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C0802 – January 16, 2008 – Obadiah: Judgment Of Edom

We're looking at the outworking of the Abrahamic Covenant with respect to the nations and Israel. Obadiah is basically about this covenant. The word covenant, is *berith* and means "to cut". In ancient legal treaties, pacts and the like they would take animals and cut them in half and the parties to the covenant would walk between the pieces. This happened in Gen 15 in that strange passage where God, manifested as a burning oven, passed between the pieces while Abram was knocked out with a little sedative so that God alone has terms to fulfill in this contractual arrangement. It was what they called a self-maledictory oath which meant, "May what has happened to these animals happen to Me if I do not do all that I have promised." So, we're looking at the historical and prophetic outworking of this contract in Obadiah. The Parties of the contract were God, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants. The Legal Terms are basically, at least in terms of the broad outlines, a Land, a real estate in the Middle East as an eternal possession (Gen 17:8), a Seed, a specific and unique descendant that would provide a resolution to the evil and suffering problem and finally a world wide blessing, somehow through the nation of Israel corporately and the seed individually the whole world would be blessed, and in this third provision of the contract, Gen 12:3 mentions another aspect. In light of God's choice of this nation, founded on His love for that nation, he says, "I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse." That's blessing and cursing upon the nations for their treatment of Israel. Remember, the nations began after the Flood in Gen 10, that's where we find the origin of the nations and we'll be talking about that in-depth in the coming weeks in our Biblical Framework on Sunday mornings but God called this man out from the nations to form a new nation to be a counter-culture which by the Holy Spirit would be a conduit to preserve a record of the covenant faithfulness of God and to be a vessel to bring the Seed, the Messiah into the World to provide World Redemption. So, of course, that people Israel is a very special people and to bless them will result in blessing and to curse them will result in cursing. That's a major dynamic of history that really is behind and controlling the rise and fall of nations. It's something that is unfortunately left out of the interpretive equation of history by mainline thinkers. Most

people have never heard it but it's going to be on center stage in the future Tribulation because that is narrow slot in time that has two basic purposes, both start with a 'P' so they are easy to remember, the "Punishment of the Nations" for their treatment of Israel because by that time Israel has no friends. Today she has a couple of friends and if that's any indication of where we are in the flow of history I don't know for sure. Things can look like they are heading that way and then back off some; things can simmer down but like the late great theologian John Walvoord said, when God starts moving in a direction He finishes what He's started. The other purpose for the Tribulation is to "Purge Israel to Belief" in the Messiahship of Jesus. Remember, we talked about this weeks ago. When you read the OT you find this three-fold structure to Israel's History. Once they agreed to the terms of the Mosaic Covenant, which was a blessing/cursing contract. "If you obey Me I will bless you but if you curse Me I will curse you" within the confines of a family-relationship of course. He will never cast off His people. But then you can sit back and watch the unfolding of the OT like you'd watch a trial from a courtroom, imagine yourself as a courtroom reporter and you're sitting there in the court and a great prophet comes in and He's the prosecuting attorney for God and he's got these scrolls under his arm and they record the historical evidence against Israel, the defense, and they've got false prophets trying to defend them. And then you have all the angelic witnesses come in and one by one they take the stand and give their testimony. They were there when the contract was made, they witnessed the whole thing, they saw the agreement take place and they've been tracking the behavior of God on one side and Israel on the other and so they are witnesses to covenant faithfulness of God and covenant unfaithfulness of Israel. And the prophet starts laying out all the evidence for Israel's unfaithfulness. Now, that's what the OT prophets were, prosecuting attorney's calling Israel back to obedience to the Lord so God can bless them. And God can't and won't bless them until they are obedient. So, somehow the nation has got to repent of her disobedience because she's under 5th degree cursing and God is going to "Purge the Nation" during the Tribulation by having every nation turn against her so Israel has nowhere left to turn except God and His Messiah, Jesus Christ. Then they will repent and make their confession of Matt 23:39 and you remember how Dr Toussaint said this is a point often missed but so important, and that is the contingency of the kingdom. Jesus will not come until they make the confession of Matt 23:39. That has to happen and God will ensure that it happens by purging her to repentance during the Tribulation and that brings the Kingdom and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. That's the three-fold scheme of Israel's history. It's the basic prophetic outline. So the Tribulation is for two basic purposes; to Purge Israel to Repentance and to Punish the Nations for their treatment of Israel, the outworking of Gen 12:3. Turn to Zech 2:8, here's one from the Twelve that attests to Gen 12:3, this is very late in Israel's OT history, this is after the partial restoration of Israel to

her land ~480BC. And note how this smells of Gen 12:3, “For thus says the LORD of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.” And then the context goes on about the Tribulation. But Israel is the eternal apple of God’s eye and if you touch that you are going to get pummeled. No questions asked, no valid excuses. That’s why the 7 seals and 7 trumpets and 7 bowls, to Punish the Nations, it’s the outworking of Gen 12:3; Zech 2:8 and a whole host of other passages. So one period of time accomplishes both objectives. God is able, to Purge Israel and Punish the Nations. But He will not cast off His people, Israel, completely. Yet, I showed you last week that in the early church you had literalism, a millennial reign of Christ, a future for Israel in the Kingdom and then all that got washed away when Origen came in and introduced a new method of Bible interpretation called allegorism. Augustine, who was originally a Premillennialist adopted allegorism and the promises to Israel were transferred to the Church. The Church became the Kingdom, Israel had forfeited her promises by killing the Christ and there was no more future for the Jews, no millennium. And I said this is called Replacement Theology because the Church replaces Israel and this is a breeding ground for Anti-Semitism. I’m not saying all Replacement Theologians are anti-Semitic but it opens the door for anti-Semitism and we read two very anti-Semitic quotes from two men of the middle ages, John Chrysostom and Martin Luther, one early one late that were terribly anti-Semitic and there statements always seem to go back to the charge that the Jews were the Christ-killers when, in all reality, God assigns responsibility beyond the Jews. Turn to Acts 4:27. Here’s Peter in his second sermon and keep in mind this is a current issue. Mel Gibson was accused when he directed *The Passion of Christ* of accusing the Jews. This isn’t new, people throughout all church history have been blaming the Jews. In fact, the persecution has been so terrible, Christian persecution of Jews has been so terrible that the cross is not a sign of love to most Jews, it is a sign of persecution. But this is an empty charge, it’s not the Jews sole fault...““For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel.” We could go on and see that this isn’t totally unrelated to God’s purpose either. But the Jews are not the only Christ-killers. So those quotes I read to you were red alerts that something is seriously wrong with their understanding of the Bible on that point. God will never cast off His people Israel. He will tear them but He will heal them. He will wound them but He will bandage them (Hos 6:1). So, you have to be very careful with your foreign policy toward Israel and your individual policy toward Israel. I say bless the Jews. Now the question arises and someone asked me this last week. “Okay, but...” there’s always a “but involved.” “But what about Israel in unbelief? Do we support Israel in unbelief?” Well, you know, that’s the tough question and it’s taken me a few years to see the

larger structure of Scripture involving this question but consider this. Was Israel in belief in Egypt? Was Israel in belief in Babylon? No. Did God punish those nations for their treatment of Israel. Yes. So, I think that history addresses that question and gives us an affirmative to support Israel even while in unbelief. But we have evangelicals waffling on that issue, that's a real touchy issue. Now, I'm not saying that every decision Israel makes I'm in favor of, I pass off on it. If it's a sinful decision I'm against the sin but I still support the people and love the people because they are God's eternal people, sinful or not. That is the unabashed testimony of Scripture. What about America? I'm telling you that the foreign policy department has been making anti-Israel decisions for the last 30 years. I'm not trying to scare you. I'm just trying to tell you the facts. And when things started, under Carter, all these negotiations on dividing the Land that's a serious mistake. What about Bush, he's our President. What's his theology on Israel? I don't know. Best I know is he was raised an Episcopalian and Laura was a Methodist so he went over to Methodism but his beliefs are pretty much a hodge-podge. But his stance on trying to divide the Land speaks volumes. He says Israel is our friend but it's because Israel is a democracy. It's not because Israel is God's people. If he thought Israel was God's people He would not divide the Land. And on his recent visit to Israel last week, first visit mind you as President of the United States, if he didn't know better before he knows now, He was given the Bush Scroll, professionally done by Jewish calligraphers with this message, I'll read only the pertinent portions, "Upon your arrival in Jerusalem you have the ability to make a declaration, as did Cyrus, King of Persia - whose memory is honored - who in the year 538 BCE returned the exiled nations to their lands and recognized the full right of the Jewish people to reestablish their Holy Temple, the "house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:7), and called upon them to return to their land...The Land of Israel was bequeathed to the nation of Israel by the Creator of the world. Neither could I, as a son of my faith, nor the Muslims according to their faith, ever take away even the slightest grain from the Eternal's gift, which He gave to His people Israel, the eternal people. Thus I call upon all the nations to save themselves from certain doom, to return and recognize That this land is the exclusive rightful inheritance of the people of Israel, as is written in the Torah of Israel...He who denies this truth endangers all life on earth." They call upon Bush to declare, "I shall dedicate all my strength and resources towards settling the Jewish people throughout their entire land. I shall greatly encourage and empower the Jews all over the world to rise up to the Land of Israel and to settle it, to establish God's sanctuary in Jerusalem, to distance strangers from it and thus, I believe, I will be making a major contribution towards world peace. I cannot simultaneously support the establishment of a foreign state for an alien nation in the Land of Israel, and I will not lend my hand to this wrong. Or - Heaven forbid - you can choose the second option - to willfully aid in the destruction, under the guise of peace! You certainly know

what the God of Israel did to Egypt and Assyria and to all Israel's enemies from time immemorial: Do you imagine that you will be able to save yourself if you have come to implement a plan that intends to steal the land...that was given to them by the Creator?

All of the peace treaties and initiatives which have been based upon the decisions of the government of Israel, indeed the entire Oslo process, and the 'Disengagement,' and the establishment of a terrorist state within the Land of Israel known as 'Palestine' - regrettably, all of these agreements are the result of a lack of sufficient faith in the Divine promises that the Lord made to the patriarchs of our nation, and all that is written in the Torah of Israel...No government in Israel and no representative of the Jewish people has the power or right to alter, by even the slightest degree, our covenant with God and the words of our holy Torah, which are everlasting, as expressed by the prophets of Israel...Thus any desire, plan or agreement that challenges the eternal sovereignty and active possession of the nation of Israel over her entire land is utterly worthless, and has no basis in reality. Therefore it behooves you to declare: "I, George Bush, Commander in Chief of the armies of the United States of America, will instruct all of my troops to protect the Divine rights of the nation of Israel, and remove from her any threat."

Accompanying this was five pages of verses which record that the Land of Israel is Israel's eternal possession

Now, we're doing all this because the time is near! And Obadiah is a stiff warning against cursing Israel, a stiff warning against anti-Semitism. A little bit about that term anti-Semitism. Semites are the descendants of Shem, one of Noah's three sons so refer to all Arab and Jewish people. But the term Semite became used exclusively of the Jews in the 1860's in Germany. The term "anti-Semitism" was first used in 1860 by the Austrian Jewish scholar Moritz Steinshneider. So, it's a relatively recent word that refers to various expressions of prejudice or hostility against the Jews. Okay, with that introduction to the issues of anti-Semitism let's pick up in verse 1, no doubt anti-Semitism is inspired by Satan but obviously that does not remove human responsibility. Clearly Obadiah is a book about God's judgment on anti-Semitism.

Obadiah: Judgment on Anti-Semitism

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Obadiah: Judgment on Anti-Semitism

I've had to change a few things, this is a very difficult book to interpret and as you go along and get more familiar with the book things start to fall into place. I can tell you there is a lot of variation among commentators on this book so it has been very frustrating and difficult. I knew something wasn't just right but I think I've worked the wrinkles out. This book explains that God is sovereign over the cosmos including the nations and is a covenant making and keeping God. Edom is declared to be the great enemy of twin brother Jacob in a universal anti-Semitic campaign to exterminate Israel that escalates into a future last days judgment on all the nations coupled with the salvation of a Jewish remnant issuing in the Kingdom of God.

I. **Nations Summoned against Israel (1)**

Verse 1, **The vision of Obadiah. Thus says the Lord GOD concerning Edom**— So the vision has to do with these people called Edom. The Edomites are the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. One famous Edomite, also called Idumeans and Seir, from the time of Christ was Herod the Great. So, they still existed in NT times. From this book we know they still exist today. They are an Arab people. Primarily they are Muslim today. Now note, the message concerning **Edom** comes from the **Lord God**, that's a rare combination of names for God, *Adonai YHWH*, and it is so remarkable because the meaning of those names is a summary of the entire book. He is sovereign over all the nations and He keeps His covenant with Israel. vv 1-15 deal with God's sovereignty over the nation of Edom and vv 16-21 with God's fulfillment of His Abrahamic Covenant with Israel. So it says **We heard a report from the LORD**, and I want to comment on that "we" and I now think this is an editorial "we" referring to Obadiah and the prophets. **And an envoy has been sent among the nations saying, "Arise and let us go against her, and now I think her is "Israel" for battle"**— So, Obadiah and the prophets heard a report that God has stirred up the all the nations to go

against Israel. And this is all end times, all has to do with “the day of the Lord”, a technical phrase that refers to the future Tribulation. At the end of the Tribulation all the nations will go up against Israel.

II. Edom the Greatest Anti-Semitic Nation (2-14)

Verses 2-14 outline the greatest anti-Semitic nation of all, Edom and the certain and total and complete doom of Edom. Edom is the chief enemy of Israel when he should have been the chief help of Israel being blood brothers. So Edom gets the most intense wrath of God in “the day of the Lord.”

A. Proclamation of Judgment (2-4)

Verse 2, the proclamation of judgment to Edom, “**Behold, I will make you small**, “insignificant”, **among the nations**; All of the nations are going to go up but out of all the nations Edom will be the least because she is going to be completely wiped out. **You are greatly despised.** ³“**The arrogance**, this is the mental attitude sin of pride, **of your heart has deceived you**, it has caused them to perceive reality incorrectly. They think they are impenetrable, they think they have national security because of their rock fortress. As he says, **You who live in the clefts of the rock**, the *Sela*, that’s a name for the ancient rock city of Petra which was the capital of Edom and which will be a dwelling place of Edomites in the Tribulation.

Petra was the primary military fortress of Edom but the whole terrain is difficult to navigate. *Sela* comes from an Arabic root *salaa* meaning “split or fissure” in the rock. The entrance to Petra is about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long fissure in the rock called Al-Siq with walls several hundred feet high and a width of only 3-6m. You could not flank Petra because of the steep rocky cliffs on all sides. With no other entrances into the city it seemed impenetrable. It was well known as the greatest natural military fortress. This led to a false sense of security and the sin of arrogance among the people of Edom. Pride cometh before the fall (Prov 16:18). You sit **In the loftiness of your dwelling place**, and look what they said, **Who say in your heart, ‘Who will bring me down to earth?’** ⁴“**Though you build high like the eagle, Though you set your nest among the stars**, that is, up high in the rock they dug out dwellings, **From there I will bring you down,**” declares the LORD. Allusion is made to the fall of Satan in the phrase **among the stars, From**

there I will bring you down. Just as pride was found in Satan's heart before his fall so pride is found in Edom's heart before his fall. They said my rock is Petra but the Lord says I alone am the Petra. He is the only rock and deliverer. All other securities are idols. Edom had exchanged relying on the Lord for security for relying on the military fortress and rocky cliffs of Edom. So, as v 1 says God is going to stir up the nations to go against her. The nations will become God's instrument of judgment. Even the wisest men of Edom will not be able to decipher the plot to bring her down out of her rocky cliff dwellings into open territory.

B. Plan of Judgment (5-9)

Verses 5-9 lay out God's plan for judging Edom, her military defeat and how it will happen, how she will be drawn out from the security of her rocky cliffs by a cleverly devised ploy and defeated. This all looks forward to "the Day of the Lord", the future Tribulation when Edom will be completely eliminated. There will be no nation of Edom in the Millennial Kingdom. Let's start verse 5. It's phrased a little oddly. Read it without the line set off by dashes first, then we'll come back to that part. **"If thieves came to you, If robbers by night – Would they not steal *only* until they had enough?** Hypothetical situation of a normal robbery. In a normal robbery a thief only takes what he needs that can be carried away easily and quickly. But the robbery Edom will experience will be total. As the text says between the dashed lines — **O how you will be ruined!**— Edom will not experience a normal robbery but will be totally smashed. The point being that when the battle happens all the valuables will be plundered and everything else will be destroyed. **If grape gatherers came to you, Would they not leave *some* gleanings?** Again, if someone gathers grapes don't they usually leave some behind? Normally, yes, but in the case of Edom's defeat nothing will be left behind, everything will be stolen or smashed. Verse 6, **"O how Esau will be ransacked, *And* his hidden treasures searched out!** Searches will be made of hidden places where valuables might be **hidden**. Verse 7 reveals the plot. Their defeat will take place in part by all the men **allied with** them. I know it's only in part because v 18 says that the house of Jacob and Joseph will be like fire and Edom will be like stubble and they will set them on fire and consume them like stubble. So, Israel in military array brings the final destruction of Edom but the nations allied with Edom bring the first crushing blow. The Hebrew word **allied** is actually the word "covenant", *berith*, so these nations have cut

a deal with Edom but they will violate the contract. Here's the plot. They **Will send you forth to the border**, that is, they will draw them out as if they are all going to go up against Israel, this will pull them away from their military fortresses, a cleverly devised plot. **And the men at peace with you.** The men at *shalom* **with you, Will deceive you and overpower you.** That is, they will prevail over them in battle. **They who eat your bread.** It was common to make contracts with other nations over bread and to sit down and eat together with your allies. But they **Will set an ambush for you.** It's a trap cunningly set by their allies. **(There is no understanding in him.)** The sense of the Hebrew is that it's a total surprise. They had no idea they would be betrayed by their allies. This is due to their "arrogance" in v 3 which resulted in self-deception so that even the wisest men among Edom do not see this surprise attack coming.¹ Verse 8, **"Will I not on that day," declares the LORD, "Destroy wise men from Edom And understanding from the mountain of Esau?"** The phrase **that day** refers to the "day of the Lord" in vv 15ff, the future Tribulation. That will be the day when Edom is totally annihilated for her violence to Jacob. So, the **Lord**, and this is the covenant name of the Lord, YHWH, he will **destroy the wise men from Edom.** He's the one bringing this about as v 1 implied, He is the one who has set this in their heart to go up against Israel but on the way, at the border her allies will turn against her in a surprise attack. This could well be Arab neighbors, the Arabs are always fighting against one another. Iran and Iraq have been fighting continuously for 2,500 years. So, again, we see that the nations who received the envoy are under God's sovereign control to go to battle against their ally, Edom. God turns His enemies against one another, a brilliant military tactic. Verse 9, **"Then your mighty men will be dismayed, O Teman,** Teman was a major city in the land of Edom and is metonymy for the whole land of Edom. Everyone in Teman will be dismayed by this surprise attack. Note also the phrase in v 8, **wise men** and in v 9 **mighty men.** That is a figure of speech called merism which is a part for the whole. In other words, these two parts of Edom constitute the whole of Edom. All of Edom would be dismayed when they realized their allies had plotted against them. **So that everyone may be cut off from the mountain of Esau by slaughter.** Clearly this battle sets everything up so they will be completely cut off by slaughter when Jacob and Joseph come in to finish the job in v 18. They will totally consume Esau leaving no survivors. The mountains of Esau are a mountain range along the western border of Edom, called Mt Seir, this is where they will be cut off.

So, let's summarize the battles that result in Edom's total annihilation because of her violence to brother Jacob. Movement one, initiated by YHWH, an envoy is sent to all the nations, including Edom, to go to battle against Israel (v 1). Movement 2, initiated by Edom's allies, they will draw Edom out to join the battle against Israel (v 7)). Movement 3, initiated by Edom's allies, they will turn against Edom in a surprise attack leaving Edom dismayed and in shambles (v 7-9a). Movement 4, initiated by the allied forces minus Edom, they will go up against Israel (v 1). Movement 5, battle between Israel and the nations. Movement 6, verse 17, a remnant of Israel will escape (v 17). Movement 7, the remnant of Israel will fight those remaining of the house of Esau (v 18) **so that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau**. Thus there will be no nation of Edom in the Millennium because of violence done to his brother Jacob.

C. Reason for Judgment (10-14)

1. Past Anti-Semitism (10-11)

Verses 10-11 give the reason for Esau's total extermination. **"Because of violence to your brother Jacob**. These two verses describe a past event, a historic act of violence. Remember, these two were twin brothers, Gen 25:25ff. Esau was born first, Jacob was born second. Esau was named Esau because he was hairy all over and Jacob was named Jacob because he was holding the heel of Esau when he was born. But then Esau was re-named Edom because of the tomato soup incident where he sold his birthright for a bowl of soup. Jacob was re-named Israel because he wrestled with God. And interestingly, these twin boys were fighting even in their mother's womb (Gen 25:22-23). And God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant with Jacob and not with Esau and here Esau commits violence against his **brother Jacob**. We're going to look at that violence in a moment. What did **the house of Esau** do to **brother Jacob**? So thinking here. Think about this. What does the punishment of Esau all go back to? Gen 12:3. If you bless Israel you will be blessed, if you curse Israel you will be cursed. And so vv 10-11 describe military maneuvers of Edom against his own brother Jacob that will result in the final slaughter of every single Edomite on planet earth. Take note of the phrase "on the day" "on the day" in these two verses. **"Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered *with* shame, And you will be cut off forever.** ¹¹**"On the day that you stood aloof,** so clearly this is a

past battle, something that happened near Obadiah's day, **On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gate And cast lots for Jerusalem**— Now, the big question is “What day is this talking about?” Clearly it's an attack against Israel in Jerusalem. There were seven such attacks in the history of Israel and it's very difficult to know which attack this is referring to but it's clear that Edom was involved to some degree. He says, **You too were as one of them.** They weren't leading the attack but they played a part. What they should have done was help their brother, we're talking blood ties here, yet they didn't, they stood aloof and let these foreigners loot Jerusalem.

2. Future Anti-Semitism (12-14)

Verses 12-14 are a warning against future anti-Semitism, so this jumps all the way to the Tribulation. **“Do not gloat over your brother's day, The day of his misfortune.** Israel will be under the extremely horrible system of the Antichrist during the 2nd half of the Tribulation, called the Great Tribulation. **And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah In the day of their destruction;** Many, many Jews will lose their lives in the last days battle for Jerusalem. **Yes, do not boast In the day of *their* distress.** The Great Tribulation is elsewhere called “the day of Jacob's distress.” ¹³**“Do not enter the gate of My people In the day of their disaster.** A warning against entering Jerusalem during the Great Tribulation. **Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity In the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth In the day of their disaster.** ¹⁴**“Do not stand at the fork of the road To cut down their fugitives; And do not imprison their survivors In the day of their distress.** Note the phrase used over and over and over in vv 12-14, “in the day”, “in the day, “in the day” over and over and over, every time referring to the future “day of the Lord”, the Tribulation period when God punishes the nations and purges the nation of Israel.

Of course, what you want to keep in mind is basically that this is the outworking of Gen 12:3, the blessing/cursing motif for treatment of Israel. Since Jacob's brother Esau treated him worse than all and should have treated him best of all he receives the harshest judgment in the Tribulation, total extermination. What is so ironic is that much of the Arab, many of which are descendants of Edom, call for the total extermination of Israel and refusal to recognize her existence as a nation. But God will turn the tables.

¹ It reminds me of Pearl Harbor. They were allies in WWI and during WWII, although they were fighting the Chinese for control of Asia they did not enter WWII until Pearl Harbor and the other attacks on islands held by the allied powers of Britain, France and the Netherlands. Up till Dec 7, 1941 high level US and Japanese commanders were in close contact. We were training Japanese pilots in Japan and then, out of the blue, Pearl Harbor happened. We didn't even see it coming.

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