

## “YOUR OWN SPARK”

Once the great Hasidic leader, the Maggid of Mezeritch, was walking through a town, surrounded by people anxious for the blessing and council of the renowned rabbi. A woman approached him and asked for a blessing to ensure that she would bear a child.

“Before I was born,” said the Maggid, “my mother prayed to have a child. She heard that a great scholar would be passing through the town, and she spent months before his appearance knitting him a beautiful shawl. When he arrived she presented him with the shawl and asked for his blessing for a child. A year later, I was born.” The woman thanked the Maggid and went back home.

The following year the Maggid was again passing through the town. The same woman approached him, bearing a beautifully knitted shawl. She presented it and asked for a blessing. “I will offer a blessing,” replied the Maggid, “but it won’t work. You see, my mother didn’t know the story.”

The Maggid’s point is that we must not only learn from others, but create something new and beautiful of our own. To slavishly emulate another, even in something good, is not enough; a mitzvah must carry something of the creativity and vitality of our own unique souls.

As we approach Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, may our introspection not only yield insight, but also enable us to move forward in the world, in accord with both the community and with our own special gifts. The story we create will then be our own story as well as one that enhances the collective story of our people.