ISRAEL and the MIDDLE EAST in PROPHECY

Rev. 22:17-20 (King James Version)

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

[18] For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

[19] And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Chapter One

OH, JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM!

How can I begin to tell you about a part of this world that means so much to me? I was not born there, have never lived there, nor have my ancestors; yet it always feels like "home" when I am there.

I ask the Holy Spirit to help me to cause you to feel or sense or touch - or even catch the strange aroma - of this old land.

It has been my privilege to travel on several occasions through Lebanon to the north of Israel. Beirut, once a breath-taking city prior to the civil war not all that long ago, was often referred to as "the San Francisco of the Middle East." I have spent several days or so in the ruins of Baalbek, 50 miles northeast of Beirut, (the largest stone structure known to man built in "honor" of Bacchus, the god of pleasure, by the Romans). I have spent a tense day in Damascus following the route of the would-be assassin Saul who left the city as the Apostle Paul. I have on several occasions traveled the length of Jordan, looking with awe at the ruins of Jerash and the canyons of Petra and challenged by the beauty of Amman, the capital. Egypt stirs a warm spot in my heart as I visit there and remember the Old Testament epics that took place by the Nile. But it is Israel that charms my heart and fills my mind. As we will emphasize in this study, Israel is the focal point of biblical prophecy.

Each year for 33 years, it has been my great joy to catch the sights and sounds of Israel, now 2000 years removed from our generation. I have studied and prayed in Bethlehem, Jericho, the Jordan River, Bethany, Tiberias, Caesarea, the Valley of Elah where Goliath crashed to the ground (a stone embedded between his eyes), the valley of Delilah at Zorek, and, of course, the wonders of the Holy City, Jerusalem.

Someone once wrote that you cannot know the fulness of a mountain unless first you measure the valley around it. I contend that you cannot comprehend the miracle that is Israel unless you first measure the unnumbered valleys through which Israelis have gone through the centuries - and, as we will see in this study, will continue to traverse until Shiloh (He Who has the right to rule) returns.

So come with me in this study of God's Word, through a shepherd's field near the city of David where angels gave shepherds a mighty concert...to the Kidron chasm wherein lies a garden known as Gethsemane...to the Dead Sea which lies in the shadow of a place called Masada...and to a valley the whole world will someday know called Armageddon.
Feel this land! Allow your imagination to paint a new image for you. Discover Israel and the Middle East in a fresh encounter. Find in God’s Holy Word what is going to happen there and how it relates to you personally. And, believe me, it DOES relate to you. The Bible so declares. So let’s begin our study, led by the Holy Spirit, to uncover exactly what God has planned.

How I Got Involved In The Middle East

Genesis 1:1 KJV *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

There is an ancient legend that declares, “The beginning of everything took place in a narrow strip of land between the desert and the sea, the area known today as the Holy Land. This is the place where prophets and apostles walked, where Christ Jesus of Nazareth healed and taught. Perhaps that’s why a certain sense of mystery, a spark of man’s deep yearning for a return to that dawn of innocence, will arises from these ancient terraced hillsides.

As a returning pilgrim, again and again I have found this land contains not only those things most holy, but to all the world of believers in the One True God, this plot of earth itself is indeed holy; hence its title, “The Holy Land.”
To even commence this study concerning Israel and the Middle East, the challenge represents to me an almost overwhelming task of condensing an encyclopedia of thought into a short syllabus. I want this study to be simple, yet on solid Biblical grounds. I will tell you up front that while I do not agree with every action of the Israeli government, I am a strong Zionist - which means I believe the Land of Israel (Eretz Israel) was given by God to the Jews millennia ago and it was given to them in perpetuity forever. I will give you Biblical reasons for believing that in this lesson.

This past week, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Natanyahu said Israel would not cooperate in a UN investigation to this year's Gaza uprising. He said the UN already had a "made-up mind" about the matter so what was the point. He was absolutely right. In July, a UN "fact-finding" investigation into the matter voted overwhelmingly to condemn Israel. Daniel wrote by the Holy Spirit that in the last days all nations will be gathered against Israel. We are getting close to that situation even now.

What Is Special About Israel?

Well, not its size, that's for sure. You could drop the whole country in Lake Erie. Compared to its Arab neighbors it is tiny, only about 10,000 square miles. About 2500 years ago, Iraq (Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar) conquered the Jews and they were scattered (known as "the dispersion."). Since then, it has been overrun by Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Turks and the British.

In our lifetime, Israel has launched incredible national development. I frankly am astonished at the progress each time I return. Israel today is ultra-modern, sophisticated, high-tech. It used to be, in my first trip there, that diamond-cutting and polishing (stones imported from Du Beers in South Africa) was the main financial thrust. No more. While diamonds still portray a large part of the economy, the main thrust is high technology. I remember terrible roadways in my early days there in the 1970's. Today the road system is as fine as any nation in the world. High-speed trains are now being situated among the main cities. Real estate is at an all-time high with prices that are astronomical. While surrounding nations hoard water because of its scarcity, Israelis now enjoy the luxury of desalinated water. That is an astounding development.

But...is this why God loves Israel. No. Here is the Biblical reason God looks upon Israel as special: Isaiah 43:10  Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. 2 Samuel 7:23 And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for
you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemedst to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?

Here is the great miracle of my lifetime: In May of 1948, the scattered Jews, hounded from death camps to crematoria by the Nazis, became a full-fledged, legal, UN-sanctioned nation (led by Prime Minister David Ben Gurion). Our US President Harry S. Truman was the first national leader to stamp approval on this development. This was the fulfillment of: Ezekiel 37:21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

Much of the world united against this development. Fifteen military operations or wars have been necessary there to cement Israeli security. Here is a list of those wars:

1. The Israeli War of Independence November 1947 to July 1949 With the UN declaration signifying Israel as a nation and the Jewish Declaration of Independence, the surrounding Arab nations (dwarfing Israel 400-1) launched an all-out attack on the new state. At its ending, agreements were signed by Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria called the 1949 Armistice, which established boundary lines known as the green line.

2. Reprisal Operations. 1950's-1960's. These actions by the Israeli Defense forces were necessary because of constant fedayeen incursion during which Arab guerillas infiltrated from Syria, Egypt and Jordan into Israel carrying out attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers.

3. The Suez Crisis in October 1956. A military attack on Egypt by Britain, France and Israel beginning on October 29 followed Egypt's decision of July 26, 1956 to nationalize the Suez Canal. This allowed Israel to reopen the canal for shipping.

4. The Six Day War (June 1967) This miraculously-short battle was fought between Israel and Arab neighbors - Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The nations of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Algeria and others contributed troops and arms. There is no other explanation for Israel's spectacular victory than the supernatural. For example, the Russians had supplied Egypt with over $2 BILLION in arms. Egypt under Nasser had announced its intention to exterminate Israel, which concentrated 90,000 troops and 900 tanks for that purpose. The Arabs had over 40,000 killed, according to the Associated Press. Israel had but 679 military casualties.

5. War of Attrition (1967-1970) was a limited war among Israel, Egypt, Russia, Jordan, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization, initiated by Egypt as a way of
recapturing the Sinai from the Israelis (who had control of that vast area following the Six Day War).

6. Yom Kippur War (October 1973) was fought from October 6 to 26. This was another effort by Arab forces to regain territory gained by Israel during the Six Day War. This was about as close to a defeat as Israel has ever suffered and caused the career demises of Prime Minister Golda Meyer and General Moshe Dayan.

7. The Palestinian insurgency in south Lebanon (1971-1982). The PLO became strong in Lebanon (the nation just north of Israel) and stated attacks on the Galilee. In 1978, Israel launched Operation Litani, a large-scale invasion of Lebanon. This brought about the full-scale war in 1982 known as –

8. The 1982 Lebanon War. This was the operation used by Israel to clear PLO forces from Lebanon following the assassination attempt against Israel’s ambassador to the UK, Shlomo Argov. The war resulted in the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon and created an Israeli Security Zone in southern Lebanon.

9. The South Lebanon Conflict 1982-2000. This was a lengthy warfare between Israel Defense Forces and Lebanese Muslim Hezbollah.

10. The first Intifada (Palestinian uprising) - 1987-1993. Using the pretext that Israel was threatening Muslim “holy places” in Jerusalem (which would be the Al Aqsa mosque - see full page drawing next page in your notes) by developing the Western Wall tunnel, the Palestinians fomented violence in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and other cities in Israel. During this time, more then 3,600 Molotov cocktail attacks, 100 hand grenade attacks and 600 assaults with guns or explosives were reported by the IDF (Israel Defense Forces).

11. Second Intifada - 2000-2005 This was the second Palestinian uprising, a period of intensified violence.


13. The Gaza War - December 2008 through January 2009. This was a 3-week armed conflict between Israel and Hamas. The Gaza strip (one of the ancient Philistine areas) was given autonomy earlier by Israel. There the Palestinian militants began firing rockets into nearby Israel. The Israeli forces counter-attacked to stop the rocket fire from
Gaza and the importing of arms into Gaza from Egypt.


15. The Gaza War of 2014. Following kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers, the subsequent kidnapping and murder of a Palestinian teenager, and increased rocket attacks on Israel by Hamas militants from Gaza, the area exploded with Israeli counter-attacks. This war ended only a few weeks ago as of this writing (Nov. 2014).

Despite these uprisings, the people of Israel continue living life on a fairly normal basis. I have personally been in Jerusalem during several of these wars and went about my business there as I always have. Because the Israelis focus on their lives and infrastructure of their nation, they continue to progress and prosper while all-too-often the Palestinian towns suffer greatly from their lack of progressive leadership and their Islamic pre-occupation with bloodshed.

THE MEDIA AND POLITICAL BIAS AGAINST ISRAEL

Rev. 12:1-6 [Message]

A great Sign appeared in Heaven: a Woman dressed all in sunlight, standing on the moon, and crowned with Twelve Stars. [2] She was giving birth to a Child and cried out in the pain of childbirth. [3] And then another Sign alongside the first: a huge and fiery Dragon! It had seven heads and ten horns, a crown on each of the seven heads. [4] With one flick of its tail it knocked a third of the Stars from the sky and dumped them on earth. The Dragon crouched before the Woman in childbirth, poised to eat up the Child when it came. [5] The Woman gave birth to a Son who will shepherd all nations with an iron rod. Her Son was seized and placed safely before God on his Throne. [6] The Woman herself escaped to the desert to a place of safety prepared by God, all comforts provided her for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

This stunning passage in Revelation tells of the “woman” who is Israel, pregnant with Christ. Verse 3 introduces the enemy, Satan, who attempts to destroy Jesus from the very beginning (Herod the Great). World opinion has all-too-often been opposed to Jews and Israel. It is a satanically-inspired effort to end Jesus’ effect on the world and, to be sure, His salvation.

Much of the media in our day lambastes Israel for the alleged “illegal occupation” of “Palestinian land.” This is a totally fabricated lie. The media has been used by Satan,
the fiery dragon of Rev. 12:3, as a forum to express antipathy (at best) and outright hatred (at worst) toward Israel. Israelis would be among the first to say their public relations efforts have often been woeful, but that does not justify the almost universal bias against her. Our long-time U.S. ally England has certainly done little to be of assistance to Israel through the years - going back to the end of WWI. Their vaunted BBC network has long harbored spoken and unspoken resentment against Israel.

The British Foreign Office does not permit Queen Elizabeth to make a state visit to Israel, but she can visit Islamic states!

These developments should not surprise the student of Biblical prophecy for it is prophesied that all nations (including the United States, I believe) will eventually abandon support for Israel. Ezekiel 38 and 39, which we will study in depth later in this series, reveals that all nations will one day be gathered against Israel in war. The international bias is already readily observed in United Nations resolutions. As of recent accounting, the UN has passed 79 resolutions directly critical of Israel and 40% of UN Human Rights Council Resolutions have been against Israel. This should be shocking to us in light of the fact that ISRAEL IS THE ONLY TRUE DEMOCRACY LEFT IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

The Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in 2012, “Israel is a cancerous tumor that should be cut and will be cut.” This diabolical sentiment brings to mind Psalm 83:4: “They have said, Come and let us wipe them out as a nation, that the name of Israel be remembered no more.” I will deal with the aggressive attitudes of the Arab nations against Israel in depth as we continue this series.

THE GRAND MUFTI OF JERUSALEM

In the early '70's, I began leading tours to Israel. There I met a delightful Palestinian businessman who ran a local hotel (not a tourist hotel) but also had a tour business. I worked with him for several years and found him to be an honest and good man. His private home was the full second floor of his hotel, located less than a five minute walk from Calvary. It was a gorgeous domicile and the Arab hospitality was top flight. I enjoyed being with this man, totally unaware of the danger that lurked in his business associates.

The first tip-off to that danger came in May of 1986 when a terrorist was seriously wounded while putting together a bomb in an upper floor of the hotel. He was identified as a would-be suicide bomber for Hezbollah. The police reported that the terrorist had a clock-radio rigged as a time bomb and some two pounds of plastic explosives in his
This is a picture of the Grand Mufti - Hajj Amin al-Husseini, meeting with Adolf Hitler. The Mufti had earlier met with Adolf Eichmann (one of the chief architects of the Holocaust) under the direction of Heinrich Himmler, head of the feared SS. He was later invited to Berlin as an "honored guest" of Hitler himself.

possession. I doubt if my friend who owned the hotel was in cahoots with the bomber, although his second-in-charge gave me a sense of danger. His name was Husseini and I found he was the nephew of the former Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj (meaning he had made the mandatory pilgrimage to Mecca) Amin al-Husseini (seen above in the picture with Adolf Hitler). I walked into a business room of the hotel and saw a large picture of the former-and-late Grand Mufti adorning a wall. I was shocked, and knew I would have to make a totally different business arrangement in Jerusalem.

The Grand Mufti, put in charge of Jerusalem holy sites by the then-entrenched British forces who governed Palestine after WWI, earnestly sought the "final solution" of all Jews in the Holy Land. Husseini had traveled to Damascus to meet with Eichmann and later to Berlin to meet with Hitler himself to seek possible placement of death camps on Holy Land soil. In a 1941 statement, Husseini said, "Our fundamental condition for cooperating with Germany was a free hand to eradicate every last Jew from Palestine and the Arab world. I asked Hitler for an explicit undertaking to allow us to solve the Jewish people in a manner befitting our national and racial aspirations and according to the scientific methods innovated by Germany in the handling of its Jews." (That meant, of course - gas chambers and crematoria).

Fortunately the war ended with the defeat of the Axis powers and Husseini fled from Germany to Switzerland and then to Paris. Amazingly, he was never prosecuted at Nuremberg. His legacy was to inspire generations of terrorists, Islamic jihadists and such dictators as Saddam Hussein of Iraq. One of his most ardent students was Yasser
Arafat. Husseini died after living in luxury (and love of fellow radical Muslims) in Lebanon in 1974.

Let's get acquainted with "the land."

- **Mount Hermon** - the border of Israel, Syria, and Lebanon
- **Baniyas and the Cave of Pan** - where Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say I am?"
- **Capernaum** - where Jesus lived during His 3-year ministry and the home of Peter.
- **Cana** - where Jesus performed His first miracle
- **Nazareth** - where Jesus grew up
- **Herod Spring** - where Joshua separated his army down to 300
- **Bethshan** - where Philistines brought Saul's body
- **The Valley of Armageddon**
- **Caesarea**
- **Masada**
- **Sodom and Gomorrah**

http://en.18dao.net/images/0/01/Map-Israel.jpg
Genesis 12:1-9

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: [2] And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: [3] And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. [4] So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran. [5] And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

[6] And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. [7] And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him. [8] And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord. [9] And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

This is a huge question facing today's world leaders. But then, it's the same question that has beleaguered leaders for centuries - To whom does the land of Israel really belong? Does it belong to the Arabs who have been there for generations? Or does the land belong to the descendants of Abraham who first entered the land and whose descendants conquered it, possessed it for centuries as a great and glorious homeland and then were driven out?

We learn from Genesis that God does NOT treat all people the same - then or now. To those who seek Him, and draw near to Him, He is ever present. But are we not all created equal in the sight of God? Only on the basis that all humans were made by God irrespective of race of locale. After the great flood of Genesis, which wiped most humans from existence with the exception of Noah and his family, God revealed Himself to Noah and through Noah the knowledge of God was spread abroad over the face of the newly inhabited and repopulated earth. But again there was rebellion against the Creator and men began making their own gods who they found easier to serve.

In was against this background of rejection that God chose a "Iraki" (Ur of Chaldea), a man called Abraham - that through him He might raise up a new nation as a new vehicle through which the knowledge of Himself might be made known to man. Out of a very idolatrous situation, God separated Abraham for a specific purpose.
When God called Abraham, He gave him a promise containing personal blessings, national blessings and universal blessings.

PERSONAL  Genesis 12:3  “I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee.”

NATIONAL  Genesis 12:2  “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.”

UNIVERSAL  Genesis 12:3  “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

Equipped with those divine commitments, Abraham and his family left Chaldea and headed for “parts unknown,” led by the Holy Spirit. He came to the land of Canaan and God promised him, Genesis 12:7  “And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.”

In the next chapter (13 of Genesis), God reinforced that commitment to this man of faith Abraham. There we read of dissension between the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot, his nephew. God told Abraham to let Lot choose his direction and go his own way. At that moment God said to Abraham, Genesis 13:14-17  “And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: [15] For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed [for ever]. [16] And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. [17] Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee.”

“In Genesis 14 we find that there was a coalition of kings who conquered the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot had taken up his residence in the city of Sodom. When Sodom fell into the hands of this coalition under the leadership of Chedorlaomer, Lot was captured. Abraham vanquished Chedorlaomer and the coalition of kings and delivered Lot. The king of Sodom, out of gratitude, offered Abraham all the spoils of conquest, thus conferring great riches on the deliver. But Abraham refused to take any of that which the king of Sodom offered him. Genesis 14:23-24  That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: [24] Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion. Abraham had the promise from God that God would protect and provide and he trusted God to fulfill His promise. The offer of the king of Sodom was a subtle temptation to trust in material things rather than in God. In response to this trust,
God again spoke to Abraham saying, Genesis 15:1 “After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.” God was saying that because He was Abraham’s shield, he did not need the protection of the king of Sodom, and because He was Abraham’s reward, he did not need the material wealth offered.

Now when Abraham was reminded of the faithfulness of God, he took courage to remind God that He had promised him an heir and that at that time his only heir was a stranger who managed his household. God strengthened Abraham’s faith by promising him a seed as multitudinous as the stars of heaven: Genesis 15:5-6 “And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. [6] And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” On the basis of this affirmation, Abraham was declared righteous: Romans 4:3 “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” To this one declared righteous by faith, God said, Genesis 15:7 “And he said unto him, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.” The previous promise of God is reiterated and is now to be confirmed through the strongest possible affirmation, THE BLOOD COVENANT.

In the Old Testament (one of three covenants) was in this form: The contracting parties would agree on the terms of the covenant. After this, they would take an animal, slay it, divide the carcass down the backbone, and place the divided parts opposite each other on the ground so as to form a pathway between the pieces. The two would join hands, recite the terms of the covenant, and walk together between the divided halves of the slain animal. It signified that they were bound in a contract until death, and if either violated the terms of the contract, his blood should be poured out as the blood of the animal had been poured out.

Abraham was called on by God to prepare the animal which would make a blood covenant possible. GOD, WHO HAD PROMISED THE LAND AND A SEED TO ABRAHAM, WAS ABOUT TO CONFIRM THE PROMISE WITH THE RITUAL OF A BLOOD COVENANT. Because of the large number of animals God required for this ritual, when one would have been sufficient, Abraham certainly would have the impression of a great significance attached to what was transpiring. Abraham slew the heifer, the goat, the ram, and the birds and laid their carcasses on the ground, preparing to enter into this blood covenant concerning THE LAND AND THE HEIR.

At this point in the ritual, God caused a deep sleep to fall on Abraham, so that he could not participate in the ritual personally. In his sleep, Abraham saw “a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passing between those pieces.” Genesis 15:17 “And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a
burning lamp that passed between those pieces.”  In the Old Testament, the burning lamp or the light signified God’s presence - the Shekinah glory of God.  God Himself, apart from Abraham’s participation or promise, was binding Himself by a blood covenant to fulfill that which He had promised to Abraham.  The terms of the covenant were clearly stated:  Genesis 15:18  In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land...  The dimensions of the land are clearly stated, stretching from the Nile to the Euphrates and from the Persian peninsula to Asia minor.

(ibid)  Pp51-55

But is that promise still binding today, after all of Israel’s failures?  We will deal with that in the next session.

Next Wednesday is Thanksgiving Eve.  We will not meet as we encourage you to spend valuable time with your family and in a time of appreciation to God for all His tender mercies.

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