



Congregation Ahavath Sholom

The Creative Spirit Dwells Here

THE CAS NEWSLETTER

May 2026

Upcoming services and events

Wednesday, May 6 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, May 8 at 5:00 PM: Kabbalat Shabbat at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

Saturday, May 9 at 10:00 AM: Traditional Shabbat Service at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

Monday, May 11 at 5:00 PM: May Board Meeting

Wednesday, May 13 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Sunday, May 17 at 3:00 PM: Joey Weisenberg Concert

Monday, May 18 at noon: Memoir Workshop with Barbara Janoff

Wednesday, May 20 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

Friday, May 22 at 5:00 PM: Lay-led Kabbalat Shabbat Service, at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire,

Saturday, May 23 at 10:00 AM: Shabbat Torah Study at Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire

Monday, May 25 at 7:00 PM: Photography Workshop with Arthur Hillman via Zoom

Wednesday, May 27 at 10:00 AM: Café Kehillah with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin via Zoom

The Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire is located at 1089 Main Street, Housatonic, MA

This month's newsletter features:

The CAS Second Night Seder

Elaine Friedman's 95th birthday celebration

Joey Weisenberg Concert/Fundraiser is on May 17th!

The Gift of the Grant: Establishing 'A Caring Committee'

Notes from the April Board Meeting

Some Additional CAS Notes

From the Future of the Building Committee

New Summer Book Group: *The Last Woman of Warsaw*

Zoom Cooking Class: Cooking Four Salatim

May Yahrzeits

Donations

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The CAS Second Night Community Seder

"I'm sitting here enjoying a bowl of the *non-chicken* and matzo ball soup thinking about how lovely the Seder was! It was especially meaningful being together with so many warm, caring people. Everyone on the committee created a smoothly run evening with delicious food and memorable readings. CAS is a small but mighty group of wonderful people and Gerry and I are happy to be a part of it!"

Carole Clarin

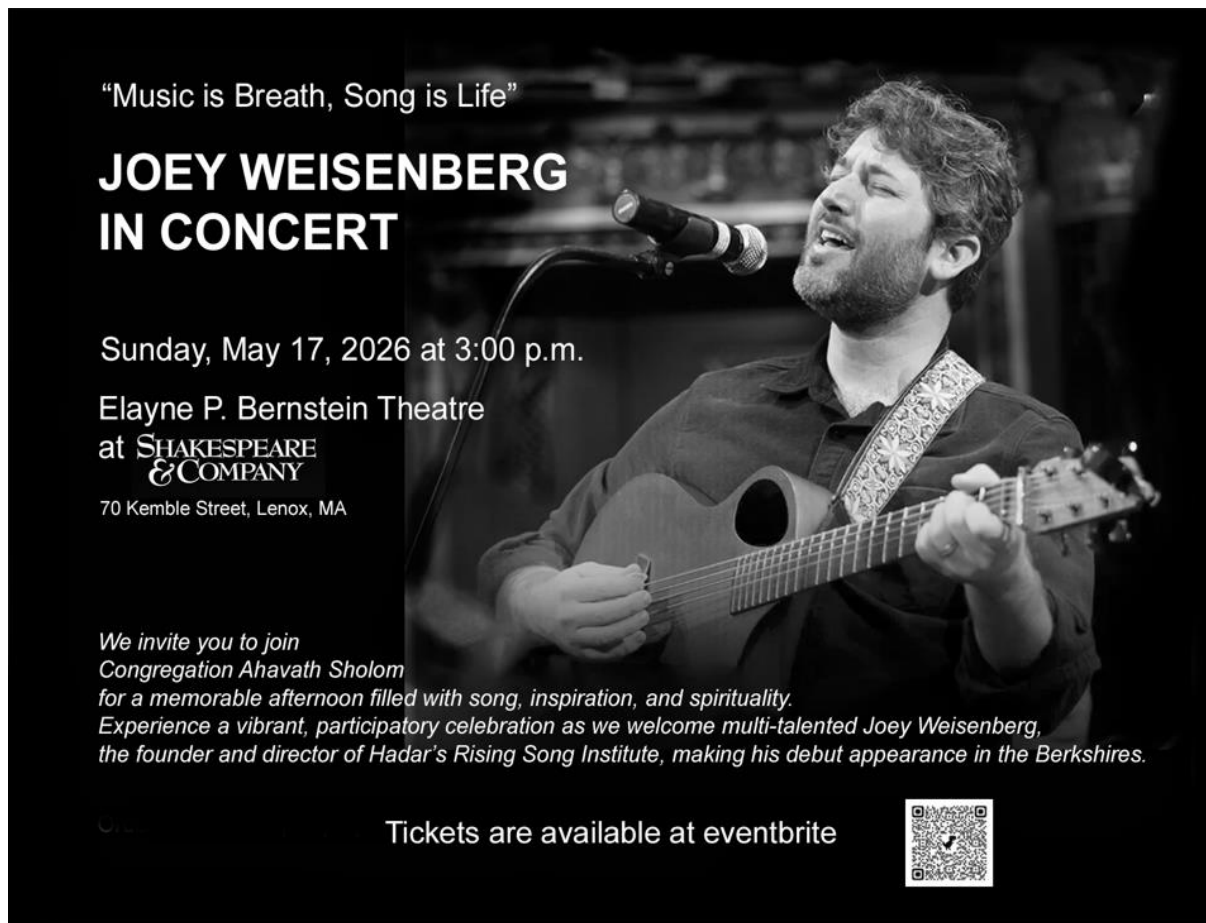


Elaine Friedman's 95th Birthday Celebration

Elaine Friedman celebrated her 95th birthday with the congregation on Saturday, April 11th. During the shabbat service, Elaine read from the Torah and gave a short, but heartfelt, talk on the portion "Shemini." After services, an extended kiddush lunch to honor her birthday was served.



Joey Weisenberg Concert/Fundraiser is on May 17th!



“Music is Breath, Song is Life”


JOEY WEISENBERG IN CONCERT

Sunday, May 17, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

Elayne P. Bernstein Theatre
at SHAKESPEARE
& COMPANY
70 Kemble Street, Lenox, MA

*We invite you to join
Congregation Ahavath Sholom
for a memorable afternoon filled with song, inspiration, and spirituality.
Experience a vibrant, participatory celebration as we welcome multi-talented Joey Weisenberg,
the founder and director of Hadar’s Rising Song Institute, making his debut appearance in the Berkshires.*

Tickets are available at eventbrite



It’s not too late to purchase tickets at <https://joeyweisenberginconcert.eventbrite.com>

The Gift of the Grant: Establishing a ‘Caring Committee’

The small and intimate community that is Congregation Ahavath Sholom cares deeply for each of its congregants. We are exploring ‘caring’ through a new lens – one that supports and accompanies our members through **all** life cycle events.

When The Hadar Institute granted us seed money to explore the concept of developing a ‘caring community within our shul’, Rabbi Rudin and congregant Susan Hicks asked eight congregants to meet with them monthly for eight sessions.

Our meetings are extraordinary. We are thrilled to be together – and to be able to focus on our fellow congregants. Because of the structure spelled out by the grant, *we sing* (a new melody each meeting, which is often related to the day’s study topic) and *we study* (Torah which is often based on the prior month’s discussion). *We creatively imagine* and *explore* novel ways to connect with - and support - each other. Our process-driven discussions have led us to realizations about our community, individuals within it, and relationships in general.

Over the course of the past several months, we have come to the realization that supporting one another in times of need would be enhanced if we established a norm of sharing moments of joy and celebration. This regularized accompaniment encourages relationship-building which, in turn, better enables us to support one another, as deep and meaningful connection is already in place.

We are now creating experiences that lead us to moments of connection-in-community (impromptu social & cultural events). These shared experiences and events give birth to deep connection...which leads to the desire to share our moments of joy and celebration with one another. We are also finding that we are learning about the challenges and needs of the members of the Ahavath Sholom congregation organically. All of this sets us up to better—and more gracefully—support one another in times of need.

Notes from the April Board Meeting

April 13, 2026

- The Board discussed the possible adoption of Values Based Decision Making (VBDM), a method widely used within the Reconstructing Judaism Movement, as we approach a number of challenging issues in the coming year, including the renovation or disposition of our building, and the repair of our Torahs. In brief summary, VBDM is a process that seeks to:
 1. Determine facts, alternative actions and their outcomes.
 2. Examine relevant scientific and social scientific approaches to understanding these.
 3. Consider the historical and contemporary context, including the history and rationales of Jewish practice.
 4. Look for norms that might exclude some actions.
 5. Assemble and weigh relevant attitudes, beliefs and values.
 6. Formulate decision alternatives.
 7. Seek consensus (if a group is deciding).
 8. Make the decision.
- Arthur Hillman and Dan Burkhard attended a webinar for Reconstructing Judaism synagogue treasurers, with about 50 congregations represented. They participated in a break-out group that focused on issues connected with older buildings.
- The community seder held at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire was a great success, with 56 attendees from both CAS and UUMSB.
- The congregation has been acquiring prayer books and Torah commentaries to replace ones that have deteriorated. Alison Adams-Weinberg travelled to Baltimore to pick up several from a congregation that is closing there, and others have been purchased with donations from the Federation and a number of individuals.
- Members of the congregation should take care that requests for scheduling events in the UUMSB building should always go through the Executive Committee.
- The HADAR Caring Committee is continuing its efforts toward creating a strong community through joyous moments of mutual support. They are building a calling tree to keep in touch with congregants and will soon be announcing some upcoming events.
- The Building Maintenance Committee and Building Planning Committees are continuing work toward, respectively, keeping the building in good order through the coming months, and researching options for renovation or disposition.
- Tickets are still available for the Joey Weisenberg concert on May 15th. Everyone is encouraged to purchase them and to promote the event among friends and family.

Some Additional CAS notes

Congregation Ahavath Sholom Tisha B'Av Remembrance

Join Congregation Ahavath Sholom for a Tisha B'av Remembrance at 4:30 pm on Friday, July 24. Kabbalat Shabbat services will follow. Services will be at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting, 1089 Main St., Housatonic.



Passover Donations

The congregation celebrated Passover by hosting a Seder at the Unitarian Universalist Meeting house. Everyone contributed an item and there were sixty guests. We were able to donate 124 items to the People's Pantry.

From the *Future of the Building Committee*

These are the notes from our first discussion concerning our future home.

We agreed that we need to take special care to preserve a strong and vibrant community while we're in transition without a named home.

We have a consensus around a five-year plan: stay in the Unitarian Universalist Meeting of South Berkshire (UUMSB) until we figure out what we are doing with our building and then execute that plan. Meeting @ UUMSB has several advantages:

1. UUMSB has an ecumenical feeling with which we can be comfortable.
2. Ironically, in the current hate-filled environment, we feel relatively safe because the building is not identified as Jewish.
3. Of course, renting at UUMSB would be subject to unforeseeable events and circumstances, but the idea is, we're in no rush. We currently have 43 paying "units" or families and individuals and thus not many donors or resources to fund a building.

Knowing that simply repairing the current building will not be adequate for our population because the stairs are unworkable for many, and the shul is not big enough to accommodate HHD (other than outside), the Committee discussed three broad options:

1. Keep the building and renovate, retaining the heart of the shul, the sanctuary. This option involves expanding beyond the sanctuary on an extended first floor (probably legal [according to City Hall] because we can declare the upstairs not usable for our population) so that our legal footprint would remain at 25% of the land space.
2. Tear down the building and rebuild a one-floor structure (modular or otherwise) on the land.
3. Sell the building and begin funding with a long-term view to purchasing a new building (or finding land on which we can build).
 - a. We will need price estimates from three realtors.
 - a. If we decide to sell, we need to understand whether there are things we need to remediate—and pay for— before we put the property up for sale.
 - a. Identify realtors.
4. Sell the building and make a long-term arrangement for use of the UUMSB building.

Remaining questions for the Executive Committee:

1. Clarification of the recent \$200,000. Grant; are there restrictions. Can it be used for the existing building or a new building?
2. Do we have insurance compensation for mold? Did we submit claims and are there any funds forthcoming?

Next steps:

Barbara Janoff and several Committee members met with an expert on Wednesday 3/18/26 to address the following questions:

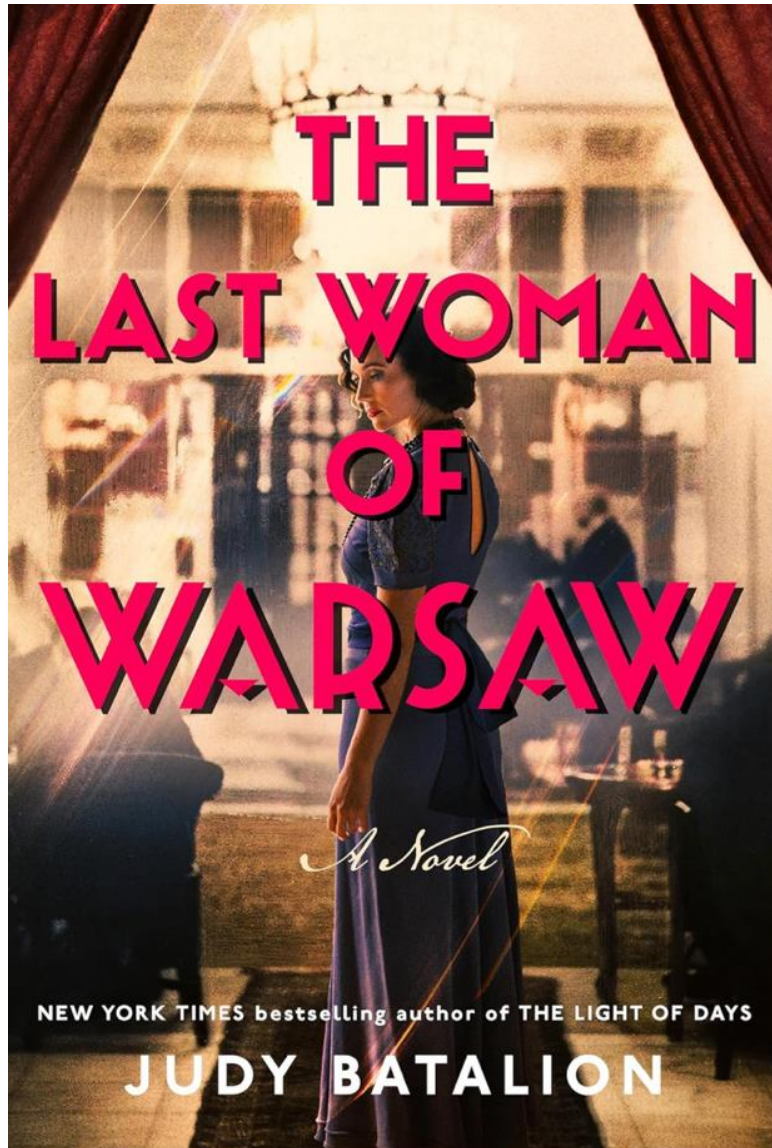
1. What repairs would we have to make and how much money will it take to make the space on 15 North Street usable, comfortable and safe for us to move back in?
2. What would we need to do and how much money will it take to maintain the space until/if we sell it? Essentially, what will it cost to run the building unoccupied?

The Committee will reconvene once these numbers are reported to discuss our options with verified estimates.

New Summer Book Group: *The Last Woman of Warsaw*

By popular demand, the Congregation Ahavath Sholom book group is back—and this summer's selection promises to Spark meaningful conversation, reflection, and connection.

We invite you to join us as we read *The Last Woman of Warsaw*, the compelling new novel by Judy Batalion, released this April. In this gripping work of historical fiction, Batalion explores the lives of women navigating danger, resistance, and impossible choices in wartime Warsaw. Through richly drawn characters and moral complexity, the novel sheds light on lesser-known stories of courage and survival, while raising timely questions about identity, loyalty, and what it means to act with bravery under pressure.



This four-part Zoom series will meet on Monday evenings—June 22, June 29, July 13, and July 20—at 6:00 PM. Sessions will be facilitated by Rabbi Jennifer Rudin, whose guidance will help participants engage deeply with the text and with one another.

Our previous book groups filled quickly, and we anticipate strong interest once again. Whether you're a devoted reader or simply looking for a meaningful way to connect with others this summer, this is a wonderful opportunity to explore a powerful story in a warm and welcoming setting.

To register, please email casoffice15@gmail.com.

Come ready to read, reflect, and share in conversation. Space is limited—early registration is encouraged.

Taste of Community: Cooking Up Connection with CAS Salatim Class

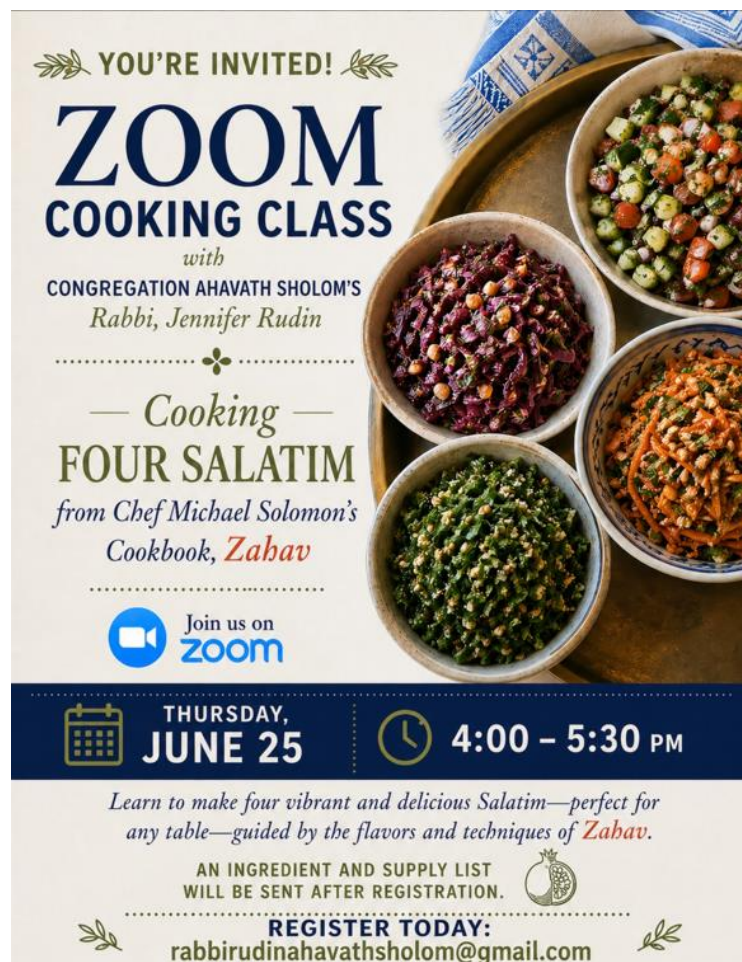
In a season when summer tables overflow with fresh produce, Congregation Ahavath Sholom is offering something that feels especially fitting, a virtual gathering that blends food, culture, learning, and community. Our upcoming Zoom cooking class with Rabbi Jennifer Rudin invites participants into the vibrant culinary world of salatim—those colorful, deeply flavorful small dishes that have become beloved staples of Israeli and Middle Eastern cuisine.

The Hebrew word *salatim* simply means salads, but in practice it refers to a dazzling assortment of small vegetable-based dishes often served as the opening course of a meal. In Israeli and Sephardic culinary traditions, salatim can include roasted eggplant, carrot salads bright with cumin and lemon, chopped cucumber-tomato mixtures, marinated beets, herb-forward green salads, and other regional variations. These are not side dishes in the American sense. Salatim are a centerpiece of hospitality. Set out together in many small bowls, they invite conversation and lingering. They encourage sharing. They turn a meal into an experience.

For this virtual class, Rabbi Jennifer Rudin will guide participants in preparing four salatim inspired by celebrated chef Michael Solomon's acclaimed cookbook *Zahav*. Solomon, whose Philadelphia restaurant of the same name helped bring modern Israeli cuisine into the American culinary spotlight, has long championed food as a bridge between memory, identity, and innovation.

Jewish tradition has always found meaning around the table. Recipes are passed down as acts of memory. Ingredients carry stories of migration, adaptation, and resilience. Rabbi Jennifer Rudin's program promises practical kitchen instruction and an exploration of the flavors and techniques behind these dishes. Attendees will cook in their own kitchens, assembling ingredients, stirring dressings, tasting seasonings, and creating something tangible as the class unfolds.

Ready to bring the flavors of summer to your own kitchen? Congregation Ahavath Sholom invites cooks of all levels to join this virtual gathering. Whether you come for the recipes, the learning, or the connection, this Zoom salatim class promises inspiration well beyond a single afternoon. To RSVP or ask questions, email RabbiRudinAhavathSholom@gmail.com. A Zoom link and ingredient/supply list will be provided upon receipt of your response. Come cook, learn, and celebrate the tastes of summer together.

A vertical graphic for a Zoom cooking class. The top right features a photograph of four small white bowls filled with different colorful salads, arranged on a wooden tray. The text is centered and reads: "YOU'RE INVITED!" with leaf icons, "ZOOM COOKING CLASS" in large blue letters, "with CONGREGATION AHAVATH SHOLOM'S Rabbi, Jennifer Rudin", "— Cooking —", "FOUR SALATIM", and "from Chef Michael Solomon's Cookbook, Zahav". Below this is the Zoom logo with "Join us on zoom". A dark blue banner at the bottom contains a calendar icon, "THURSDAY, JUNE 25", a clock icon, and "4:00 - 5:30 PM". Below the banner, it says "Learn to make four vibrant and delicious Salatim—perfect for any table—guided by the flavors and techniques of Zahav." and "AN INGREDIENT AND SUPPLY LIST WILL BE SENT AFTER REGISTRATION." with a small fruit icon. At the bottom, it says "REGISTER TODAY: rabbirudinahavathsholom@gmail.com" with leaf icons on either side.

YOU'RE INVITED!

ZOOM COOKING CLASS



with
CONGREGATION AHAVATH SHOLOM'S
Rabbi, Jennifer Rudin

— Cooking —

FOUR SALATIM

from Chef Michael Solomon's
Cookbook, *Zahav*

Join us on
zoom

 **THURSDAY,
JUNE 25**  **4:00 - 5:30 PM**

Learn to make four vibrant and delicious Salatim—perfect for any table—guided by the flavors and techniques of *Zahav*.

AN INGREDIENT AND SUPPLY LIST
WILL BE SENT AFTER REGISTRATION.

REGISTER TODAY:
rabbirudinahavathsholom@gmail.com

May Yahrzeits

Much of our experience of divine goodness, grace and love has come to us through those whose lives have

| | Hebrew Date | Secular Date | This Year |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------|
| Daniel Eisenstein | Iyyar 24 5758 | 5/20/1998 | 5/11 |
| Gunther Richard | Iyyar 25 5759 | 5/11/1999 | 5/12 |
| Helen E. Schenker | Iyyar 26 5759 | 5/12/1999 | 5/13 |
| Risa Graubard | Iyyar 26 5775 | 5/26/1995 | 5/13 |
| Irene Linder | Iyyar 26 5760 | 5/31/2000 | 5/13 |
| Manuel Kessman | Iyyar 26 5753 | 5/17/1993 | 5/13 |
| Johnine Cummings | Sivan 02 5752 | 5/31/2022 | 5/18 |
| Irving Adams | Sivan 9 5769 | 6/1/2009 | 5/25 |
| Howard Kanner | Sivan 11 5756 | 5/29/1996 | 5/27 |

Donations

In memory of Elizabeth Norman

Sandra Flannery

In memory of Elaine Adams

Alison Adams-Weinberg

In Honor of Elaine Friedman's 95th birthday

Debbie Slater

In honor of Alison Adams-Weinberg [for her tireless devotion to CAS]

Karen and Larry Peltz

In memory of Barbara Barron

Ruth Barron

General Contributions

Marie Rudden

Debbie Slater

In support of the Creative Arts Workshops

Ross Bettinger

Bruce Frishkoff

Arthur Hillman

Carol Killian

Marie Rudden

Stephanie Sloane

Jeff Zimmerman

Prayer Book Donations

Jamie Horwitz [in honor of Rabbi Barbara Cohen]

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