

15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 08 Feb 2009 21:10

I have been battling this menuval for over 15 years since the age of 16. For the first time in my life I have a social network to reach out to and connect. I have made many attempts to breaking this terrible habit. But I will now once start from over again with what I hope will be the final battle that will ultimately lead to victory. Anyone reading this who feels moved or has encouraging words or words of advice, please share them with me. It will give me chizuk to know that I can give chizuk to others. It gives me chizuk knowing that others want me to succeed and want to give me chizuk. So please do not refrain from even the smallest comment. You never know how far your words can reach.

I have been clean now since Feb 4. I spent last night (Feb 6, motzai shabbos) and today in intense teshuva. For the first time in a long time, I felt the signs from Shamayim that I will be accepted back again. I was so encouraged by these signs it made me focus more on how to continue to work on myself to rid myself completely.

Here is my declaration of Teshuva(based on chovos Halevavos)

Today I am doing Teshuva for the terrible sins of masturbation, spilling seed, gazing at inappropriate material, and all other related sins. I realize full well that I have done these terrible acts. These acts are disgusting and despicable in the eyes of Hashem. Hashem despises them being done. They taint the body and soul.

Great Punishment awaits me for violating these prohibitions; I am afraid of your judgement. And although Hashem has not already meted out retribution for my sins, my sins are still preserved in the book of iniquities; nothing is forgotten from Hashem. I should not think that the reason I have not been punished already is because Hashem let this one slide. On the contrary, He know full well of my deeds but delays retribution to give me a chance to do Teshuvah. This is done out of the the great Chesed of Hashem. For according to the attribute of justice, I deserve to be punished immediately. But, Hashem in his great and infinite chesed gave me a chance to do Teshuvah. I thank you Hashem for granting m such privileges, for creating the concept of Teshuvah. I CAN FIX MY WRONGDOINGS!!!!

But not only this Kindness do you do for me but countless amount of kindness do you shower upon me. But in return for your graciousness I rebelled against you, while in fact I should be praising, thanking and be pleasing in your eyes.

Woe to me for committing these Sins. For instead of receiving great reward in this world and the next I am receiving just a minute and temporal amount of pleasure for my sins. And although I received at least this little amount of pleasure, I will be receiving great amounts of pain due to the punishment in this world and the next.

I, Therefore, take upon myself to remove myself from these sins and return to you Hashem. And although, I realize from the beginning that this will not be easy and I will have to face tough battles with the Yetzer Harah, I am willing to fight and I will never ever give up, no-matter what happens, and I am confident that I will win.

And I end with a plea to you, Hashem. For I realize that without your help I am unable to properly do Teshuvah. I therefore ask of you that now that I have pierced a hole the size of a needlepoint, you widen it like the opening of the Ulam.

May we all be Zoche to Teshuva Shleima

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 05 Mar 2009 22:47

But I don't think this is a Chiddush to you, as you yourself mentioned this countless times in your post.

Thank you for understanding me. You are right. This is no chiddush to me. My formula for davening was before I was introduced to the 12 steps, but the 12 steps strengthened me even more to daven for these things. I learned a lot from the 12 steps.

I think baruch's issue is the idea of **group** therapy. It appears he feels a person should go 6 hours a week to group therapy. If not, he is short changing himself. Am I right boruch?

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 05 Mar 2009 23:01

Boruch goes for two hours, not 6. (It takes him 4 hours of driving).

Boruch is right that group therapy is one of the most powerful aspects of the 12-Steps. Being in an environment where everyone feels they MUST break free or they are dead, is a HUGE chizuk. As well as the group support and accountability. You can't beat that. It's not for nothing Rabbi Twerski holds this is the surest way to break free for someone who is desperate.

But with all this, Yaakov, you are doing great as it is now. No need to shake the boat.

And you too, Boruch. Keep doing what you are doing. You guys are both doing absolutely incredible.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by boruch - 06 Mar 2009 17:23

[Ykv schwartz wrote on 05 Mar 2009 22:24:](#)

Boruch, I prefer not to debate you...

Yaakov, there is nothing to debate, we just need a little bit more clarity.

Yesterday, you wrote that learning **in a moment of nisoyon** as described by the Rambam and Chazal is not an easy option for you, even with the 12 steps because **in a moment of nisoyon** there are no 12 steps for you. You are certainly not alone, as I posted on these forums I heard something very similar from Shomer very recently. He said that in a time of nisoyon there is nothing. Now, Yaakov, I was no different than you and Shomer, before I got involved and invested in the group I too would have been unable to implement 12 steps **in a moment of nisosyon**. And like you and Shomer the very idea of turning my mind to learning **in a time of nisosyon** would have been an immense struggle. So on this we are very clear, **by default**, the idea of implementing anything in a moment of nisoyon is extremely difficult if not sometimes unattainable.

How about the people who go to 12 step groups? Last night I went to a 12 steps meeting and listened to one goy after another discuss how he had at one time been totally immersed in addiction all day and now thanks to the steps and the groups **whenever he gets an urge he just works through the surrender to their Higher Power, and they surrender in two ways, they surrender themselves to do His will and not theirs AND they surrender to their Higher Power all expectation of ever getting cravings and lust**. They discussed how when that doesn't work then right then and there in the middle of a nisoyon they call a fellow member from the groups and if that doesn't help they attend the soonest possible meeting. As one guy put it, if that doesn't work he does all three simultaneously! One guy put it beautifully, if I can use the 12 steps to beat craving, addiction and lust then anyone can.

Yaakov, you, Shomer and I, are infinitely holier and wiser than any of these goyim were so how can they do something that none of us could do?

Well I will first tell you what is not the answer. **It is not because of group therapy. Group therapy makes you feel heard, it doesn't give you techniques and abilities you never had.**

So what is the answer? From first-hand experience I can tell you that what is really going on in the fellowship is that you see and hear in the flesh people implement something that sounds very abstract, very remote and seems unattainable and when you see with your own eyes that even goyim coming from the lowest places are able to do it, you see that they can keep it up for 5 years, 10 years, 13 years and you finally realize that you can do it too, all you need to do is just join the groups and work the steps together with everyone else and get them from everyone else, especially the long haulers.

Now Yaakov, unlike your original treatises and theories on addiction, the 12 step groups have

over years and years been proven on the record to be the single most successful system at beating addiction with the longest sustained recovery periods. So the question becomes why would anyone who is serious about recovery, rule out what has been proven over the years and instead chart his own course?

Yes, tirutzim and excuses, there are plenty. But real reasons there are very few. I myself was initially against both the steps and the groups. But deep down I was ready to go the distance. The proof is that when someone I trusted and whose judgment I valued told me that I should do it, I did. No ifs, ands or buts. Because I wanted to do whatever it takes. As Guard quotes so beautifully from Rabbi Twersky, if someone ch"v has cancer what will they not do to save themselves?

So, you ask me why I am not afraid that I will ch"v succumb to the addiction? There are two reasons. Firstly, **I deliberately made a very public commitment to never regress again, and I deliberately made a massive investment to fighting my addiction.** More than once I have had the opportunity to be nichshal and so far, Bechasdei Hashem, every time I had the opportunity and there were quite a few, each time I have instantly dismissed the thought of being nischshol out of fear of ruining everything. So, at least I know that the path I have taken is Bechasdei Hashem so far working even in moments of nisoyon. Secondly, I know that come what may I am ready to do whatever it takes to beat this addiction. I am already taking massive action and I don't have any inner guilt for setting up artificial pre-conditions of what I will never do. Because I will do anything. So, while I am not over-confident, I am no different than any hopeful baal teshuva and I certainly have to be extremely vigilant, but at least I know that I am doing what I believe to be a full hishtadlus and if there is more to be done I am ready to do it. I know that nothing I write on these forums is serving as an excuse for not doing more.

So, I ask you again, if you are truly afraid and not just saying the words about fear to be yotzei, why do you not honestly at least consider the possibility that maybe you are short-changing your teshuva out of fear to change the status quo? Maybe you would do much better if in addition to your own path of recovery you were open to outside advice. I had deeply and strongly held views and yet I was very open to doing anything that would help.

You asked why I am so sure of myself if I only have 40-something days of sobriety. Yaakov, **I am not sure of myself, I am at least sure that I am using a proven method.**

You are using a method that leads you into unknown territory, not so much because of what it includes but far more importantly because of what it excludes.

Yaakov, you do not even need to choose between either committing to joining the groups now or ruling them out forever. All it takes to improve is a little more openness, **a little more readiness to consider joining the groups when the time is right**. That's not even my advice, it's Guard's advice. You would listen to Guard for almost everything else, listen to him for this too...

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 07 Mar 2009 18:56

they surrender in two ways, they surrender themselves to do His will and not theirs AND they surrender to their Higher Power all expectation of ever getting cravings and lust.

Wow, that was beautifully put. Profound!

...to consider joining the groups when the time is right. That's not even my advice, it's Guard's advice.

I bless you Yaakov, that the time should never be right. But yes, be OPEN to all possibilities. I have read your story above and it is a classic case of serious addiction. Let's hope that now that you have found us, and now that you have been clean last year for 6 months, let's hope indeed that the vicious cycle has ended. But if *Chas veshalom* it hasn't - leave the door open to a new path of hope.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 07 Mar 2009 21:48

Yaakov, congrats on reaching 30 days - Level 4. I have updated your chart!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 12 Mar 2009 21:30

day 38. And beginning week 6

Glad to see all the activity on the forums.

B"H, Life is wonderful. I had such an amazing Purim. Taanis ester I spent many hours delving into the secrets of the megilla and how it relates to fighting the Y"H. On Leil Purim, I opened my heart up and davened late into the night, saying tehillim. I recited Vidui and repeated it again during mincha on Purim itself. I spent my seuda with my Rebbe as I do every year. It was filled with kedusha. I allowed myself above the normal drinking range for myself as I felt spiritually lifted.

My personal growth has taken new heights. I cannot go into details as words cannot describe my feelings.

I have been staying focused in saying ??? with proper kavana. My understanding has increased with time.

I have been putting focus on seeing Hashem in every facet of life. In terms of Teshuva, I decided after Purim that I should start developing a sincere ???? for my aveiros. For the past five weeks, my main focus, in terms of teshuvah, has been ????? ?????. This does not mean simply refraining from doing aveiros. This means purifying the mind from aveiros as is evident from Rabeinu Yona's words. Now I my attention will be to ?????. This means going back in time and telling myself and Hashem how stupid I have been for acting this way and realizing the great rebellion against Hashem. Of course there are a lot of details that Rabeinu Yona summarizes in one paragraph and to internalize it takes time, concentration and of course honesty.

I should clarify that just because ones MAIN focus is on one of the 20 principles of teshuvah,

does not mean he cannot work on a few things at a time. I try to keep my avodas Hashem, in general, and teshuva process in particular, exciting by focusing on a few issues at once. I keep a notebook and write down thoughts to focus on. But a person should have few areas that he puts extra focus on. This is true for davening, middos, mitzvot/aveiros, duties of the heart, etc. Meaning for each area he can have one or two things that he focusing on.

I would like to encourage others on this forum, especially those that feel far from their Y"H, to record their growth and what you are doing in your life as a baal teshuva. It would give all of your devoted readers ideas and inspiration for growth.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 15 Mar 2009 20:15

So my journey for ???? begins:

There are two parts of ????

- 1) Realization/understanding
- 2) Surprise/disbelief

What this means is that first a person must internally realize the terrible act of committing aveiros. Only after he properly internalizes it, can he begin to act surprised and feel disbelief in himself for doing it and declare, "how could I have done that".

Realization/understanding

In essence, there are three things a person must realize and internalize. I will mention only the first now, and move on with the days. The first thing is that when a person does an aveira, he removes himself from Hashem and that is Objectively **bad (??)**. Hashem says do not do it, so we should not do it. Simply put. By doing aveiros, we are doing evil because hashem said so.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by the.guard - 17 Mar 2009 00:07

Congrats Yaakov on 40 days! Tonight is the Yartzeit of R' Elimelech of Lizensk. And you know what he says about 40 days? I quote:

16. A person was only created in order to break his nature. Therefore he should spur himself to correct his midos*. Specifically when he is 18.

As I have explained, one who is born with the nature to be stubborn, should break this nature for 40 days one after another. He should specifically do the opposite from what he had in mind to do.

The same is if one is lazy. He should train himself for 40 days to do everything swiftly. Whether he is going to sleep, or rising in the morning from his bed. He should quickly dress himself, wash his hands, purify his body and speedily go to the Beis HaKnesses after he has finished learning in a sefer.

Similarly someone who is shy, from a shyness that is bad. He should train himself 40 days to pray with a loud voice, with all his strength, and with all his limbs in order to fulfil the verse, 'All my bones say...' And he should say the blessing over the Torah with a loud voice. [All this] he should do until from Heaven they will help him and remove this evil shyness that is in him.

The same is with the one who does not clearly say his words. He should train himself for 40 days to listen carefully to the words he says. [This is the case] whether speaking common things or words of prayer or when he is learning Torah. The reason for this is that one is ruled over by those things he is used to do.

The same is with the person who does not learn diligently. He should train himself for 40 days to learn more than he is used to learning. Every time before he learns he should look at this Tzetel Katon. From this time on he will be helped from heaven and he will add to his service and break his bad midos until he attains perfection.

May His merit protect us all and give us strength!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 17 Mar 2009 19:36

Thanks guard.

Last night I went through the most of chapter 17 of ?????? ?????, which deals with tikkun habris. I felt energized and the time is right for me to take my teshuvah to another level. By reading it, I realized that I will have a long journey of teshuvah to do. But I am prepared for this journey. Rectifying this aveira is no easy task as he declares but very possible as he makes clear. Today I went out and bought the ????? ?????? which is an entire sefer devoted top this. He writes that the ?????? ????? paved the way. Please wish me success as I begin my journey and that Hashem should give me the patience to work it out from beginning to end and be zoche to teshuvah shleimah. Anyone who already feels "free" from the addiction and has begun an official teshuva (azivas hachet, charata, vidui) and is ready to take it to another level and focus on the yesodos of tikkun habris, please join me.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory

Posted by the.guard - 17 Mar 2009 20:02

Yaakov, you obviously have a very high neshama. For most people today, true teshuvah involves simply Azivas hachet. Then, if they use their past falls to learn how and where to make fences so that they don't fall again, then they are uplifting their past falls to Kedusha.

On GUE we don't want people to think that teshuvah is a HUGE monumental task. It is in everybody's reach, *ki karov eilecha hadavar me'od*.

How? Figure out what is bringing you to fall, make fences and just stop these behaviors. And if you fall, **learn from it** and uplift it to Kedusha, and make NEW fences. And if you can help inspire others as well - **THAT is called taking your teshuvah to the next level.**

And you are doing all that Yaakov.

So be careful not to overwhelm yourself. Unless you truly feel your soul is capable of doing Teshuvah in the way that the Sefarim of old describe. Most Gedolim will tell you that these Sefarim don't mean our generation. The Tikkunim that one must do for these sins according to the Arizal and others, would be enough to scare any one away at the start :-)

In our generation, Hashem knows how much "bechirah" we really had when we were falling. Some of us had no Bechirah. Others had a little bit, but *very little*. The sin is in relation to the situation. Today, every little bit we can do in purifying ourselves is infinitely great in Hashem's eyes. These are not my own ideas, I think the Steipler says similar... (Battleworn?), and I've heard it in various Shiurim as well...

Like the Chassidic masters have said, today we achieve Sur Me'ra through Asei Tov! Keep learning blat after blat of gemara, keep inspiring others and making new fences. This is the highest level of teshuvah. Don't look to feel broken about it and shed endless tears, don't try fasts and sigufim. Bring light to the world, and all the darkness will be banished of its own accord!

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 17 Mar 2009 21:25

For most people today, true teshuvah involves simply Azivas hachet.

That is not teshuva according to halacha. The Rambam and Rabeinu Yona tells us we need charata and vidui as well. We all know this. we have been taught this since we were young. This is a mitzvah in the torah and we should do it properly. I admit my shortcomings. But, in my six month clean streak, I never did proper teshuvah. I left my addiction and forgot all about it. I kept saying to myself that perhaps I should do teshuvah but was too lazy to do it. I never really

worked on feeling charata and I waited until Yom Kippur to say vidui. Yom Kippur was the first time I cried over the aveiros during the entire six months. And I think that I was wrong for that. If you look at the wording of the meiri (chibur hateshuvah) he writes clearly that the essence of teshuvah is the charata. Though, by looking at the wording of the rambam the main part may be the azivah. Howeverm they all agree that you need both components.

In our generation, Hashem knows how much "bechirah" we really had when we were falling. Some of us had no Bechirah. Others had a little bit, but very little. The sin is in relation to the situation. Today, every little bit we can do in purifying ourselves is infinitely great in Hashem's eyes. These are not my own ideas, I think the Steipler says similar... (Battleworn?), and I've heard it in various Shiurim as well...

Yes indeed the steipler does write this in his series of letters dealing with pgam habris. They are very encouraging letters to anyone trying to free themselves. His purpose in the letters was to give encouragement to bachurim who could not even begin to do teshuvah because of feelings of guilt. However, his purpose was not to discourage anyone from teshuvah shleima. The Rabeinu Yona makes it very clear that there is a big difference between the minimal and maximum. And he says it is a long road. Anyone who reads tehilim 51 realizes the great levels of teshuva that can be accomplished. But reading the chovos halevovos, rabeinu Yona or Tehilim or reshis chachma should not get a person depressed or discouraged because it is a huge task. Firstly, even minimal teshuvah is great thing. Secondly, a person should realize that because he has been so low he can reach so high with his teshuvah. But it is the same for everything in life. True Yirash Shemayim is a lofty level as the mesilas yehsrim states. But that does not mean we do not strive for it. We start low and build ourselves up. When you go step by step in Rabeinu Yona, you see it is not simply azivas hachet. And yes one of the levels is making fence and inspiring others. Dovid Hamelech mentions that that as the highest level.

Don't look to feel broken about it and shed endless tears, don't try fasts and sigufim.

My only brokenness is that I want to get closer to Hashem. That is the ultimate expression of love as indicated by the sefer chareidim in yedid nefesh. We ask Hashem to heal us and get closer. Tears are good. B"H, I am very happy. A happy person can cry also. Rabeinu Yona writes that crying is very effective. He says that it is the yesod of nisuch hamayim. And regarding teshuva, when a person cries he can hit high levels in charata and yagon(sorrow). regarding fasts and sigufim, yes indeed these sefarim talk about that. However, the tahara hakodesh writes that a person needs to be quite honest with himself. It should also be noted that the Rambam's son already addressed this issue and said that it is not so effective for people that have LOTS of aveiros only for people who have minor aveiros. (on the other hand Rav Moshe Feinstein mentions fasting as an effective measure for people that violated sexual aveiros.) He mentions there the importance in limud hatorah and not to be mevatel from torah, which B"H I maintain all my regular sederim. DO not worry, my time is not spent on sigufim. I have never done any sigufim. But the sefarim do not focus only on that. In fact a very small part of the sefer is devoted to that. But they help understand the aveira and the the different types of teshuvah. Then lots of the sefer is devoted to bringing kedusha into ones life and how to do that. You see from all my posts that I do put focus on that aspect but rather on really dealing with the self and ones true relationship with Hashem.

Every individual needs to find his path for teshuvah. After healing himself from the addiction and feeling that he will never return again, he needs to begin to address teshuvah. He should read on of the classic seforim, be it Rabeinu Yonah, chovos halevovos or Ramabam or all three, and pave a path for himself. We are not trying to find just inspiration anymore at this point, we need to do what Hashem wants from us. And as the mabit says in his essay on teshuvah, the purpose of teshuva is returning to Hashem, and building an everlasting connection with him.

We should all be zoche to teshuva sheleima

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 17 Mar 2009 22:45

I was just worried that

- 1) you shouldn't overwhelm yourself, which can lead to giving up chas veshalom, down the line
- 2) people shouldn't see your posts and think Teshuvah is too hard and give up.

I meant to say that for most people today, true teshuvah involves mainly Azivas hachet. Obviously Charata is part of it too. But, in my opinion, with such a difficult struggle as this, if someone is Ozev the chet, they must have a strong Charata. They don't need to sit down and bang their head into the wall and try to get themselves to feel bad about the past and cry. The simple fact that they are resisting the Yetzer Hara's constant tests every day (which you seem not to have too many of lately B"H), proves pretty strongly that they obviously have Charata on the past. Otherwise, where would they get the Koach to be Ozev each day?

The Sefer Taharas Hakodesh is an amazing Sefer! And yes, I would suggest it for everyone to read for these inyanim.

Keep up the great work Yaakov. Your soul is shining bright and lighting up the darkness.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by Ykv_schwartz - 17 Mar 2009 22:58

Guard, you are one of the most impressive people I know. You are so insightful, honest and have a power of words. I know you hate praise, but I just cannot contain myself.

I was just worried that

1) you shouldn't overwhelm yourself, which can lead to giving up chas veshalom, down the line

This is an obvious concern that even I have for myself. But the truth is that I do not feel overwhelmed at all. I am very chilled out. I skimmed the entire chapter on teshuvah already (I tend to read fast). I pick up the points that are relevant for me now. I am very honest with myself as to where I am really holding (even though I probably do not come across that way). My entire spiritual ascend has been a pleasant journey from beginning to end. I enjoy every moment of it and I make sure that I am building myself within the confines of my nature. Even

Chumrahs that I took upon myself were all chumrahs that I wanted to take upon myself.

Thank you very much for being so loving and caring to all of us on this site.

May you be zoche for many more years of true love for your fellow yidden.

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Re: 15+ years of battle - The Final Battle that will lead to victory
Posted by the.guard - 17 Mar 2009 23:10

I know you hate praise, but I just cannot contain myself.

"Hating praise" is a high madrega which unfortunately I'm not holding by yet, so don't feel so bad :D

They say that when a person enjoys something, they can accomplish **100 times more** than someone - of the same strengths - who doesn't enjoy it. So Yaakov, if you enjoy it, I truly believe you WILL be able to achieve the highest madregos of teshuvah and avodas hashem!

R' Noach Weinberg (who was just niftar) as a Bochur, used to sleep from 12-1 AM, 6-7 AM and one more hour in the afternoon. All the rest of the time he sat and learned with great hasmada. When asked how such a thing is possible in today's day and age, he replied that when a person has true Simchas Hatorah it's not hard at all!

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