

# THE SPARK IS THERE

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

Here we are again. The awesome day of Rosh HaShana is rapidly approaching and for so many it's not a question of "if" but "where" we will hear the Shofar blast. It's hard to explain in logical terms how this raspy ram's horn packs out houses of worship with its unarticulated tones year after year. Like an auditory Rorschach test everyone hears the same sound in a different way and that's ok. Still we can ask in advance, "What does the Shofar do for me?" "What can the Shofar do for me?"

The Dubno Maggid was famous for his parables. Whenever anyone would ask him a question he answered with a parable. Somebody once asked him why he answered every question with a parable and to that he said, "I'll tell you a parable!" He proceeded to tell the following; "Naked truth was used to walking down the street but everywhere he went he caused a tremendous stir. People turned away from him in disgust. He could find no place where he was welcome. He had a friend, though, whose name was Parable, or Moshol, his Hebrew name. Parable assessed the problem of his friend Truth and made a brilliant suggestion. He offered him a handsome- well tailored suit of clothing that he could wear everywhere he goes. That way people would be willing to tolerate him. Eventually they may even accept him. The Dubno Maggid explained that most people are not willing to stare at naked truth. However, when it is clothed in a fine parable it becomes more appealing to those who would otherwise avoid it.

A staunch non-believer once approached the Dubno Maggid and challenged him. "I hear that you are such a powerful orator and a profound teacher that you can turn any man around. Try your skills on me and see if you can turn me into a righteous person." Sensing his cynical tone the Dubno Maggid responded to him with the following parable: A sophisticated city dweller happened upon a primitive group of villagers who were foolishly attempting to fan a fire by blowing with only the force of their lungs. He told them that they would be better served by using a pair of bellows. They looked at him as if he spoke a foreign language. They had no idea what bellows are and how they work. So out of the kindness of his heart he made for them a beautiful pair of bellows and he demonstrated how remarkably effective they were. Everyone was amazed to see how quickly a fire can become a flame with this technology. He left the town with great fanfare but when he returned he was met with derision. The people claimed that he was a fraud. His bellows didn't work. He examined them and found them in perfect condition. He couldn't figure out what the problem could be. He asked them to show him how they were being used. After observing how they blew with the bellows on a pile of wood he understood immediately what the problem was. He asked them, "Where are your glowing coals?" They were amazed. "You mean we need glowing coals too?" they responded. He

laughed at their foolishness and told them, "The bellows only produce a current of air which excites the burning embers to become a consuming fire. If there is no spark to begin with, to aim the bellows at then even the best pair of bellows cannot make a fire." So the Dubno Maggid explained to his challenger, "With my lessons I can coax those embers embedded in the hearts of the listeners to become flames of passionate love and fear of G-d. However, when the spirit of a man has become so void of those feelings then even the greatest speaker cannot hope to change his heart. I need for there to be a spark"

The Shofar speaks to us like the wind of those bellows, and by our attendance and attention to the blowing we demonstrate yearly and clearly **the spark is there**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).