



# Elul Hearing the Shofar

NVHC'S COMMUNAL  
HIGH HOLY DAY  
PREPARATION  
SERIES FOR 5785

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## The Alarm by the Maggid of Dubno

A native villager, born and reared in an obscure rural environment, came to a big city for the first time and obtained lodging at an inn. Awakened in the middle of the night by the loud beating of drums, he inquired drowsily, “What's this all about?”

Informed that a fire had broken out and that the drum beating was the city's fire alarm, he turned over and went back to sleep. On his return home, he reported to the village authorities: ‘They have a wonderful system in the big city; when a fire breaks out, the people beat their drums, and before long, the fire burns out.’

All excited, they ordered a supply of drums and distributed them to the population. When a fire broke out sometime later, there was a deafening explosion of drum beating, and while the people waited expectantly for the flames to subside, a number of their homes burned to the ground. A sophisticated visitor passing through that village, when told the reason for the ear-splitting din, derided the simplistic natives: ‘Idiots! Do you think a fire can be put out by beating drums? They only sound an alarm for the people to wake up and take measures to extinguish the fire.’ This parable, said the Maggid of Dubno, applies to those of us who believe that beating the breast during the Al Het (confessional), raising our voices during worship, and blowing the shofar will put out the fires of sin and evil that burn in us. They are only an alarm, a warning to wake up and resort to *cheshbon hanefesh* (soul-searching), so that we may merit the favor of God.”

**Reflection Question:** Have you ever listened to the sound of the shofar and thought that was enough, going back to sleep (metaphorically) because you thought the shofar's call would do the work of *cheshbon hanefesh*? How can we allow it to wake us up and investigate our souls?