

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

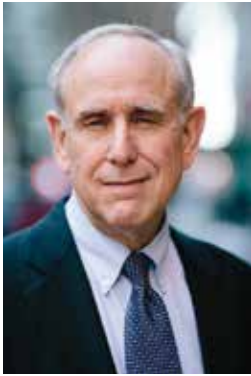


Volume XXIV, Issue 5
June 2018

IRAN: THE NEW PERSIA

IRAN: ONCE A THREAT, ALWAYS A THREAT | IRANIAN TESTIMONIES | ISAIAH 19 | HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY

FROM THE PRESIDENT



ISRAEL AND IRAN: THE NEW PERSIA

Once a threat,
always a threat

Dear friend in our Messiah Jesus,

Shalom in His grace. Join me again in wishing modern Israel a happy 70th birthday. And congratulations to our country for moving the United States Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, marking a significant affirmation of our nation's relationship with Israel.

Yet, more than ever, Israel desperately needs our prayers and support, especially during these difficult days as the Jewish people are surrounded by fierce enemies who seek their destruction.

In fact, what is happening today is simply a replay of what took place centuries ago: One of Israel's historic enemies now poses a significant threat to Israel. This country is Iran!

IRAN/PERSIA

It is common knowledge that the modern country known as Iran is, in fact, ancient Persia. The ancient territory of Persia extended from the Caspian Sea in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south, and from the Tigris River in the west to the Indus River in the southeast.¹

The Persian Empire rose to prominence by conquering the Babylonians (Iraq) and achieved dominance from 539 to 331 B.C., until they were conquered by the Greeks under the leadership of Alexander the Great.

Persia, led by King Cyrus, inherited both the land of Israel and Babylon, where the Jewish people had been taken captive in three waves, beginning in 605 B.C. and concluding with the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C.

PERSIA IN SCRIPTURE

In biblical times, Israel came under Persian dominion. Some of the key cities of ancient Persia were mentioned in the book of Esther, but also in the books of Daniel, Isaiah, Ezra, and Nehemiah. The entire book of Esther takes place in Susa, the capital of Persia, where the Jews were threatened with annihilation by Haman, who served in the court of King Ahasuerus.

In Isaiah 44:28, the prophet predicts that God would raise up a Persian Gentile leader, Cyrus, to deliver the Jewish people from the Babylonian captivity and bring them back to the land of Israel. This prophecy aligns with Jeremiah 29:11, which prophesied to the Jewish exiles that they would remain in Babylon for seventy years. Second Chronicles 36:22-23 confirms this when the writer reports this great deliverance of the Jewish people by the hand of Cyrus, the Servant-Shepherd predicted by Isaiah.

WHO IS THE PRINCE OF PERSIA?

In the book of Daniel, we are introduced to the Prince of Persia who, according to the prophet, was intent on keeping the angel Gabriel from coming to Daniel and interpreting the vision (Daniel 10:13, 20-21).

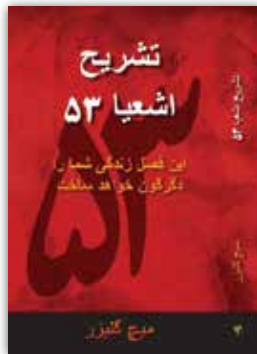
Daniel 10:20-21 recounts how the angel Gabriel remained in conversation with the kings (note the plural) of Persia until he was released through the actions of Michael the archangel. *Clearly the Prince of Persia is some type of angel, probably an evil angel (demon), who was working against God's purposes and was sent by Satan to hinder the travel of Gabriel's message to Daniel.*

This brief passage gives us some insight into the cosmic conflict taking place in the heavens between Israel and her neighbors. These types of conflicts should not surprise believers in Jesus as the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 6, describes these battles

as continuing into the New Testament era:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

The question we naturally want to ask is this: "Is the current conflict between Israel and Iran a reflection of the spiritual battle between God and the devil as we draw closer to the end of this age?" It certainly seems so! Both Ephesians 6 and Daniel 10 pull back the curtains of heaven to show us that this earthly war reflects heavenly realities. The nations of the world, inspired by Satan himself, seek the destruction of God's chosen people in order to put a stop to the plan of God for the end of the age (Romans 11:11-19). *This would elevate the Middle East conflict beyond the political and into the spiritual realm!*



Isaiah 53 Explained in Farsi,
the language of Iran

THE NATURE OF IRAN'S THREAT TO ISRAEL

This past April, the tensions between Israel and Iran became literally more explosive when Iran established an air defense system in southern Syria that could be used against Israeli Air Force (IAF) planes acting in defense of Israel. Iran continues to control the area just north of Israel's border through Hezbollah, its proxy. This has created an extremely dangerous situation on the northern border of Israel, and it is why the IAF attacked the Iranian air defense system in southern Syria.

It is apparent that Iran and Russia are supporting the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad in his war against insurgents. This war is bad for Israel—not that victory on the part of the insurgents is good for Israel either! To win this war, Assad was forced to create an alliance with Russia and Iran. The United States, of course, opposed this coalition and is supporting Israel. The U.S. has been sending airstrikes into Syria to destroy the chemical weapons Bashar is using against his own people. Of course, one day, these weapons could easily be used against Israel, as could Iranian nuclear weapons when developed. There is no question that Syria, Iran, and Russia form a triad of enemies to the nation of Israel now perched on the northern border of the Holy Land.

THE CURRENT STATE OF IRANIAN SHI'ITE END-TIME THEOLOGY

What is even more disconcerting for those of us who read the Bible and understand God's plan for Israel is that the Islam of the Ayatollahs is not simply driven by political motives or territorial ambition. Their reasons for hating Israel and the United States are theologically motivated and are not easily seen at first glance. Let me explain.

The modern state of Iran is Shi'ite, as distinguished from Sunni. Shi'ites believe that the arrival of the *Mahdi* (Messiah) will be signaled by the following signs:

- The vast majority of people who profess to be Muslim will be so only in name despite their practice of Islamic rites, and it will be they who make war with the Mahdi.
- Before his coming will come the red death and the white death, killing two thirds of the world's population. The red death signifies violence and the white death is plague.
- Several figures will appear: the Al-Harth, Al-Mansur, Shuaib bin Saleh, and the Sufyani.
- There will be a great conflict in the land of Syria until it is destroyed.
- Death and fear will afflict the people of Baghdad and Iraq. A fire will appear in the sky and a redness will cover them.²

There are some similarities between biblical and Islamic eschatology that cannot be missed! **One point of uniqueness involves Syria—which causes the conflict in Syria to take**

on a new spiritual dimension. Perpetuating the conflict in Syria prepares the path for the coming of the Mahdi, the Shi'ite false Messiah.

The battle on the northern border of Israel in Lebanon between pro-Assad and anti-Assad forces fought by Russia and Iran raises the level of danger to Israel since Iran's eschatological motivation is always a more potent threat than mere nationalism.

THE GROWTH OF THE GOSPEL AMONG IRANIANS

The Lord is also performing incredible miracles among Iranians who are coming to Jesus the Messiah. Perhaps you have heard of the dreams and visions Muslims are experiencing both within and outside of Iran. Jesus has been revealing Himself to Iranians in this nation where it is still almost impossible to conduct regular missionary activity. Unfortunately, it is also not uncommon for Iranian pastors and Christian leaders to be put in prison for their faith and ministries. One of the very exciting ministries happening today in and outside of Iran that is touching the lives of Iranians—especially Muslims—is that of Hormoz Shariat. He founded and continues to broadcast evangelistic television programs in Farsi through the Iran Alive television program.



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THE IRANIAN MESSIANIC JEWISH MOVEMENT

Iranian Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus the Messiah, but there are also many Iranian Jewish followers of Jesus around the globe as well. In the center section of this newsletter, we feature the testimonies of two Iranian Jewish couples who came to faith in Jesus the Messiah in the United States. Three of these four believers have their testimonies on the ifoundshalom.com Messianic Jewish testimony website that we created in partnership with One for Israel ministries. We have also begun an Isaiah 53 outreach campaign in Farsi through Facebook ads focused on reaching the hundreds of thousands of Iranian Jews in Israel, the United States, and England.

We need to continue to pray for God's work among Iranians. As our brother Hormoz attests, when even the most vociferous Iranian opponent to Israel comes to know Jesus as Lord, they also tend to love the Jewish people and support Israel. The testimonies of Iranian believers, both Jews and Gentiles alike, is evidence that God loves Iran and is not willing that any Iranian should perish without knowing the Lord! It is also clear that God still has His holy and powerful hand upon the Jewish people, even though difficult days lie ahead before the return of the Messiah.

Your brother in the Messiah,


Mitch

1 <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12045-persia>

2 Momen, Moojan. An introduction to Shi'i Islam: The history and doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism (New Haven: Yale University press, 1985), 75, 166–168. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahdi#cite_note-momen-4

The Iranian Threat to Israel

The Iranian threat to Israel is no longer at work in the shadows—previously engaging Israel in a de facto war via proxies in Lebanon and Gaza—but could now amount to a direct confrontation with the Jewish state.

For decades Iran has strengthened and supported enemies of Israel—namely Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon—as a way to oppose the existence of the Jewish state while increasing Iranian influence in the Muslim world. But now, with an ever-growing Iranian military presence in Syria, there is a likely possibility that conflict between Israel and Iran could come about directly.

The rising tensions began on February 10, 2018, when an Iranian drone carrying explosives penetrated Israeli airspace. Although indirect confrontation between Israel and Iran is no new revelation, this incident is significant because it indicates that Tehran directly initiated the drone attack into Israel; effectively changing engagement tactics they have employed for decades.

The Israeli military responded by shooting down the drone and striking the Syrian T-4 air base from where it was launched, losing an Israeli F-16 jet from Syrian ground fire in the process. Before dawn on April 9, 2018, Israel once again targeted the T-4 complex with a missile raid, attempting to prevent any future Iranian threats. According to an unnamed senior Israeli military official, “It was the first time we [Israel] attacked live Iranian targets.”

Following Israel’s military response, top Iranian officials issued direct threats against the Jewish state. Most notably, the head of Iran’s army, Abdolrahim Mousavi, threatened to “annihilate Israel,” while the general of the Iranian ground forces stated that a date had been set for the destruction of Israel.

With Iranian-backed terrorist groups in Gaza and Lebanon, and the growing Iranian military presence in Syria, Israel is preparing to respond to any potential military action taken by Iran.



ISRAEL PREPARES FOR AN ATTACK BY IRAN

ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES ARE SETTING UP CAMP IN THE GOLAN HEIGHTS EXPECTING IMMINENT ATTACKS



Isaiah 19:24-25

“God plans to make Egypt, Israel, and Iraq a blessing to all the world.” This final announcement seems to be more breathtaking than all of the previous promises: These same three nations who up to this point in history have been at such terrible odds with each other and the great disturbers of the peace of the rest of the world will turn around and suddenly become a blessing on earth (v. 24). What is more, God will bless each of the three nations individually. He will call Egypt “My people;” Assyria/ Iraq will be named “My handiwork;” and Israel will be known by God as “My inheritance,” v. 25). Those are the names that had at one time or another been the exclusive names for Israel, but now were being shared with her former enemies!

We are familiar with the call of Abraham, where God promised that he and his descendants would be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Genesis 12:3), but now God promises something similar to these three former bitter enemies who will now be “third[s]” together in the kingdom of God. Amazing!

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “Israel and Her Neighbors: Isaiah 19” in *Israel, the Church and the Middle East: A Biblical Response to the Current Conflict* ed. Mitch Glaser and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2018) 43-44.

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SHOHREH JADDA

As a Jewish kid growing up in Tehran, Shohreh went to a Jewish school. Every Monday and Thursday she would go to synagogue and sing songs, open the Torah, and read from the siddur. Her father would tell stories from the Torah and passionately recount the story of Passover.

In 1977, Shohreh moved to New York for school and a year later the Iranian revolution started. She started to question the meaning of life as everything seemed to fall apart in her home country. Shohreh wanted to be a person who could make a positive difference in the world, so she started taking self-empowerment courses. When both of Shohreh's parents fell ill, all of what she learned in her courses only took her so far, and she realized that there was no way she could fix her own problems.

She started reading the Torah and realized that God was speaking to her through it. She saw a continuous theme of a sacrifice required for sins and remembered the stories about the Mashiach that her grandfather told. She realized that Yeshua came to fulfill promises that God set out in the Torah.

When she was a child, Shohreh would go to the synagogue and go to the rabbi to pray for her or send written prayers with people going to Jerusalem to pray at the Western Wall. Now, Shohreh rejoices that she can take her cares and concerns to Yeshua and experience the peace that comes with faith.

KAMRAN JADDA

Kamran comes from a Persian Jewish family and lived in Iran until he was 15 years old, when he moved to the United States and never quite got adjusted. He was homesick and depressed and worried about his parents, friends, and family back home in Iran. Kamran didn't have close friends or people he could relate to and was a loner for a long time. Eventually he became friends with the neighbors in his apartment complex. One day his neighbor Tom asked Kamran if he wanted to learn about the Jewish Messiah. Kamran was surprised and started reading both the Hebrew scriptures and the New Testament. He saw that the writers of the New Testament were Jewish and that Yeshua seemed so real. After much prayer and searching, Kamran prayed to receive Yeshua and felt God's presence in his life.

Kamran's older brother and uncle were opposed to his new belief and forbid him to associate with other believers or to read the New Testament

scriptures. Loneliness and isolation led Kamran to "not so kosher people"—three of his best friends were drug dealers, so his life became about partying, drugs, and not too long after he became a drug addict, a compulsive gambler, and an alcoholic. At his worst moment, Kamran describes becoming insane and incarcerated. In those moments, Kamran remembered his faith in Yeshua and Yeshua's love and rededicated his life. After this, Kamran experienced freedom from his addictions and joy in his life again.

PIROOZ ABIR

Pirooz went to a Jewish school in Tehran, where he learned Hebrew, English, and Farsi. Pirooz remembers praying the Shema and openly talking to God as a child. In his family, things were out of sorts: his parents fought with each other, and one evening Pirooz had a tremendous earache. His grandmother instructed his father to bring a lamb, have the rabbi come and say a blessing, and then sacrifice the lamb. The family gathered, the rabbi prayed, and the sheep was sacrificed. Immediately, the earache went away. Pirooz remembers distinctively that the prayers over the lamb were for a wound, for sins. Eventually Pirooz moved to the United States for school and flourished in his educational and career path, becoming a software developer. Many of his clients were Christians and the fact that they talked about Yeshua like they knew Him personally was offensive to him. However, Pirooz was intrigued by their faith, and challenged since they knew more about his Jewish Bible than he did. So he started reading the Torah and read Isaiah 53. Immediately he thought of the lamb from all those years ago, and Jesus became real to him. To not upset his family he stayed silent. However, when his son got in a serious accident, all Pirooz could pray was that God would bring his son back to him whole. With each hour his son improved. It was a miraculous healing. Pirooz is now so full of joy that Yeshua healed his son, he cannot remain silent anymore.

*Hear these stories, and many more,
at ifoundshalom.com.*

IRANIAN TESTIMONIES

Hebrews 11:1-3: A Biblical Description of Faith



Dr. Rich Freeman, D. Min. serves as the Vice President for Church Ministries and Conferences with Chosen People Ministries and lives in South Florida with his wife, Julia.

Hebrews 11 has been called the “Great Hall of Faith” chapter. It’s a chapter filled with the faith stories of the great Old Testament saints, which are intended by the writer of Hebrews to be teaching tools and examples for us for our own personal faith journeys. Hebrews 11:1 begins with what sounds like a definition of faith but is in fact a description of what faith does and how faith works. In describing faith as *“the assurance of things hoped for,”* it is not blind optimism with an “I hope so” or an “I hope things will work out” attitude. It is also not believing in something without any evidence—which is what we call superstition. Rather, it is believing and trusting in God’s word in spite of circumstances that would typically lead you to do otherwise. It is trusting that God’s word is true and that you can rest and trust in the consequences of your actions when you obey Him. Accepting Yeshua as your Lord, Savior, and Messiah will result in eternal life in His presence. God will keep all His promises as He truly is a promise keeper. The word translated “assurance” means literally “to stand under, or to support.” When a believer has faith, it is God’s way of giving him confidence and assurance that what is promised by God will be experienced. He can stand under it with the confident assurance that it won’t all collapse upon him.

Continuing to describe faith in 11:1, the writer of Hebrews adds *“...the conviction of things not seen.”* The Greek word *ellegos* can either be translated “conviction, evidence, or proof.” Either way, the thought is that the person of faith is living out that faith convinced that these unseen things are absolutely true. Those “things not seen,” already elaborated upon in Hebrews, would include the priestly ministry of Jesus, the full access to God and to His throne of grace, the full pardon of sin, and the full atonement

through the death of Jesus. While the believer is unable to see these things, he nevertheless is convinced that they are indeed true. In 11:2, the writer states, *“For by it, the men of old gained approval.”* It is as if the writer is saying, just look through the examples of the Old Testament saints, which will be the remainder of the chapter, and see how they acted in history and how God approved of how their faith was lived out. They will ultimately be the *“great cloud of witnesses”* spoken of in Hebrews 12:1.

Finally, Hebrews 11:3 says, *“By faith, we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God.”* The phrase “by faith” will be repeated many times throughout the chapter. Here, it is in relation to how creation is viewed and is a clear allusion to the creation account in the first chapter of Genesis. Since no man was present to observe the creation of the universe, it is only by faith that we can understand God created it by His word. The writer concludes the thought with the phrase *“... so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.”*

Theologians today use the phrase “Creation ex nihilo” when speaking about the universe being created out of nothing. That’s not what the writer is referring to, which is something that the Greek philosophers of his time would reject. Rather, he is saying that the universe did not originate from some sort of primal ooze or anything that is visible. Most people view faith as something that is always looking forward to the idea that one day we will all be with Jesus in eternity—and this is the basis of our Christian faith. But faith sometimes looks backward, and in this case at creation, believing that God exists even though no man has ever seen Him. What the writer of Hebrews is saying here is that creation itself bears witness to the existence of God.

Hebrews 11:1-3

¹ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

² For by it the men of old gained approval.

³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

SEEING ROMANS 11:11 COME ALIVE THROUGH IRANIAN BELIEVERS

By Hormoz Shariat

*Hormoz Shariat is the president and founder of **Iran Alive Ministries (IAM)**. Below, he shares about the partnerships between Iranian believers in Jesus and how Iranian Muslim converts view Israel and Jewish believers.*

God has graciously positioned **Iran Alive Ministries (IAM)** to have a tangible impact in Iran for the gospel. We have been broadcasting satellite TV into Iran since 2001. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims have come to Christ through us and hundreds of house churches have been planted. Our current focus is to teach, train, encourage, connect, and mobilize the current three million Christians so that they will be agents of transformation for Iran. We believe by doing this, not just Iran but the whole Middle East will be impacted.

One mission of **IAM** is to help Muslim background believers become free from any kind of hatred and animosity towards any people group and nation—especially the Jewish

people. We do not get involved in the political side of the issues. Therefore, we do not condone or condemn the political decisions of the Israeli government. However, we teach Iranian believers that:

- a. God loves all nations and so should we. We must love the Jewish people, want His best for them, serve them, and share the gospel with them.
- b. God has a special plan for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. God loves all people. But as He has different plans for different people, He also has different plans for different nations. Just as He has a special plan for Iran as declared in Jeremiah 49:34-38, He also has a very special plan for the future of Israel.

There is such a disconnect between the people of Iran and their government that when the government puts on rallies shouting, “Death to Israel,” the people of Iran say, “We don’t trust you. Why should we hate Israel?” So, once they become Christians, it is not hard to help them get rid of that hatred and animosity.

At **Iran Alive**, we feel a part of our call is to turn the enemies

of Israel into its friends. We believe Iran has a major part in the fulfillment of Romans 11:11 to bring the Jewish people to jealousy. We believe once the Jewish people see how the Lord Jesus has changed the hearts of their Iranian arch enemies, who wanted to wipe Israel off the map, into people who love them, they will become open to the gospel in an unprecedented ways.

Even now, there is a continuous flow of Iranian Muslim background Christians who travel to Israel for prayer and ministry. There are a growing number of Iranian Christians who feel called to serve the Jewish people and minister to them. There is even a Muslim background Christian pastor in Jerusalem who has planted a church there.

We at **Iran Alive** invite the Jewish believers to partner with us to take advantage of this historical opportunity to transform Iran into a Christian nation. Let’s work together to help Christianity grow strong in Iran—after all, that is one of the best things you can do for Israel!

**To read more, please visit
chosenpeople.com/romans11**



MINISTRY BEGINS AGAIN IN BROOKLYN

In Brooklyn, the weather is starting to warm up, so our ministry efforts have also expanded. The Brooklyn team has been able to increase its regular book table outreaches at some of the local subway stops and has distributed a lot of gospel material to Jewish people in the neighborhood. Please pray specifically for a group of four young Jewish men with whom our team has interacted. Initially, they were very confrontational, but our missionaries, Robert and Joseph, continue to run into them in seemingly random ways. Two of the men in particular have shown an interest in actually talking about and considering that Jesus might be the Messiah. Please pray that God would strip away any sense of hesitancy, fear, and skepticism and that He would open up their hearts and eyes to see the truth. Also pray that God would give the team great confidence, boldness, and wisdom as its members share with them.

Never-ending love? Yes!

Your great heart for God's chosen people...your compassion, your commitment...can continue beyond your lifetime.

You can leave a wonderful legacy of **ongoing commitment and blessing to the Jewish people**—with a simple bequest in your will to Chosen People Ministries.

Through a bequest for this ministry in which you have faithfully invested—you can keep on reaching Jewish people with news of the Messiah, keep on discipling believers in Yeshua, and keep on transforming lives by the power of God's love!

What a wonderful legacy to leave and a beautiful way to honor the Lord!

Please ask your attorney to include Chosen People Ministries in your will with a simple bequest, and provide our Tax ID # 13-1659171. If you need more information on this or other planned giving options contact Cindy Forbes at 212-223-2252 or cforbes@chosenpeople.com.

Thank you! God bless you!



OFFERING PEACE THROUGH JESUS THE MESSIAH

Shalom Brooklyn 2018 is an outreach focused on proclaiming the gospel to the Jewish people of New York. If God is leading you to minister to the Jewish people, this is your opportunity!

July 21-28, 2018

Contact opportunities@chosenpeople.com for more information

MESSIANIC RESOURCES



Israel: The Land and the People is a wonderful book with some of the best photos of Israel anywhere! Through 70 spectacular photos by Lawrence Hirsch, Director of Celebrate Messiah (Chosen People Ministries' partner in Australia), this coffee table book presents the beauty, history, culture and variety of the land from snow-topped Mt. Hermon to the fortress of Masada, ancient Jerusalem, modern Tel Aviv, Jaffa and much, much more. A must before you visit Israel, a reminder afterward, and a perfect gift for anyone who wants to feel as if they've been there.

Price: **\$19.95^{US}** (#3190)

Israel, the Church, and the Middle East challenges the supersessionist drift of the modern Church, showing that God retains a plan and purpose for the Jewish people. Edited by Mitch Glaser and Darrell Bock, this volume addresses popular criticisms of Israel held by contemporary authors, as well as those who affirm Israel's right to the land. This book will help anyone—student, lay person, or pastor—understand Israel's place based upon a sound exegesis of the biblical texts, the legal arguments for Israel's right to the land, new information on the Palestinians and Israeli Church, and much more. A must read!

Price: **\$24.95^{US}** (#3179)

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THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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