

A few years ago, after a trek through the snow on my way to shul on Shabbat morning, as we were getting ready to begin services, I stepped up onto the bimah and noticed that there were shards of broken glass on the floor. I looked up and realized that the light bulb which was used in our *Ner Tamid*, the eternal light that hangs in front of the ark, had shattered. It went out. We cleaned it up, and went on with the service. A few times throughout the morning, people pointed out to us that our light was off, but we didn't think much of it.

But over the next few days, we had dozens of angry emails from people, some were furious, that our *Ner Tamid* had gone out. I am not sure entirely what upset people so much. Maybe it was the thought of needing to change a light bulb, but people were incredibly concerned. In the first verse of our Torah portion this morning, *Teztaveh*, the Israelites are commanded by God to ignite, and then tend to, a *Ner Tamid* - an eternal light. The light was supposed to be lit - eternally - and placed in front of the *Mishkan*.

Now almost every synagogue in the world has some kind of light fixture in their main sanctuary, always lit, in front of their ark. Some - like the one here at Tifereth Israel, are beautiful works of art, while others might not be much more than a lightbulb. Nevertheless, that light, is always supposed to be lit.

There is a tremendous amount of symbolism that can be derived from the idea of a light that burns forever. It could be a symbol of God's omnipresence, or of the enduring power and wisdom of Torah. However we choose to understand it, since the time of the temple, the Jewish people have committed ourselves to ensuring that the light does not go out. God commands us in our Torah portion to keep it lit. That is probably why we got in so much trouble that morning, when it wasn't.

Usually when God commands the Israelites to do something, the Torah says *tzav* - which literally means that you are commanded. But in our Torah portion this morning, when we are commanded by God to keep the light lit, it uses atypical language. Instead of *tzav* - it uses the

word *tetzaveh* - and you will be commanded, which is future tense. According to Midrash HaGadol, that's because in this case, the command to light the *Ner Tamid*, and keep it lit, was actually never intended to be a command for the generation of Jews in the desert. It's not even meant as a command for us today. It's for *Dorot B'Atid* - a command for all of the generations in the future, to make sure that it stays lit.

There is another beautiful Midrash that teaches that each and every one of us is a *Ner Tamid*, an eternal light. And that throughout the course of our life, we need to not only tend to our own lights, but use our light to light up the life of others. And in the words of Peter, Paul and Mary, "we can't let that light go out." Because that light is the light of our love for Jewish passion, our Jewish identity, and Jewish tradition.

It's not easy keeping a light burning forever, even if you don't have electrical malfunctions. To keep that light lit we need to be deliberate, we need to be intentional, and it takes a lot of work and effort, but keeping that light lit, is amongst the most important things that we can do as a people.

And in that sense, over the past 30 years, Rabbi Rosenthal has been the *Ner Tamid*, the eternal light, of Tifereth Israel. He worked tirelessly throughout his life to ensure that the light of passion, Jewish education, and Jewish identity, stays bright, for *Dorot B'Atid*, the generations in the future. And as our eternal light, his sudden and unexpected passing is heartbreaking; shattering into pieces all over the floor, beyond repair.

When I think about the original eternal light, it wasn't a lightbulb, but more like a candle with a flame. As we know, each and every candle, one day, some sooner than others, some in their time and others before, but each and every candle becomes extinguished.

Rabbi Rosenthal's candle has been extinguished. But what is clear to me is that his fire continues to burn bright in all of us, and in the hearts and minds of all of those who knew and loved him.

Every time we step foot in this building, someone wears that ridiculous birthday crown, at home, simply celebrating Shabbat with our families, or embracing and even struggling with our own Jewish journeys, his presence will be felt.

And now, as Peter, Paul and Mary said, it is up to us. "We won't let that light go out; it's lasted for so many years. We won't let the light go out; it will shine through our love and our tears." And in that regard, this past week, Rabbi Rosenthal's light has been shining bright through an incredible display of love and tears. And every time we come together as a community to pray together, play together, to learn together and be together, we are ensuring that light Rabbi Rosenthal shared with all of us will continue to burn bright.

Each morning as part of our service, we pray *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech HaOlam, Yotzeir HaMeOrotz*. Blessed are you, Lord our God, creator of our many sources of light. I am so grateful to have had the honor and the privilege of being inspired by Rabbi Rosenthal's light. And together, we will ensure that his light continues to burn bright, and continues to serve as inspiration for *dorot b'atid*, for generations to come.

May the memory of Rabbi Rosenthal be for a blessing, and let us say, Amen.