THE LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT, GOES OUT
By Rabbi Dan Moskovitz

Once upon a time there was a very small synagogue in a very small village far far away from here. Even though it was a very small synagogue in a very small village this synagogue had all of the things you would expect to find in a synagogue. There were prayerbooks and yamulkas, their were big wooden benches for the worshipers to sit on during services. Which also made for good places for children to sleep when the services went long past bed time. There was a mezuzah on the door and two Torahs in the ark. And just like every other synagogue every where else in the world, hanging high about the ark was the Ner Tamid the eternal light that never went out no matter what. The Ner Tamid shined a soft light in the synagogue even when all the other lights were off. It kept the Torah's company when no one else was in the Temple to pray, it was like the light on your front porch as long as it was on you knew someone was home. And since the Temple is God's house the whenever the Ner Tamid is shining bright, which is all the time, it means that God is home.

In this village lived a little boy named Judah. Judah went to services every Friday night with his parents and would sit on the hard benches and stare up at the Ner Tamid and think. Some people might come to temple to pray, but Judah came to temple to think – which when he thought about it was just another form of praying.

Well on this particular Shabbat night, as Judah sat back and stared at the Ner Tamid and did his thinking. On a night when the temple was full people for Shabbat services, when the cantor was singing and the rabbi was smiling and all the people were praying. The Ner Tamid, the light that never goes out, the light that is always on, always shining its warm glow on the Torahs and on the people, the eternal, never ending always lighting light God is in this place light – that light - **went out!**

Just like that one minute it was shining bright and the next minute is was dark. When Judah saw this he let out a gasp and said to himself the light went out, God's not here anymore, where did he go, why did he leave, we have to go find God. And at that thought Judah started to cry.

His parents thinking Judah just wanted to go home, told him to sit still and be quiet – it not proper to make noise during the service. Judah tried to tell them that the light went out – that God left and they needed to go find God - but they just said shush. Judah looked around hoping that another grownup would notice that the light was out and do something. But they were all deep in prayer, singing and reading their prayer books.

Judah didn't know what to do. He had to tell the Rabbi that the light went out that God wasn't here anymore – that they needed to stop the service – and find God. But how could he tell all of that to Rabbi, who was way up on the Bimah and Judah was sitting so far back in the sanctuary?

How can Judah get the Rabbi's attention?

- Raised his hand
- Started to sing loud
- Send him a note through one of the ushers

Judah was getting very nervous, he knew that the service was coming to the most important part the Shema, when everyone closes there eyes to says in one loud voice SHEMA YISRAEL ADONAI IS OUR GOD ADONAI IS ONE. Judah had to do something to warn the Rabbi that they couldn't say the Shema because God's light was out – God wasn't here anymore – they needed to find God. But how could he do it, how could he tell the Rabbi?

Then Judah had an idea. As the cantor started to sing the first words of the Shema and everyone started to close their eyes to concentrate. Judah stood up and ran as fast as he could up on to the bimah to where the Rabbi was standing. Since everyone's eyes were closed his parents didn't see him get up and no one tired to stop him. In no time at all Judah was standing next to the Rabbi and the Cantor, and right in the middle of the Shema he pulled on the Rabbi's sleeve and said Rabbi, Rabbi – the Ner Tamid is out we have to stop the service God isn't here anymore and we have to go find God.

Now the whole congregation gasped, people were asking each other what did that little boy say? God's not here? Judah's parent's realizing their son was now standing on the bimah started to go up to get him. But the Rabbi – who was kinda hard of hearing - leaned down and asked Judah to repeat himself. Judah said in a louder voice this time. "The Ner Tamid went out, God is not in the Temple anymore we have to stop the service and go find God."

Judah's parents had reached the bimah by now and started to apologize, something about missing his nap. But the Rabbi waved his hand to say it was ok. Then the Rabbi looked at Judah, then he looked at the Ner Tamid, and then back at Judah and he started to smile. He put his hand on Judah's head and said in a voice loud enough for everyone to hear.

"The light is indeed out, and we need to fix that, but God is not missing Judah, God has not left the building. We know exactly where God is, God is right here" and Rabbi pointed to Judah's heart. "God is not in the light, God is not even in the sanctuary, God is inside each person, God is in your heart. That is the true Ner Tamid, the light that never goes out – God's light shines inside you."

Judah understood and breathed a sigh of relief, as did his parents and all the people in the congregation and the service continued- even with the light out. But from that day on no one who was at that service ever walked into the sanctuary again without

checking to make sure the Ner Tamid was shining bright – because they remembered the story of the little boy who found God's light shining inside him.