

# Fanning the Flame

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Once a man who was indifferent about serving God attended one of the Maggid of Dubno's fiery sermons. Despite the Maggid's inspiring words, this man still felt completely unmoved. Boldly, in front of a crowd of enthusiastic listeners, he challenged the Maggid to explain why he couldn't reach him, too.

Characteristically, the Maggid answered with an original parable:

There was once a villager who visited the big city for the first time. As he was taking in its wonders, he saw a blacksmith using a bellows to fan his fire. In his simplicity, the villager figured that the bellows was actually generating the flame, and resolved to buy it from the blacksmith at any price. "How wonderful it would be to never have to struggle to

build a fire again!" he rejoiced.

When he arrived home, he called all of the villagers together for a demonstration. To his chagrin, after wearing himself out pumping the bellows, all he got out of it was air. Although he protested that it really could produce a flame, he was a laughingstock in the eyes of all his neighbors.

He returned to the city and angrily confronted the blacksmith. "Why did you trick me? I tried to use this to make a fire and it was useless!"

The blacksmith was perplexed. "You mean that the bellows didn't set your live coal aflame?".

The simple villager gaped. "What live coal?"

"You fool!" the blacksmith roared. "If there is no spark, how did you expect the bellows to fan it into fire? You need a spark to work with!"

The Maggid explained, "The same is true regarding my sermon. Like a bellows, I fan the Jewish spark into a roaring flame. But one who has no spark will not be moved by my words in the slightest. It is only possible to fan a flame where there is a spark!"

But when this story was told to Reb Noson, he explained that this is not the Breslov approach. "This is not true at all. Every Jew has a spark, no matter what he thinks or feels. But one must understand how to discover that hidden spark and blow it into a flame!"

Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh V:85