

Putting fragments in context: An analysis of 4Q468 fragment B

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This note presents a linguistic and paleographic analysis of the Qumranic fragment 4Q468a-d Frag. b [olim 4QUnid Frg. D]. Although this is a very fragmentary text, an attempt is made to contextualize it within the Qumranic literature by highlighting connections with the well-known Qumranic themes of light and the importance of priesthood. This fragment aligns with the overall theme of celebrating and elevating the importance of the priesthood within the community. It is possible that the fragment also alludes to the circumstances in Jerusalem that ultimately brought about the downfall of the Zadokite priesthood.

Keywords: Dead Sea Scrolls, Hebrew paleography, Second Temple Judaism.

1. Introduction¹

Although the texts from Qumran have been published in full for some time and are readily available to scholars, they still leave much room for interpretation.² This is especially true of those fragments that have not yet been identified with certainty. In this regard, it is worth remembering that an entire and far from slender volume of the DJD series is dedicated to unidentified fragments (Pike and Skinner 2001). In this short note we will offer an analysis of the fragment 4Q468 b, which was grouped by the editor with 4Q468, 4Q468c, 4Q468d and duly labelled “4Q468a–d Frag. b.”

The fragment was first published in the early 1990s, in B. Z. Wacholder and M. Abegg’s “unauthorized” edition of DJD (1991–1996). More recently, it was published by Magen Broshi (2000) for the “official” DJD series (Broshi 2000). The fragment is visible in photo PAM 43.399, as well as in the earlier photos 40.609 and 42.011, where it is labeled 4QUnidentified D. The fragment is also found in the Leon Levy Scrolls Foundation online archive, where it appears in photos B-473791 and B-473792.³

¹ It is an honor and pleasure to dedicate this short note to Fabrizio Pennacchietti in gratitude for his teachings and friendship.

² See in this regard the seminal study by Eibert Tigchelaar (2010).

³ The image is available at <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-473791> and <https://www.deadseascrolls.org.il/explore-the-archive/image/B-473792> (accessed February 12, 2023). The high-resolution photo, taken on August 23, 2013, is very useful for analyzing the details of the fragment.

It should be noted that the number 4Q468 was assigned to a number of fragments that are found together in the aforementioned photo PAM 43.399 but are not part of the same work or even the same scroll (Broshi 2000, 401).

2. The text and its translation

We present here the text in question as published by M. Broshi (4Q468a–d Frag. b [olim 4QUnid Frg. D]), along with a tentative translation.

Frg. b

נג[שתי אני לנוגהו]	1
באור [משבצתו יתהלכו כול ב]	2
מלך עלי ואור נגהו על]	3
שמ[ש בצאתה מזבול]	4
בני [עול ובני צד]ק	5
קו[דש קוד]שים	6
יד לון]	7

Translation

1 [...] ... I in its splendor [...] 2 its bezel. They will go every ... [...] 3 [...] (?) On me, and the light of its splendor on ... [...] 4 [...] ... coming out from on high ... [...] 5 [...] iniquity and sons of ... [...] 6-7 [...] ... [...]

3. Paleographic observations⁴

The calligraphy is neat and regular, as the letters are hung on horizontal lines drawn with a stylus in accord with standard Qumran practice (Tov 2004, 58–64). The letters are fairly uniform in size and are drawn with multiple strokes of the stylus—features suggesting formal or semi-formal writing. Although the fragment is small, it is possible to detect differences between final and non-final forms of letters (see the kaf at the beginning of l. 3) and the presence of serifs on certain letters (alef, šadi, šin, and taw). These details suggest that this text may have been produced in the late Herodian

⁴ The following discussion is indebted to the classic study by Frank Moore Cross (1965), see also Martone (2021).

period.⁵ Such a date is especially recommended by the left portion of the alef, which leans backward, toward the right (Yardeni 2014: 39). On the basis of these data the fragment can be tentatively dated to the first half of the first century AD. The formal (or semi-formal) ductus indicates that the fragment is of a text of some importance, copied by a professional scribe.⁶

4. Analysis

Although the fragment is incomplete, it contains interesting features that are associated with well-known and important themes in Qumran literature. Particularly noteworthy is a lexicon linked, on the one hand, to light and splendor, and, on the other hand, to the priestly office.

Line 1

Given that there are no indications that our fragment contains a biblical text, at least in the sense in which the term “biblical” is used today,⁷ the use of the first-person independent pronoun אני suggests that it should be viewed in the context of Qumran poetic and liturgical texts.⁸ The use of the first-person singular in the so-called *Hodayot* and in various liturgical texts is widely recognized. In particular, with respect to the *Hodayot*, there is much speculation on whether the first-person speaker in these texts is the Teacher of Righteousness,⁹ that is, the founder of the Qumran sect.¹⁰ In the fragment under consideration here, the pronoun in all probability indicates the subject of a verb ending with the letters -שתי, but it is unlikely that it contains any reference to 1 Sam 17:10 (הפלשתי אני). Given that the following form is introduced by the preposition ל-, the editor opts to interpolate a verb connoting movement, לגשתי, derived from the root גשג, whose main meaning is “to approach.” The root in its various forms appears frequently in biblical Hebrew¹¹ and, at Qumran, in the

⁵ See Yardeni 2014, 30, referring to the periodization established by Cross (1965). A *status quaestionis* on the complex matter of Qumran paleography is now Tigchelaar (2020).

⁶ For the scribal characteristics that can be deduced from the manuscripts of Qumran and other sites in the desert of Judah, see Tov (2004; 2016).

⁷ See the discussion in Martone (2004).

⁸ On liturgy in the Qumran texts, see the fundamental study by Bilhah Nitzan (1994) and, most recently, Russell (2006).

⁹ On the Teacher of Righteousness, cf. most recently Kratz (2017).

¹⁰ See the discussion in García Martínez (2002).

¹¹ Gen 33:7; Exod 20:21; 34:32; 1 Sam 7:10; 2 Sam 3:34; 11:20–21; 17:29; 1 Kgs 20:13; Ezra 9:1; Isa 29:13; Amos 5:25.

abovementioned *Hodayot*.¹² The form נגשתי, however, is not found anywhere in the two corpora,¹³ and to conjecture a *hapax legomenon* is methodologically risky.¹⁴

Be that as it may, the first-person singular independent pronoun of our text is followed by the phrase לְנוֹגְהוּ. This form is derived from the root נגה, which refers to luminescence.¹⁵ The root reoccurs in line 3 of our fragment and is also found in other Qumran texts, including an exquisite liturgical text that is especially resonant (4Q286 1a iib 3).¹⁶

The first-person speaker places himself in relation “to his splendor.” We are thus in the presence of one of the principal and most distinctive themes of Qumran literature. As the so-called *Doctrine of the Two Spirits* in the *Rule of the Community* (1QS 3:13–4:26) evinces, this literature is the expression of a community whose members considered themselves sons of light, as opposed to the sons of darkness and their domain, the external world.¹⁷

Line 2

The inferred approach of the first-person subject toward a source of resplendence can be further qualified, albeit speculatively, according to the remains of line 2.

The term משבצת points to a priestly context. The word is found in chapters 28 and 39 of the book of Exodus¹⁸ and signifies a distinctive ornament of the priest’s vestments whose construction God has directly commanded, as explained in Exod 28:3.11:

ואתה תדבר אל כל חכמי לב אשר מלאתיו רוח חכמה ועשו את בגדי אהרן לקדשו לכהנו לי... מעשה חרש אבן
פתוחי חתם תפתח את שתי האבנים על שמת בני ישראל מסבת משבצות זהב תעשה אתם

¹² 1QS 11:13; 1QM 16:13; 19:11; 1QHa 6:18; 20:23; 4Q158 7 8:12; 4Q181 1: 3; 4Q264 1: 1; 4Q271 3: 2; 4Q375 1ii: 7; 4Q422 2: 9; 4Q429 4ii: 4; 4Q434 1i: 11; 4Q468b 1: 1; 4Q491 10ii: 13; 11ii: 11; 4Q492 1: 10; 4Q504 10: 1; 4Q524 15 22: 9; 11QT 61: 15; 63: 3.

¹³ For other possibilities, unfortunately not particularly attractive, see Sander and Mayerhofer (2010 *ad loc*).

¹⁴ On the difficult relationship between biblical studies and the art of conjecture, cf. Catastini (1991), Martone (2012), and Chiesa (2012).

¹⁵ 2 Sam 22:13; 23:4; Ps 18:13; Prov 4:18; Isa 4:5; 50:10; 60:3, 19; 62:1; Ezek 1:4, 13, 27–28; 10:4; Joel 2:10; 4:15; Amos 5:20; Hab 3:4, 11.

¹⁶ See Nitzan (1995, 1998). For other occurrences see 1QHa 14:18; 4Q184 1: 8; 4Q405 20ii 22: 11; 4Q429 4i: 5; 4Q468b 1: 1, 3; 11Q17 7:13; 11Q22 1: 2.

¹⁷ The bibliography on the so-called Qumran dualism is vast; it will suffice to recall here the important collection of studies edited by the late Géza G. Xeravits (2010). On the *Rule of the Community*, cf. Sacchi (2006).

¹⁸ Exod 28:11, 13–14, 25; 39:6, 13, 16, 18; cf. also Ps 45:14.

And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with an able mind, that they make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood. ... As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree (משבצות). (NRV)

The term derives from the root שבץ, which indicates a way of decorating wood or metal (and, in fact, in the book of Exodus the term is used with reference to a breastplate) with an intertwined pattern that is probably the root's fundamental meaning. Maimonides explains the term as follows (Mishne Torah, *Klei HaMiq* 8:16):¹⁹

וכיצד מעשה הבגדים הכתונת בין של כ"ג בין של כהן הדיוט משבצת היתה שהיא בתים בתים באריגתה כמו בית הכוסות כדרך שעושין האורגין בבגדים הקשים

How were the clothes made? The tunic, both of the high priest and of an ordinary priest, was checkered (משבצת)—that is, it had rows of [ridged] squares woven into it, like the pattern on the reticulum, in the way that weavers make heavy clothing.

The theme of light sounded in line 1 must therefore be situated in a priestly context, a collocation confirmed by the occurrence of the term משבצות in a Qumran text that is certainly connected to the priesthood, namely 4Q365 (see 4Q365 12b iii: 11, 14; Crawford 2008 and Zahn 2012). This is another sign that the fragment belongs to the literature of the Qumran community, a group that some scholars, with a touch of anachronism, have characterized as sectarian (Martone 2015).

In view of what has been presented thus far, it does not seem risky to interpret the following verbal form (יתהלכו) as a description of a liturgical function performed by the priesthood. This is consistent with the recurrence of the form in Qumran literature and in contexts of this type.²⁰ The passage 1QS III, 20–21 from the aforementioned *Doctrine of the Two Spirits* is particularly interesting in this regard:

¹⁹ The text follows Touger (1988–2002 *ad loc*). For the use of the expression בית הכוסות to indicate the reticulum, i.e. the second compartment of the stomach of a ruminant, which has a ridged, honeycomb structure see b. *Hul* 42a. The intertwined ornamentation to which the root שבץ refers is evoked by the squares of a chessboard, which is one of the meanings assumed by the term משבצת in modern Hebrew.

²⁰ CD 12:22; 19: 4; 20: 6; 1QS 4:15, 18, 24; 6:2; 1QS^b 3:24; 1QM 13:12; 4Q169 3 4ii:2; 4Q257 6:2; 4Q258 2:6; 4Q263 1:2; 4Q266 5i:15; 9ii:8; 15:2; 4Q385a 5a b:7; 4Q387 3:4; 4Q390 1:3, 12; 4Q418 47:3; 69ii:3, 14; 81 + 81a:14; 4Q468b 1:2; 4Q495 2:4; 4Q511 1:7; 4Q525 5:9; 14ii:15; 21:5.

20 ביד שר אורים ממשלת כול בני צדק בדרכי אור יתהלכו וביד מלאך

21 חושכ כול ממשלת בני עול ובדרכי חושכ יתהלכו ובמלאך חושך

20 In the hand of the Prince of Lights is dominion over all the sons of righteousness; they proceed on paths of light. And in the hand of the Angel of 21 Darkness lies complete dominion over the sons of lies; they proceed on paths of darkness.

Line 3

In this line the thematization of light is heightened. The two clearly legible words are **ואור** and **נגהו**. The root **נגה** has already been encountered and examined in relation to line 1.²¹ Here it is connected to the sectarian term *par excellence*, “light,” employed very frequently at Qumran. It refers to that fraction of humanity that includes the members of the community, who, rather unsurprisingly, define themselves as “sons of light.”²² The terminology of our fragment thus focuses persistently on an identitarian formation that is tied to the Qumran community (Collins 2009; Jokiranta 2013).

The first legible letter of this line is a terminal *kaf*. The editor of the text are confident about their reading of a *lamed* and offers a more tentative reading of a *mem*: **מלך**. This reconstruction can be accepted and the identification of a *lamed* can indeed be regarded as certain, and although only a portion of the base and the upper part of the preceding letter is visible, it is certainly a *mem*. Such a sequence is not found anywhere in the Hebrew Bible.²³

Line 4

In this line we witness the departure (**בצאתה**) of something or someone “from on high” (**מזבול**). The root **זבל**, which is found five times in the Hebrew Bible,²⁴ basically indicates God’s dwelling, or in any case a heavenly residence. The same meaning is also found in Qumran texts tied to a liturgical context and strongly linked to the community’s identity as it is articulated in the *Community Rule* and the *Rule*

²¹ See the quite lengthy discussion of the root in Kratz, Steudel and Kottsieper (2017: 42-48).

²² To limit ourselves to a fundamental text of the Qumran group, 1QS, these are the occurrences of the term **אור**: 1QS 1:9; 2:16; 3:3, 7, 13, 19–20, 24–25; 4:8; 11:3, 5.

²³ The only similar sequence in the Hebrew Bible (corresponding only to **ך עלי**) is 1 Sam 2:20 (**ויברך עלי**), which unfortunately is not of much help in our context.

²⁴ Cf. 1 Kgs 8:13; 2 Chr 6:2; Ps 49:15; Isa 63:15; Hab 3:11. For possible Ugaritic parallels, cf. Albright (1936).

of War in particular.²⁵ These two texts speak of the sacred residence of the stars and of God, and in the *Rule of War* (1QM 12:1–2), זבול occurs in a hymn concerning the invocation and awaiting of divine intervention in the eschatological war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness:²⁶

1 כִּיָּא רֹב קְדוּשִׁים [א] לֵּה בְּשָׁמַיִם וְצַבָּאוֹת מַלְאָכִים בְּזִבּוּל קוֹדֶשְׁכָּה לֵּה [וְדוֹת אִמְתָּ] כֹּה וּבַחִירִי עִם קוֹדֶשׁ
2 שְׁמַתָּה לֵּכָה ב[...]. פֶּר שְׁמוֹת כּוֹל צְבָאָם אֲתָכָה בְּמַעוֹן קוֹדֶשְׁכָּה וּמָ[...]. יָם בְּזִבּוּל כְּבוֹדָכָה

1 For there are a multitude of saints in heaven and hosts of angels in your holy dwelling to praise your name. The elect of the holy people 2 you have chosen for yourself in [...] [The] book of the names of all their armies is with you in your holy abode [...] in the dwelling of your glory.

Line 5

Line 5 brings us back to a distinctively Qumran context. The phrase עול [בני] can be translated literally as “sons of iniquity.” These are the members of the world outside the community, who by virtue of this very fact are destined for damnation. The phrase is found in 1QS 3:21,²⁷ again in the *Doctrine of the Two Spirits*:

וּבִיד מְלֹאךְ 21 חוּשֶׁךְ כּוֹל מְשַׁלֵּת בְּנֵי עוֹל וּבְדַרְכֵי חוּשֶׁךְ יִתְהַלְכוּ

And in the hand of the Angel of 21 Darkness lies complete dominion over the sons of iniquity; they proceed in ways of darkness.

The phrase is of biblical origin, but in the Hebrew Bible it does not have any particular identitarian connotations,²⁸ unlike in the Qumran texts, where, in addition to the passage just mentioned, such connotations are common.²⁹ Its identitarian function is also attested by the different *nomina regentia* accompanying עול that are found in the Qumran corpus, mostly in those texts referring to the

²⁵ 1QS 10:3; 1QM 12:1–2; 1QHa 11:35; 4Q256 19:1; 4Q258 8:12; 4Q260 2:2; 4Q298 3 4i:1; 4Q403 1i:41; 4Q405 6:2; 81:2; 4Q408 3 + 3a:5; 4Q468b 1:4; 4Q491 5 6:1; 11Q17 10:8.

²⁶ See Ibba (2000).

²⁷ Sacchi (2006, *ad loc*) translates the phrase figuratively as “sons of Evil.”

²⁸ Cf. 2 Sam 3:34; 7:10; 1 Chr 17:9; the usual translation is “evildoers” or “wicked (ones).”

²⁹ 1QS 3:21; 1QHa 13:10; 14:21; 4Q88 9:7; 4Q265 1:5; 4Q418 69ii:8; 201:2; 4Q429 1i:3; 4i:5; 4Q511 1:8 .

community and attaching a negative quality to those outside it. Even more obvious are the various deverbals from the root עוּל,³⁰ which refers to acting unjustly.

In the fragment under consideration, the term עוּל is incomplete and only the last letter is intact. Nevertheless, the reconstruction can be considered certain, as traces of a *waw* and the upper part of a *'ayin* are clearly visible. The only completely intact word of the line is בּוּי, followed by traces of a letter among which the right arm of a *ṣadi* is easily observed. On the basis of what has been said so far, the insertions proposed by the editor, which refer not only to the “sons of iniquity” but also to the “sons of justice” (בּוּי צַדִּיק), repeating the contrast found in the aforementioned passage 1QS III, 20–21, should be accepted. Again, the terminology takes us back to the Qumran community’s literature and its modes of self-definition.³¹

Line 6

The few surviving traces of line 6 point again to a priestly context. The first legible letter is a *šin* preceded by traces of the roof of a *dalet*. After a space, the letters קוּד are clearly legible and are followed by the traces of the right arm of a *šin*. The phrase קוּדֵשׁ קוּדֵשִׁים is found frequently in both Qumran and in biblical literature, and, employed in the well-known construction whereby biblical Hebrew expresses the superlative, it indicates the highest degree of sanctity of the offering to be sacrificed.³² It also indicates, however, the innermost and most sacred part of the temple, which in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezek 45:3ff) becomes the temple itself, the most sacred part of restored Judea after the exile (Eichrodt 1970, 569). As is to be expected, the same phrase is found in Qumran literature, in those texts most closely related to the community’s self-definition and its eschatological priesthood,³³ such as the previously cited *Rule of the Community*. It is also found in the so-called *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*,

³⁰ 1QS 3:19, 21; 5:2, 10; 6:15; 8:13, 18; 9:9, 17, 21; 11:9; 1QM 4:3; 1QHa 8:18; 9:28; 11:19; 13:26; 14:10; 17:36; 21:29; 23:36; 1Q27 1i:9; 4Q88 8:4; 4Q172 4:2; 4Q176 1 2ii:3; 4Q179 1ii:4; 4Q184 8, 10; 3:4; 4Q256 9:2, 8; 18:4; 4Q257 6:2, 3; 4Q258 1:2, 7; 6:7; 8:2, 5; 4Q259 3:4, 15; 4:2; 4Q266 3ii:21; 4Q299 1:1; 4Q367 2a b: 13; 4Q380 1ii:6; 4Q417 1i:6; 2i:7; 4Q418 43 45i:4; 88ii:4; 4Q418c 1:5; 4Q428 7:1; 4Q432 5:6; 4Q468b 1:5; 4Q525 28:5; 11Q5 22:7, 10; 11Q11 5:8; 11Q13 2:11.

³¹ In this regard, it will suffice to mention here Carol Newsom’s *The Self as Symbolic Space* (2004), now almost a classic.

³² Exod 29:37; 30:10, 29, 36; 40:10; Lev 2:3, 10; 6:10, 18, 22; 7:1, 6; 10:12, 17; 14:13; 24:9; 27:28; Num 18:9; Judg 17:3; 1 Chr 23:13; 2 Chr 31:18; Ezek 43:12; 45:3; 48:12; Dan 9:24. For the form, see Joüon and Muraoka (2011, §96 Ag).

³³ On the eschatological priesthood in Qumran, cf. Martone (2003). For occurrences of קוּדֵשׁ קוּדֵשִׁים, cf. 1QS 8:8; 9:6; 10:4; 1QSb 4:28; 4Q158 13:2; 4Q251 15:1; 4Q256 19:2; 4Q258 6:2; 9:1; 4Q259 2:14, 15; 4Q260 2:4; 4Q286 2:5; 4Q287 2:5, 7; 4Q398 9:2; 4Q400 1i:7, 10, 12; 1ii:6; 2:10; 4Q401 6:5; 12:1, 3; 35:2; 4Q403 1i:11, 42–43, 45; 1ii:1, 7–8, 27; 2:1; 3:2; 4Q404 5:1; 4Q405 6:5, 8; 7:2; 11:2; 14 15i:2, 4, 7; 19:2, 4; 20ii 22:10; 23ii:8; 41:3; 85:1; 4Q423 8:3; 4Q468b 1:6; 4Q502 6 10:13; 100:2; 4Q503 15 16:2, 4–5; 23:1; 24 25:1; 27:5; 29 32:23; 11Q17 4:9; 6:5; 11Q19 35:9.

one of the most fascinating works in the Qumran corpus. Here the community presents itself as a community of angels in the priestly service of a heavenly temple (Newsom 1990).

1QS 9:5–6 unequivocally underlines the eschatological conception of the priesthood that membership in the community entails, and in terms that resonate with our fragment:

בעת ההיא יבדילו אנשי 6 היחד בית קודש לאהרון להיחד קודש קודשים ובית יחד לישראל ההולכים בתמים

At that time the men of the 6 community will separate themselves off (as) the holy house of Aaron and join the Holy of Holies, and (as) a house for the people of Israel, (for) those who proceed in perfection.

In essence, to build the community is to build a temple with a Holy of Holies (קודש קודשים) (Sacchi 2006, 139 n. 5).

Line 7

In the last line of the fragment only the first and last letters of two distinct words are visible: יך לו []. This combination is not so frequent. In the Hebrew Bible the cluster is only found in Deut 10:9, 1 Kgs 22:18, and Qoh 8:12, while at Qumran, if we exclude conjectures, it appears only in 11Q5 22:9, one of the so-called apocryphal Psalms.³⁴ It is worth recalling the passage:

8 כמה קוו לישועתך ויתאבלו עליך תמיד לוא תובד תקותך 9 ציון ולוא תשכח תוחלתך

How they hoped for your salvation! How your perfect ones³⁵ have mourned you! The hope of you, 9 Zion, does not perish, nor is the awaiting of you ever forgotten.

11Q5 22:1–10 is a poem known as the *Apostrophe to Zion*. This text is an alphabetic acrostic³⁶ and is not found in any version of the Bible. The text praises Zion and reinterprets negative biblical phrases about Zion in a positive light (Reymonds 2011, 126). The fact that the fragment under consideration can be somehow connected, albeit tentatively, to the *Apostrophe to Zion* is further evidence that the text

³⁴ For the editio princeps, see Sanders (1965).

³⁵ For a discussion on the reading תמיד see Reymond (2011: 136).

³⁶ On the structure of this text see more recently Henderson (2013).

belongs to the literature of the community and it may shed some light on the historical events that led to the establishment of the community itself.

5. Concluding remarks

On the basis of what has been discussed so far, and especially the possible connection between our text and the Apostrophe to Zion, the following can be said by way of provisional conclusion. According to an interesting hypothesis (Delcor 1967), 11Q5 22:8 alludes to conditions in Jerusalem after the murder of Onias III.³⁷ If this hypothesis is valid, a text such as 11Q5 22:8 could be linked to the fragment considered here, since the riots that followed the end of the Zadokite dynasty were probably important for the birth or consolidation of the Qumran community (Martone 2003). This fragment, as we have seen, fits well in the context of praise and exaltation of the priesthood as the center of the community. It is not to be excluded that it contains tacit references to the situation in Jerusalem that led to the end of the Zadokite priesthood (Martone 2015).

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³⁷ Concerning the complex circumstances of the career of Onias III, see now Piotrkowski (2019).

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