

True Dedication to Torah

Mesiras nefesh, devotion to mitzvos to the point of self-sacrifice, has powerful properties. Indeed, it has the power to eradicate the most compelling decree. This is especially true if the decree is hampering the individual from fulfilling the specific mitzvah for which he is being moser nefesh. The story is told about one of the Gaon m'Vilna's disciples, who, despite suffering from blindness at an early age, continued to dedicate himself to Torah study on an almost super-human basis. The Gaon was determined to find a shidduch, compatible mate, for him. A special young lady in Vilna saw beyond his physical challenge and was prepared to become his wife. Her father was even willing to support the young couple, while the young man devoted his life to Torah study.

The Gaon's joy on the day of the wedding was unprecedented. He felt like the father of the chassan, groom, ushering his son into the milestone event of his life. The chassan was walked down to the chupah and the marriage ceremony was about to begin, when the Gaon turned to the chassan and said, "Chazal teach us that one may not marry a girl until he has seen her." As soon as the Gaon completed his sentence, the chassan opened his eyes and was miraculously once again able to see!

All those assembled took note of the Gaon's incredible powers. Moreover, they understood that one who clings to Torah with mesiras nefesh has the merit that the most serious decree will be abrogated if it stands in the way of his mitzvah performance.