



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

Moses

Called by God, Formed Through Dependence

The Short Answer

Moses is one of the most important people in the Bible. God rescued him as an infant, called him from a burning bush, sent him to confront Pharaoh, used him to lead Israel out of slavery, gave His Law to Israel through him, and appointed him to lead the nation through the wilderness. Yet Scripture never presents Moses as the ultimate hero of the Exodus. **God is.** Moses was reluctant, sometimes afraid, occasionally angry, and ultimately unable to enter the Promised Land because of his own disobedience. Through Moses, Scripture reveals God as the One who hears the cries of the oppressed, keeps His covenant promises, judges evil, rescues His people, and provides a mediator. Moses' ministry ultimately points beyond itself to Jesus Christ, the greater Prophet, Deliverer, and Mediator.

Exodus 1-20; 32-34 · Numbers 12-16; 20 · Deuteronomy 18; 31-34

Opening Memory Anchor

God does not need flawless people. He calls ordinary people to depend on an extraordinary God.



WELCOME

This guide is meant to send you back to Scripture

Moses' story spans four books of the Bible. Part One follows his life from birth through the Exodus, Sinai, wilderness leadership, failure, and death. Part Two addresses the harder interpretive and theological questions and then traces the explicit and broader biblical connections to Jesus.

Foundational truth

Moses was the servant. God was the Deliverer. The study of Moses should increase confidence in God, not merely admiration for a human leader.

How to use this study

- Open and read the cited passages rather than relying only on summaries.
- Distinguish what Scripture explicitly teaches from theological inference.
- Use the Memory Anchors to retain major ideas.
- Where Scripture leaves mystery, do not manufacture certainty.

PART ONE

BEGINNER GUIDE

Start by reading: Exodus 1-4; 5-14; 19-20; 32-34; Numbers 13-14; 16; 20:1-13; Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 31-34.

1. WHO WAS MOSES?

Moses was born into the tribe of **Levi** when Pharaoh had ordered Hebrew baby boys killed (Exodus 1). His mother hid him, then placed him in a waterproof basket among the Nile reeds. Pharaoh's daughter found and adopted him, and Moses' own mother was brought in to nurse him. Moses began life under a death sentence but was preserved inside Pharaoh's household. God was already moving toward Israel's deliverance long before Moses understood his role.

Memory Anchor

God may be at work long before anyone can see where the story is going.

2. WHY DID MOSES LEAVE EGYPT?

As an adult Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, killed the Egyptian, and hid the body (Exodus 2:11-25). When the act became known, Pharaoh sought to kill Moses and he fled to **Midian**. Scripture does not present the killing as God's appointed method of deliverance. Moses tried to act through his own strength and became a fugitive. In Midian he married Zipporah, had children, and became a shepherd. Meanwhile, God heard Israel's groaning, remembered His covenant, looked upon them, and knew their suffering.

3. WHAT HAPPENED AT THE BURNING BUSH?

While tending sheep near Horeb, Moses saw a bush burning without being consumed (Exodus 3-4). God called his name, told him to remove his sandals on holy ground, and identified Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God had seen Israel's suffering and intended to rescue them. The surprise was that God would send **Moses** back to Pharaoh - this time under God's authority, not Moses' own strength.

4. WHAT DOES "I AM" MEAN?

When Moses asked what name to give Israel, God answered, "**I AM WHO I AM**" (Exodus 3:14) and identified Himself as the LORD, the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The name emphasizes that God is not one created being among many. He simply is - self-existent, eternal, and dependent upon no one. Beginners do not need to master every theological detail to grasp the central point: the God sending Moses is the living God.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

5. WAS MOSES CONFIDENT WHEN GOD CALLED HIM?

No. Moses objected repeatedly: Who am I? What if they ask Your name? What if they do not believe me? What about my speaking ability? Finally he asked God to send someone else (Exodus 4:13). God did not mainly answer by building Moses' self-esteem. He redirected Moses toward **God's presence and power**. When Moses asked, "Who am I?" God's central answer was, **"I will be with you"** (Exodus 3:11-12). God also appointed Aaron to assist him.

Memory Anchor

The most important answer to "Am I enough?" is often "God will be with you."

6. WHY DID GOD SEND PLAGUES AGAINST EGYPT?

Pharaoh refused God's command to release an enslaved people (Exodus 5-12). The plagues were acts of judgment against Pharaoh and Egypt and demonstrations that the LORD - not Pharaoh or Egypt's gods - held ultimate authority. The final plague, the death of Egypt's firstborn sons, is difficult and must not be treated casually. It also occurs within a narrative where Pharaoh had earlier ordered Hebrew sons killed (Exodus 1:15-22). The biblical picture is a holy God judging entrenched evil while rescuing the oppressed.

7. WHAT WAS PASSOVER?

Before the final plague, God instructed Israelite households to sacrifice a lamb and mark their doorways with its blood (Exodus 12). Those households were spared when judgment passed through Egypt. Israel was commanded to remember this event as **Passover**. The New Testament makes an explicit Christ-centered connection: **"Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us"** (1 Corinthians 5:7). Moses led Israel in the first Passover; Jesus is the greater sacrifice to which the storyline ultimately points.

8. WHO ACTUALLY PARTED THE RED SEA?

After Pharaoh pursued Israel, the people became trapped between the army and the sea (Exodus 14). Moses said, **"The LORD himself will fight for you"** (14:14). God told Moses to raise his staff; the sea divided; Israel crossed on dry ground; and the waters returned over the pursuing army. Moses obeyed, but Scripture is clear about the rescuer: **God did it**. The Exodus is not ultimately the story of Moses defeating Pharaoh but of the LORD delivering His people.

Memory Anchor

Moses was the servant. God was the Deliverer.

9. WHY DID GOD GIVE ISRAEL THE LAW?

God rescued Israel before giving the Law at Sinai (Exodus 19-20). The Ten Commandments begin, **"I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt"** (20:2). Grace preceded the commands. The Law revealed God's holiness and moral character, Israel's covenant responsibilities, and how God's people should relate to Him and one another. It also exposes human sin and the need for something greater than human obedience (Romans 3:19-24; Galatians 3:19-26).



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

10. WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE GOLDEN CALF?

While Moses was on Sinai, Israel grew impatient and asked Aaron to make gods to lead them. Aaron fashioned a golden calf (Exodus 32-34). The nation that had just witnessed God's power turned toward idolatry. Moses interceded, pleading on the basis of God's reputation and covenant promises. This becomes one of Moses' defining roles: **he stood between the holy God and a sinful people as a mediator**. Yet Moses himself was not sinless. Israel needed a mediator - and ultimately a better one.

11. WHY WERE ABOUT 3,000 PEOPLE KILLED AFTER THE GOLDEN CALF?

Exodus 32:25-29 records that after Moses returned to the camp, he called those for the LORD to gather to him. The Levites came, and Moses commanded them to go through the camp; about **3,000 people were killed**. This is one of Exodus' hardest scenes and should not be softened. It occurs in a unique old-covenant setting immediately after Israel entered covenant and then plunged into public idolatry and rebellion. The judgment was severe because the covenant crisis was severe.

Important safeguard

This passage does **not** authorize Christians to kill idolaters, dissenters, apostates, or people who reject Christian teaching. The Church is not ancient Israel's covenant nation. Jesus did not commission His followers to advance His kingdom by force (Matthew 26:52; John 18:36; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5). It must never be used to justify religious violence, coercion, vigilantism, or abuse.

12. DID MOSES REALLY CHANGE GOD'S MIND?

Exodus 32:9-14 describes God as relenting after Moses' intercession. This does not require concluding that Moses supplied information God lacked. Scripture elsewhere presents God as knowing and accomplishing His purposes. At the same time, Moses' prayer is real and meaningful. Christians explain the relationship between divine sovereignty and responsive prayer in different ways. The central point is clearer than every philosophical explanation: **prayer matters because God has chosen to make prayer part of how He relates to His people and accomplishes His purposes**.

13. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT MOSES SPOKE WITH GOD "FACE TO FACE"?

Exodus 33:11 says the LORD spoke with Moses "face to face, as one speaks to a friend," yet 33:20 says no one may look directly at God's face and live. These are not necessarily contradictory. "Face to face" describes the unusual **directness and intimacy** of Moses' communication with God. Numbers 12:6-8 says God normally spoke to prophets through visions and dreams but communicated with Moses in an exceptionally direct way. Moses still did not see the unrestricted fullness of God's glory.

14. WHAT HAPPENED WHEN ISRAEL REFUSED TO ENTER THE PROMISED LAND?

In Numbers 13-14, twelve spies returned from Canaan. Ten emphasized the fortified cities and powerful inhabitants; Joshua and Caleb urged Israel to trust God. The people instead feared, complained, and even discussed returning to Egypt. God judged that unbelieving generation: Israel would wander for **forty years**, and that generation would die in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb would enter the land. This is distinct from Moses' later judgment in Numbers 20: the generation was barred for rebellion in Numbers 14; Moses was later barred for his own disobedience.

Memory Anchor

Seeing God's faithfulness in the past does not remove the need to trust Him in the present.



15. WAS MOSES REALLY THE MOST HUMBLE MAN ON EARTH?

Numbers 12:3 describes Moses as extraordinarily humble or meek. That can seem surprising because Moses killed an Egyptian, became angry, confronted Pharaoh, commanded a nation, and later struck a rock. Biblical humility does not mean timidity or never speaking firmly. It concerns a person's posture before God. By the later years of Moses' life, Scripture presents a man shaped through decades of dependence. His growth was real; his imperfections were also real.

16. WHAT HAPPENED IN KORAH'S REBELLION?

Numbers 16 records Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and others challenging Moses and Aaron. Their complaint sounded spiritual - "the whole community" was holy - but the deeper issue was a challenge to the specific roles God had assigned within Israel. Moses brought the dispute before God. The judgment was severe: the earth opened beneath some rebels and fire consumed others.

Leadership safeguard

Korah's rebellion does **not** mean modern pastors or ministry leaders can label every criticism of themselves "rebellion against God." Moses occupied a unique covenant role. Christian leaders remain accountable to Scripture and may rightly be questioned, corrected, confronted, or removed when they act sinfully or abuse authority. Biblical respect for leadership must never become protection for authoritarianism.

17. WHY DID MOSES NOT ENTER THE PROMISED LAND?

In Numbers 20:1-13 Israel again complained about water. God told Moses to **speak to the rock**. Moses instead spoke angrily to the people and struck the rock twice. Water still came, but God said Moses and Aaron had failed to trust Him and honor Him as holy before Israel. The consequence can seem severe after decades of service, but Moses held an extraordinary public covenant role and misrepresented God at a crucial moment. Long faithfulness does not place anyone beyond accountability. Moses was never Israel's perfect Savior; he needed grace too.

18. HOW DID MOSES' LIFE END?

Near the end of his life Moses prepared Israel to enter the land under Joshua (Deuteronomy 31-34). God allowed him to see Canaan from Mount Nebo. Moses died there at 120, and Deuteronomy says, "**The LORD buried him**" (34:6). His grave remained unknown. Deuteronomy closes by saying no prophet in Israel had arisen like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face (34:10). Yet Moses himself had said another Prophet would come.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

INTERMEDIATE

Interpretive posture

Where Scripture speaks clearly, believe it. Where Christians draw inferences, identify them as inferences. Where Scripture leaves mystery, trust God's character and obey what He has made clear.

19. WHY DOES THE BIBLE SAY GOD HARDENED PHARAOH'S HEART?

The Exodus text uses several descriptions: **Pharaoh hardens his own heart; Pharaoh's heart becomes hard; and God hardens Pharaoh's heart** (for example Exodus 8:15, 32; 9:12; 10:1). Pharaoh is not presented as an innocent man wanting to obey while God prevents him; he repeatedly resists. At the same time, Scripture clearly says God judicially hardens Pharaoh as the conflict progresses. Some Christians emphasize God confirming Pharaoh in rebellion he had already chosen; others emphasize God's sovereign purpose from the beginning while affirming Pharaoh's responsibility. Romans 9:14-18 later appeals to Pharaoh. The biblical boundaries remain: Pharaoh was responsible; God was sovereign; God's judgment was not morally arbitrary; and God used Pharaoh's rebellion to display His power and make His name known.

20. WHY DID GOD ALMOST KILL MOSES IN EXODUS 4:24-26?

This brief and difficult passage says the LORD confronted Moses on the journey back to Egypt and was about to kill him; Zipporah circumcised their son and the threat passed. The most common interpretation connects the episode with Moses' failure to circumcise his son, the covenant sign given to Abraham's descendants (Genesis 17:9-14). If Moses was to represent the covenant God, neglecting the covenant sign in his own household was serious. Interpreters disagree about some details and precisely who was under threat. The safest conclusion is that **God's appointed servant was not exempt from obedience to the covenant he represented.**

21. DID MOSES WRITE THE FIRST FIVE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE?

Genesis through Deuteronomy are commonly called the **Pentateuch** or **Torah**. Scripture repeatedly associates Moses with writing portions of the Law (Exodus 24:4; Numbers 33:2; Deuteronomy 31:9, 24), and Jesus and the New Testament regularly speak of Moses in connection with the Law (Mark 12:26; John 5:46-47). Jewish and Christian tradition therefore regards Moses as the foundational human author associated with the Pentateuch. At the same time, some material naturally reflects later editorial activity; Deuteronomy 34 records Moses' death and looks back upon him. Christians hold different views about the precise compositional process. The Bible does not give a detailed history of every editorial stage. The central theological claim remains: **Scripture presents the Law as genuinely connected with Moses and ultimately given under God's authority.**

22. WHO BURIED MOSES, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HIS BODY?

Deuteronomy 34:5-6 says Moses died in Moab and **the LORD buried him**; no one knew his grave. Jude 9 later refers to Michael the archangel disputing with the devil about Moses' body but gives no full explanation. Scripture clearly teaches that Moses died, God buried him, his burial place was unknown, and Jude refers to a supernatural dispute involving his body. Beyond that, Scripture does not provide enough information to reconstruct the event confidently.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

23. WHY DID MOSES APPEAR WITH JESUS AT THE TRANSFIGURATION?

Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36 record Moses and Elijah appearing with the transfigured Jesus. Scripture does not explicitly give a complete symbolic explanation. A common Christian understanding is that Moses represents **the Law** and Elijah **the Prophets**, both pointing toward Christ. Luke adds that they spoke about Jesus' coming "departure" in Jerusalem; the Greek word is related to **exodus** (Luke 9:31). Moses had led the first great Exodus from Egyptian slavery; Jesus was preparing to accomplish the greater saving work through His death and resurrection. Then the Father said, "**Listen to him.**" Moses was great. Jesus is greater.

24. HOW DOES MOSES POINT TO JESUS?

Moses told Israel that God would raise up **a prophet like him** and that the people must listen to that Prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15). The New Testament explicitly applies this promise to Jesus (Acts 3:20-23; Acts 7:37). This is not speculative typology; it is an **explicit New Testament connection**. There are also broader patterns. Hebrews 3:1-6 gives the decisive distinction: Moses was faithful **as a servant**; Christ is faithful **as the Son**.

Moses	Jesus
God used Moses to deliver Israel from slavery	Jesus delivers sinners from slavery to sin
Moses mediated the covenant at Sinai	Jesus mediates the new covenant
Moses gave Israel God's Law	Jesus perfectly fulfills the Law
Moses interceded for sinful Israel	Jesus continually intercedes for His people
Moses led Israel toward the Promised Land	Jesus brings His people into ultimate rest and life with God
Moses was a faithful servant in God's house	Jesus is the Son over God's house

25. WAS MOSES ISRAEL'S SAVIOR?

In a limited historical sense Moses was the human deliverer God used to lead Israel from Egypt. But the narrative repeatedly shows he was not the ultimate Savior. Moses confronted Pharaoh; God sent the plagues. Moses raised the staff; God divided the sea. Moses delivered the Law; he could not make sinful hearts perfectly obedient. Moses interceded; he could not permanently remove sin. Moses led through the wilderness; he could not even personally bring Israel into the land. Israel needed more than rescue from Pharaoh, and humanity needs more than external commandments. **Jesus accomplishes what Moses never could.**

Memory Anchor

Moses could lead people out of Egypt. Only Jesus can ultimately rescue people from sin and death.



A CLOSER LOOK AT MOSES' JOURNEY

Moses' Life	What God Was Teaching
Rescued from death as an infant	God was preserving the future deliverer
Raised in Pharaoh's household	God was preparing circumstances Moses could not yet understand
Killed an Egyptian and fled	Human strength could not accomplish God's rescue
Shepherded in Midian	God formed Moses in obscurity
Objected at the burning bush	God's presence mattered more than Moses' adequacy
Confronted Pharaoh	God - not Moses - held ultimate authority
Raised his staff at the sea	God was Israel's true Deliverer
Received the Law	God was forming a covenant people
Interceded after the golden calf	Israel needed a mediator
Led after Israel refused the land	Leadership continued through long seasons of unbelief
Faced Korah's rebellion	God's calling did not remove opposition
Struck the rock	Even great leaders remain accountable
Saw Canaan but did not enter	Moses was not the final deliverer
Appeared with Jesus	The servant ultimately points toward the Son

Moses' life was not a straight path from weakness to personal greatness. It was a long education in dependence. The burning bush did not teach Moses that he was secretly powerful. It taught him that **God was**.

WHAT MOSES' STORY DOES - AND DOES NOT - TEACH

Moses' story teaches:

- God hears the cries of the oppressed.
- God keeps His covenant promises.
- God is holy and judges evil.
- God's presence is more important than human adequacy.
- God can use reluctant and imperfect people.
- Leadership does not remove accountability.
- Prayer and intercession matter.
- Seeing God's faithfulness in the past does not remove the need to trust Him in the present.
- God - not Moses - was Israel's true Deliverer.
- The Law reveals God's holiness and exposes human sin.
- God's people need a mediator.
- Moses' ministry forms part of the storyline leading to Jesus.
- Jesus is the greater Prophet, Deliverer, and Mediator.

Moses' story does NOT teach:

- Spiritual leaders are above accountability.
- Anger is justified whenever a leader feels frustrated.
- God's servants must be naturally confident.
- Every difficulty means someone missed God's calling.
- Human leaders should demand unquestioning obedience.
- Criticism of a spiritual leader automatically equals rebellion against God.
- The Exodus or golden-calf judgment authorizes religious violence today.
- Christians must obey every aspect of Israel's old-covenant Law in the same way ancient Israel did.
- Moses was sinless.
- Moses, rather than God, was the hero of the Exodus.
- Every detail of Moses' life is secretly about Jesus.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

REVIEW

1. What tribe was Moses from?

Levi.

2. Why was Moses hidden as a baby?

Pharaoh had ordered Hebrew baby boys to be killed.

3. Why did Moses flee Egypt?

He killed an Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew, and Pharaoh sought to kill him.

4. Where did God call Moses?

At the burning bush near Mount Horeb.

5. What answer did God repeatedly give Moses' insecurity?

God promised to be with him.

6. Who actually delivered Israel from Egypt?

The LORD. Moses was the servant God used.

7. What event protected Israelite households during the final plague?

Passover.

8. Why did Israel wander for forty years?

The wilderness generation refused to trust God and enter the land after the spies returned.

9. Why did Moses not enter the Promised Land?

He disobeyed God at Meribah and failed to honor God as holy before Israel.

10. What Prophet did Moses say God would eventually raise up?

A Prophet like Moses, whom the New Testament identifies with Jesus.

THINK ABOUT IT

Use these questions for personal reflection or group discussion.

1. Moses initially tried to confront injustice through his own strength. What is the difference between faithful action and trying to accomplish God's purposes through uncontrolled human effort?

2. When Moses asked, "Who am I?" God answered with His presence. How does that change the way inadequacy should be viewed?

3. Moses spent decades in Midian before God sent him back to Egypt. What might his story teach about seasons that seem unimportant or disconnected from God's purposes?

4. Why is it important that God rescued Israel before giving the Law?

5. Israel had already seen the plagues, Passover, and Red Sea, yet still refused to enter the land. What does that reveal about the difference between seeing God act and continuing to trust Him?

6. Moses repeatedly interceded for difficult people. What does his example teach about spiritual leadership without excusing the people's sin?

7. Why should Moses' failure at the rock caution Christians against placing spiritual leaders on pedestals?

8. How should Korah's rebellion be distinguished from legitimate accountability or criticism of leaders today?

9. What is the difference between respecting God-given leadership and treating a human leader as if that person cannot be questioned or held accountable?

10. Which aspect of Moses' ministry most helps in understanding what Jesus accomplishes more fully?

FINAL MEMORY ANCHORS

- God may be at work long before anyone can see where the story is going.
- The most important answer to "Am I enough?" is often "God will be with you."
- Moses was the servant. God was the Deliverer.
- Seeing God's faithfulness in the past does not remove the need to trust Him in the present.
- Long faithfulness does not place anyone beyond accountability.
- God's people need more than rules. They need a mediator and transformed hearts.
- Moses was faithful as a servant. Jesus is the Son.
- Moses could lead people out of Egypt. Only Jesus can ultimately rescue people from sin and death.



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CONTINUE STUDYING

Exodus 1-4 - birth, flight, burning bush, and calling
Exodus 5-12 - Pharaoh, the plagues, and Passover
Exodus 13-15 - the Exodus and Red Sea
Exodus 19-24 - Sinai and the covenant
Exodus 32-34 - golden calf, judgment, intercession, and God's presence
Numbers 12 - Moses' unique prophetic relationship with God
Numbers 13-14 - Israel refuses to enter the land
Numbers 16 - Korah's rebellion
Numbers 20 - Moses strikes the rock
Deuteronomy 18:15-19 - the promised Prophet
Deuteronomy 31-34 - final words and death
Matthew 17:1-8 - Moses at the Transfiguration
Luke 9:28-36 - Jesus' coming "exodus"
John 1:17 - Moses, the Law, grace, and truth
Acts 3:20-23 - Jesus identified with Moses' promised Prophet
Acts 7:17-44 - Stephen's summary of Moses
Hebrews 3:1-6 - Moses the servant and Jesus the Son
Hebrews 11:23-29 - Moses remembered for faith

CLOSING THOUGHT

Moses' life began under a death sentence. Before he could speak, God preserved him. He grew up in Pharaoh's household but fled Egypt as a fugitive. He spent years tending sheep in Midian. Then one ordinary day a bush burned without being consumed, and God called his name.

Moses questioned.

He objected.

He worried.

He asked God to send someone else.

Yet God said, **"I will be with you."** That promise changed everything.

Moses returned to Egypt, but Moses did not defeat Pharaoh - God did. Moses did not create the plagues - God sent them. Moses did not make the sea obey - God divided it. Moses did not invent the covenant - God established it. Moses did not create God's Law - he received it.

Then came the harder years. Israel made a golden calf. Judgment fell. Moses interceded. The people reached the edge of the Promised Land and refused to enter. Forty years followed. Korah challenged his leadership. Moses kept going. But Moses remained human. His own anger and disobedience at Meribah cost him entrance into the land. The leader who spent decades bringing Israel toward Canaan would only see it from a distance.

His life ended on Mount Nebo. But that was not the last time Scripture would show Moses on a mountain.

Centuries later Moses appeared with Elijah before the transfigured Jesus. The Father said, **"This is my dearly loved Son... Listen to him."** Moses had delivered God's words; now the Father directed attention toward the Son. Moses had led an exodus from Egypt; Jesus was preparing for the greater saving work of cross and resurrection. Moses had mediated a covenant written on stone; Jesus would establish the new covenant through His blood. Moses had interceded for sinful people; Jesus would become the perfect and eternal Mediator. Moses had been a faithful servant. **Jesus is the Son.**

Final Memory Anchor

Moses was a great servant in God's story. Jesus is the greater Deliverer to whom the story was always moving.

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