

HASHGACHAH PRATIS

Inspirational messages and contemporary stories of hashgacha
From the Hashgacha Pratis Hotline



Parshas Chayei Sarah - Toldot, 5786 ■ Issue 175

HEART TO HEART

Based on shiurim in
Duties of the Heart, Shaar Bitachon, given on the Hotline

How to Live a Serene Life

Rabbeinu Bachyai repeatedly cites the *passuk*, "...and He who trusts in Hashem — *chessed* surrounds him" (*Tehillim* 32:10). When reading this *passuk* superficially, it seems to be saying, "Many aches are the lot of a wicked man" (*ibid.*), meaning that a wicked man experiences lots of pain in this world, while the tzaddik's life is filled with comfort. But as we know, that is not the reality of this world. Are there any tzaddikim whose lives are pleasant and smooth without any pain or problems?! Have we not seen exalted people, true tzaddikim of the world, who are surrounded by pain, difficulty, hurt and suffering?! Obviously, the *passuk* means something else.

Malbim explains that the wicked man is one who does not pay attention to the ways of Hashem — his life is filled with pain and anger. Every time something does not go according to his plan, even when the smallest thing happens that does not suit his desires, it makes him angry, even furious. He always feels that people are against him, and he challenges them: "Why did you do that to me," or, "Why did you talk to me like that?" Sometimes he's angry at others, and other times — at himself. He blames everything on his bad luck or his own stupid mistakes. He believes only in nature and thinks that "his strength and the might of his hand" are what achieves everything he has, and therefore he is constantly frustrated.

In contrast, the tzaddik strengthens himself in the mitzvah of *bitachon* and knows that everything is from Hashem *yisbarach*. He has invested time and energy in learning the *sugyah* of *bitachon*, and he has reviewed and heard and learned and then reviewed again the fundamentals of *emunah*. He lives with the words and phrases that express *bitachon*, such as, "This too is for the best"; "Hashem had good reason to make this happen"; "This is from Hashem"; "He alone makes things happen"; and, "Everything, whether beneficial or harmful, is in the Hands of the Creator *yisbarach*." The tzaddik's life is serene and calm. We do not say that he doesn't ever suffer any pain, but the determining factor is the way he accepts that which comes upon him. He knows with strong, deep awareness that everything is for the good, that everything is from a loving, merciful Father, Who does only good for him. He is 100 percent sure that the difficulties and even the illnesses, the losses or the lack of *nachas*, are nothing other than a great good from the Creator *yisbarach*. He sees everything around him as Hashem's

chessed, and thus the same thing that causes pain to the wicked man is understood by the one who trusts in Hashem as *chessed*! *Chessed* surrounds him.

Another explanation of the words "*chessed* surrounds him" is that with a viewpoint of *bitachon*, anything that appears to be difficult is actually transformed and becomes *chessed*.

The Kuzari explains (3:14) how a person who trusts in Hashem is surrounded by *chessed*, and this is because he fully believes that everything is for the good, such as Nachum ish Gamzu, who said, regarding everything that happened to him, including the stones and gems that turned into dust — "This too is for the good." The strong faith that everything Hashem does is for the best brings a person to live a sweet life, and his *tzaros* are not a burden upon him! He is like someone who is repaying a debt, who feels very happy to pay it up. There are all sorts of levels of repaying a debt. There is a small debt of ten shekels that were missing when he was grocery shopping: Yaakov saw a buyer in a helpless state and lent him money, and the next day during Minchah, the buyer repaid the debt. This is indeed cause for rejoicing, because "a case of one *prutah* is as important [to Hashem] as a case involving a hundred *dinars*," but this is a small joy. On the other hand, one can pay a certain debt to a *gemach* by borrowing money from another *gemach*. The debtor remains a debtor, but to another *gemach*, not to this one. But what about someone who suddenly is given several hundred thousand dollars, and he then pays all his debts at once? That person will be so thrilled he will feel like he is walking on air. *That's it, no debts! At all!* This is a great joy! May Hashem bring this joy to all the homes of Yisrael!

The *yissurim* we suffer in this world are repayment of a debt in the highest form possible: They clear away the harsh judgments in the World to Come! How much we daven, "*Avinu Malkeinu*, erase, in Your great mercies, all that we owe You." When a person undergoes a certain difficulty or pain with *emunah*, he erases all his debts to Hashem!

When we accept difficulties in this way, we can understand how one who trusts in Hashem has a wonderful life, and *chessed* surrounds him.

May we merit to strengthen ourselves more and more in *emunah* and *bitachon*, and through this may there pour forth much *shefa*, *brachah*, and *hatzlachah*; *amen*.

FROM THE EDITOR

The Simple Yid from Germany

The Question of all questions: What is *bitachon*?

The following story answers this question:

In Germany before the War, there lived a Yid who was very wealthy, and as wealthy as he was financially, that's how poor and impoverished he was spiritually, as he had barely a concept of *Yiddishkeit*.

One morning this man saw that his daughter was not feeling well. He realized immediately that the problem was serious, and he hurried to call the best doctor in Berlin.

After examining the girl, the doctor sorrowfully informed the father that there was nothing to be done. He advised him to prepare for the worst of all, as there was no medication that could heal his daughter.

The father didn't despair. He sent a messenger to Vilna and called for the best doctor of that city.

The story repeated itself. The doctor left the house without any good news.

The father called many more doctors, and they all gave him the same grim news. It was a waste of money for him to invest in doctors, because there was no chance that the girl would heal.

When he'd despaired of getting any help from the doctors, the father said, "If the doctors have nothing to do, then we must go to Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

He went to the *gabbai* of the shul and asked for the keys. He entered the shul emotionally, opened the *aron kodesh*, and said:

"Father in Heaven, I didn't want to bother You, but what could I do if I simply have no choice? I called upon and paid all the doctors, and none of them was able to heal my daughter, but, Father in Heaven, You are able to do so! Please heal my daughter quickly."

He concluded his *tefillah* and returned home.

As soon as he entered his daughter's room and he saw on her face that there was significant improvement.

Within two weeks she rose from her sickbed and was walking around, just like anyone else.

The Rebbi of Porisuv zt"l told this story. He heard it from the Skolya Rebbe zt"l, who knew the Yid and the story firsthand.

This simple Yid demonstrates the meaning of *bitachon*. It's clear that his *Yiddishkeit* was weak, and nonetheless, his *tefillah* had an impact as though he were one of the tzaddikim of the generation.

Because this Yid was sure! He was sure that Hakadosh Baruch Hu could heal his daughter, and he was sure that Hakadosh Baruch Hu *would* heal his daughter.

When a person is certain of his trust in Hashem, this *bitachon* brings him all the good and all the *yeshuos*.

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THE HAND OF HASHEM

Amazing stories of hashgachah pratis, as told on the hotline

Shabbos Protects Us

For years I have dreamed of connecting to a Shabbos generator. Each time someone talks about it or advertises it I get excited, but then it dies down, because a generator costs so much money, and where would I get the initial sum and then be able to fund the monthly use of it? So in the meantime it remained just a dream.

Lately, two things happened that caused me go ahead with it: One was changes in the infrastructure on the street where I live. Due to these changes, there was an opportunity to connect to a generator for a reasonable price. The other thing was that a large sum was deposited in my account by someone who owed me money from eight years back.

I started speaking to whoever I had to and found out about prices, and the whole time I was deliberating whether to connect the air conditioner as well, because air conditioning significantly raises the cost of using the generator. I asked for a sign from *Shamayim* to know what to do, and Hashem sent it to me.

It was during *bein hazmanim*. We left our home for several days, after organizing and packing and cleaning the house. When we arrived at our destination we unpacked, and finally it was quiet and the young children fell asleep. I thought that very soon I too would close my eyes and sleep, but just then the phone rang. It was the technician for the generator. He wanted to come and see our apartment, the electric box, and everything else in order to determine a price and to come to an agreement. I was thinking that climbing a mountain would have been easier than doing what I had to do then. I gathered my strength and traveled back home. The place where we were staying was not too far from our home, and I made my way despite my exhaustion and the exertion of that day.

While in the stairwell I smelled something burning, and the smell got stronger and stronger as I came closer to my home. When I went inside, I discovered that we'd accidentally left the oven on with what had once been fish inside it.

I recalled that we'd spoken about taking baked fish with us; we were supposed to take it, but each of us assumed the other had already turned off the oven, and ultimately we left without it.

I am still trembling from the thought of what would have happened if the oven had been left on for another few days. At that moment it was already clear to me: Shabbos was taking care of me; I did not have to worry about how to pay all the expenses of the generator. When the technician arrived we came to an agreement on the entire package, including the air conditioner.

Light from Above

If you've ever moved from one apartment to another, or the time simply came to switch the lighting in your dining room, you've probably had very serious work to

Through Others

I live on the top floor, in an attic apartment. There is a roof over my head, and above it is the sky. If the sun is boiling, it beats right down on our roof. If it is raining, we are the first to receive the blessing. Pigeons seeking a place to rest find lodging on our roof. And aside from all these gifts from above, there are some issues coming up from below as well: The roof serves as a small storage room for things that are not in use, or, more correctly, for dreams of people who think that a day will come when they will use the items they left there. What happens over time is that in the heat those things wither and break or even melt, and then throughout the year our rooftop fills with a layer of garbage created from both the heavens above and the earth below.

I recalled how last winter we suffered from leaks into our apartment, and I decided that this year we would prepare for the winter properly. Just after closing the roof of our sukkah, I would empty out the whole roof and prepare it for a proper tarring, so that our apartment would be considered suitable lodgings for human beings.

This was on a Friday. I went up to the roof energetically, equipped with garbage bags, a sponja stick and a dustpan, I worked on the roof of my home. I discovered all sorts of leftovers from construction and plastering that had blown over from the nearby buildings. I did not find, as in those nice stories, a piece of a missile so that I could inform everyone publicly that we'd been saved from being hit. I comforted myself with the fact that the missile never landed here to begin with, which is also a great *chesed*.

Thus, feeling happy that I was doing something important for my family, I cleaned and emptied out the place until the clock showed that it was after *chatzos*. *Chatzos* is *chatzos*, and I do not do any *melachah* that is not directly connected to Shabbos *kodesh* after *chatzos*. The whole matter of cleaning the roof could wait until Sunday; I was stopping my work.

I left it all in the middle, just as it was. Half collected, half clean; everything could easily end up spread out again and dirty as it had been in the beginning, but I was finished for the day. Somehow I twisted the tops of the garbage bags so they would stay closed, in the hope that the wind would not untie them, and I went back down to my house. Shabbos would spread its wings over us today, and I wanted to be prepared already from *chatzos*.

On Sunday I returned to the roof to continue clearing the garbage, and wonder of wonders: Everything was clean! All the garbage was cleared away, all the sacks disappeared. I did not have to do anything. The roof was prepared for tarring.

I think one of the neighbors was involved. I have a neighbor who loves to help, and probably he also had to close the roof of his sukkah, which is adjacent to mine, and when he saw that the work was half done, he simply completed it.

I was *zocheh* to safeguard the honor of Shabbos, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu sent me a good messenger to save my precious time.

To Eternal Life

On Monday the 28th of Tishrei this year, I was standing among the crowd in the Satmar *beis midrash* in Yerushalayim, waiting for them to start reading from the Torah. I waited and waited, while thinking to myself that if on Shabbos *kodesh* one has to wait to hear the Torah reading, fine; but on a weekday, so I thought, a bit of consideration for the people who are in a hurry to be on their way would be in place. Even if one says the words of the davening slowly and with *kavanah*, and we read from the Torah carefully and properly, at least the activities before and after the reading should be done with alacrity. An additional three or four minutes during davening is liable to cause someone to miss his bus or to be late for work or for other errands.

"What's taking so long?" I asked my friend.

"The one who got *pesichah*," he explained, "mistakenly took the *sefer Torah* that they read from on Simchas Torah."

I could not understand how something like this could happen. Our *gabbai* always sets up the *sefarim* in a way that the *sefer Torah* that is rolled to the right *parshah* is in the center. It never happens that someone gets confused and takes a *sefer Torah* that is standing on the side.

"It's not a *sefer Torah* that is usually here," someone explained. "It's usually elsewhere. They probably used it for *hakafo*s, and it needs to be returned to its set place." I prepared for a long wait, since now we were reading from *Parshas Noach*, and the *sefer* from Simchas

On the giving end

In recent years I literally felt the words of Chazal: "A person's *parnassah* is as difficult as the splitting of the sea." Every shekel I had to bring in for my *parnassah* came with great difficulty. As hard as I tried to make a respectable income, it simply did not succeed. Sometimes I found work for a lower salary than what I needed, and when I tried to advance and get promoted, I could not keep up with the workload. About a year ago, I decided to become a partner in your great project by supporting the dissemination of *emunah* and *bitachon* in an entire settlement. Since then, the gates of *parnassah* opened up for me in amazing ways: I found work with a good, respectable income and a salary that suits my abilities. I have no doubt that my partnership in the dissemination of *emunah* and *bitachon* brought about this blessed change. I thank Hashem with all my heart for His *chesed* and His wonders.

On the receiving end

Following a long period of time during which I did not listen to the *Hashgachah Pratis* phone line, I decided to start listening again. To my great surprise, I discovered that the line had undergone tremendous changes and an impressive upgrade! I listened, then listened again...and each time I listened strengthened me more and more. I strengthened myself in *emunah*, *bitachon*, joy and serenity. Along with my great excitement, I also felt regret – how had I lost out on such a precious treasure over such a long time...?! I have no words to thank you. Thank you for the incredible, stimulating *shiurim*, for the touching songs, for the stories that give life to the *nefesh* – for everything. May you be blessed from Above for all your great work, which strengthens and lights up the hearts of so many.

Torah was rolled to the end of *V'zos Habrachah*...

Seeing that I was upset, my friend hurried to assure me, "It's not the *sefer* from the reading of the *chassan Torah*; it's from the reading of the *haftarah*."

Indeed, the *sefer* had to be rolled back "only" from *Parshas Pinchas*, and a devoted *gab-bai* like ours would not allow for it to be done too quickly, so the parchment would not get creased, *chalilah*. The *gabba'im* rolled up the *sefer* patiently, and everyone around them worked on their *middos* and on the *emunah* that everything is ordained *miShamayim* and that every delay is for the good. And suddenly someone called out, "Look what it says here!" He pointed at the letters woven into the cover of the *sefer Torah*, and I moved closer to see what he was talking about. And right there the words declared that the *sefer* had been written *l'ilui nishmas* a *chashuveh bachur* who passed away thirty years ago at the age of 17, on the 28th of Tishrei.

Today was the 28th of Tishrei!

I recalled once seeing a notice about something that was dedicated in his memory. It reported there that he was the son of *kedoshim*, that he had a pleasant demeanor, and that he was growing in Torah, *chassidus*, and *yiras Shamayim*.

And now we were witness to incredible *hashgachah pratis*. The mistake made by the man who had *pesichah* was completely directed from Above so that this *chashuveh bachur z'l* should be *zocheh* to eternal life – that on the day of his *yahrtzeit* they would read from the Torah written in his memory!

At the end of the davening, while I was wrapping up my *tefillin*, I could not get over what had happened. Suddenly I no longer cared about the passing minutes. We were all excited about the Heavenly revelation taking place right before our eyes. Someone made quick calculations and came to the conclusion that the 28th of Tishrei could never come out on Shabbos or on Thursday. Of all the days when we read from the Torah, this date could only come out on a Monday. Over the course of the thirty years since this *bachur* passed away, it had happened only five times, and the next time would not be for another twenty years! We hope that until the next time comes, *techias hameisim* will have already occurred.

Enlighten our Eyes

Baruch Hashem, I started learning in yeshivah in Telzstone, located far from the chaos of the city. The words from the *mizmor* we recite in Elul, "*shviti b'veis Hashem*," express perfectly my great aspirations, and therefore one can understand why my heart fell when, one day in Elul, a screw fell out of my glasses.

It's not a problem to fix glasses. My father told me on the phone that as far as he knows, there is an optical store at the entrance to Telzstone. But I did not want to leave the yeshivah. There is a big difference between learning three *sedarim* in yeshivah all day, with all its inherent spiritual growth, and learning while going out in the middle of the day. I did not want to leave – certainly not in the middle of Elul *zman*.

I could not forgo repairing the glasses, because I am extremely nearsighted. But the thought of taking care of it outside the walls of yeshivah truly pained me, so I davened to Hashem to help me and send me what I needed to fix my glasses, so that I could continue toiling in the holy Torah.

Immediately after my genuine, heartfelt *tefillah*, a friend came over and told me, "I have a spare pair of glasses. I could remove a screw from them and give it to you. *Im yirtzeh Hashem*, after you go home for Shabbos, you'll return the screw to me."

"You know what?" I suddenly recalled. "I actually have several small screws for glasses in my suitcase! Maybe I'll be able to manage on my own. I'm going to the dormitory." I headed out in the direction of the dormitory, and while walking I told myself that everything was good. So I had a screw, but how would I insert it without a screwdriver? Afterward, I thought that I would just deal with each thing as it came up. First I'd get the screw, and then perhaps I'd succeed somehow in screwing it into place in the glasses.

On my way to the dorm I saw a local *avreich*, and I asked him, "Perhaps you know where there is an optician and when he's open?"

"I'll call him for you," he answered, and as he was speaking to me he pulled out his phone and called Telzstone's optician.

"What do you need?" the optician asked.

"There's a *bachur* here who lost a screw from his glasses," the *avreich* said.

"Tell him that I'm coming to the yeshivah in a few minutes. I have to pick up my son from the *cheder* that's next door."

And indeed, the optician arrived with the necessary equipment to put the screw back into the glasses. I did not have to leave the yeshivah. I did not go to the optician; the optician came to me.

I am filled with thanks to Hashem *yisbarach* for this. May I have the *zechus* to remain in the tent of Torah.

do, climbing up on a ladder to install a large light fixture properly. If the dining room was large, you needed two or even three light fixtures, and the whole family would stand around looking at you standing on the ladder, drill in hand, davening that the installation would be a success and that you would also succeed in getting down from there to return to life and peace. Afterward, when they turn on the light, it is a great joy – *ohr laYehudim*.

My story is very similar, but the difference is only in the numbers: I am an electrician. I live in Yerushalayim, and my work involves all sorts of small projects throughout the country. The story that I want to tell you happened when I was working in a huge structure. We installed 66 lighting fixtures, and we installed them at a height of 12 meters! It was a serious project, which included planning and designing down to the installation of the last of the bulbs. And then the exciting moment arrived: We were going to turn on the lights!

There were quite a few light switches. The bulbs lit up one by one, and light flooded the area, but then we discovered a problem: Nine of the light fixtures did not light up. There was an electrical circuit that was not working. We had to find the source of the problem.

We had to climb up a high ladder to reach the 12-meter high ceiling to open the light fixtures I had just connected, and to check whether the problem was there. There is no way to reveal where the problematic circuit is other than to check each and every fixture. And that's h-a-r-d work – after we had already worked so hard!

I went up the ladder and checked the first light fixture. It was okay.

I climbed down 12 meters, pushed over the ladder, and climbed up to examine the second light fixture. Then I thought, *Hashem can arrange that this will be the problematic light fixture, and then it will all work out*. But what would it help me to daven for it if I was already on the ladder?

I did not daven, and I did not find any problems with that light fixture.

I climbed down.

I pushed the ladder over to the third light fixture and climbed all the way up, and I asked Hashem – not from the depths but specifically from the heights, this being the third time I was climbing – I asked Hashem to help and to make this be the one with the problem, and help me be able to fix the circuit efficiently.

And indeed, *baruch Hashem*, I found the problem, I fixed it, and all nine bulbs that were connected to that electrical circuit lit up. Hashem heard my *tefillah*!

I cannot help but add my own thoughts after this amazing event. We were busy with this huge project. There were many of us with many tools, and everyone was working with tremendous energy. There was this feeling of capability – "Here, we've done it!"

In our excitement we forgot Who is the Creator of light and the Producer of all. This small blip somewhere up there in the ceiling came in order to show us Who truly gives us the strength to do mighty things.

And in keeping with my job as an electrician, I am spreading the light that came into my heart to you as well.

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Hashgochah Pratis in Sifrei Kodesh

Hashgachahh Pratis in the Sefarim Hakedoshim

Giving Thanks to Hashem Brings Good Upon Us and Delays Suffering

When someone who has sinned experiences suffering and accepts it with love, agreeing that he deserves it, this becomes a shield for him, protecting him from many more *yissurim* that he really deserves. Moreover, when someone thanks Hashem for good things, he can feel confident that things will continue to be good.

(Based on *Shaarei Teshuvah*, Rabbenu Yonah, 4:12)

Softening Harsh Judgments

Anger results from sin, and sin results from anger. When a person sins, Hashem becomes angry at him, and this is a cue for the *satan* to immediately cause that person to sin again. This is the meaning of *Chazal's* teaching that one sin leads to another – the first sin brings Hashem's anger, and that anger drags him to another sin. How can we break this cycle and bring *yeshuah*? The *pasuk* answers that it happens in the merit of *tzaddikim* who perform mitzvos with joy, and even when the Blessed Holy One brings suffering upon them they accept it with love. This softens the attribute of judgment and rectifies the entire world.

(Based on *Eis L'chananah*, Rav Moshe David Wali)

To Cancel Heaven's Decrees

I heard from the Baal Shem Tov that the world was created with the Divine attribute of judgment. The pain and suffering that a person experiences are actually the basis for his spiritual existence in this world. When someone accepts

suffering with love and joy, he connects his body with his *neshamah*, empowering his spiritual side. This cancels the effects of the attribute of judgment. Therefore, my advice is to fulfill the mitzvah of "*V'ahavta es Hashem Elokecha*."

Accepting Suffering with Love

Rabi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Someone who accepts suffering with happiness brings salvation to the world; as it says (*Yeshayahu* 64:4), "בְּהֵם עוֹלָם וְנוֹשָׁע" – In the merit of the *tzaddikim*, we experience salvation at all times."

(Ta'anis 8a)

One should happily accept *Elokecha* – the Divine attribute of judgment, connecting it to the attribute of Divine mercy through one's love for Hashem.

(Based on *Toldos Yaakov Yosef*)

One Who Anticipates Yeshuah — Brings Yeshuah

It is not natural for someone to be happy to be suffering. Still, he can be happy for the knowledge that his suffering is temporary and that it saves him from endless years of suffering. Anyone who believes this will certainly be happy, because he knows that his cries of pain are relatively momentary. The Hebrew word *vai* (Oy!) together with the word *sha'ah* (temporary) combine to form the word *yeshuah*.

(Based on *Ben Yehoyada*)

A Thought on Bitachon

From the shiurim on Kav Hashgachah

Excerpts from the popular shiur by
Harav Yehuda Mandel shlita from Lakewood

Is Anything too Wondrous for Hashem?

In *Parshas Vayeira* we learn how Sara heard the *malachim* informing them that the following year she would have a baby boy. When she heard the news, she laughed. Afterward, Hashem rebuked her: "Why did Sara laugh...is anything too wondrous for Hashem?!" We can ask: What problem is there with the fact that she laughed? Sara Immenu was a great *tzaddeikes*, a woman of tremendous faith. Isn't it natural for a person to react this way upon hearing such wondrous news, that a woman of ninety would give birth? Moreover, the *malachim* who gave her this news appeared to be simple people – Arabs, and she did not hear Hashem Himself promise her a child.

It seems that Hashem demands of a real believer that he not only believe in Him, but that he completely trust in Him and in His ability to perform the greatest and most unfathomable miracles. Absolute *bitachon* means there is no place for a moment of wonderment or laughter, because in the eyes of the *ba'al bitachon* there is nothing too wondrous for Hashem.

Sara Immenu had already seen great miracles with her own eyes: How Avraham emerged from the burning

furnace alive and well, and how he was victorious, almost all on his own, over four great kings. She herself was taken to Pharaoh's house, where Hashem protected her in the most miraculous of ways. In her tent as well, constant miracles happened. As our Sages teach: A cloud representing the *Shechinah* hovered over her tent, her candle remained burning from one Erev Shabbos to the next, and her bread dough was blessed.

And so, after a life filled with miracles, Hashem demanded absolute *bitachon* of her, to the point that it would not enter her mind at all that giving birth at the age of ninety was something impossible.

This is a lesson for all of us: When a person looks at the course of his life and sees how many *chassadim* and wonders Hashem does for him each day, then he should determine in his heart: How can I *not* trust in Hashem?! After all the miracles that I've already seen, how could I be doubtful of His abilities?! It is clear as day that Hashem can do anything, and that He will continue to make miracles and wonders, even things that appear to be impossible!



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