prodigal son turns out to be not symbolic foreshadowing, but literal foretaste, of a greater reunion. As the evangelist told the story, when the son ‘was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him’ (Luke 15:20).”

[30] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 11:2, p. 216.

[31] R. Alter, Hebrew Bible, Psalm 85:[12], justice and peace have kissed, 3:206. “Rashi construes biblical Hebrew *šedeq* ‘JUSTICE’ in the sense of Rabbinic Hebrew *šedāqāh* ‘charity’” (Rashi, Psalms, p. 554 n. 12), and comments (ibid., p. 553â):

The charity [*haššedāqāh*] which Israel used to perform and the WELL-BEING from the Holy One Blessed be He will kiss each other, which is to say that the end result of charity is well-being [that is, *šālôm*, translated in the KJB as “peace”].

[32] Church History Library, MS 2567. Original drawing prepared at the direction of Joseph Smith, Jr. in Kirtland, Ohio, in 1833 by Frederick G. William and mailed to Edward Partridge and others in Independence, Missouri, in June 1833. MS_2567_f0001-Plat_of_city_of_Zion__1833-ORIGINAL.pdf. <https://catalog.churchofjesuschrist.org/record?id=c5d54bd0-bede-47cb-b636-3281f30b0d0a> (accessed May 19, 2021). Elder Alvin R. Dyer observed that the dimensions of the drawing of the Prophet’s proposed temple structures for Zion were 61’0” x 87’0”, thus matching the dimensions of the Latter-day Saints Visitors Center, finished in 1981 and located on part of the Independence Temple Lot owned by the Church (Alvin R. Dyer, “Report of Meeting with President David O. McKay,” diary, March 10, 1967, accn. 1334, box 46, f 6, cited in R. J. Addams, Past and Future of the Temple Lot (TMZ 2020), p. 65).

[33] B. Young, 23 June 1874, p. 242.

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