

Solar Energy Powers Temple's Eternal Light

Temple Beth Israel in Eugene has lit the way for other congregations by installing a solar-powered eternal light.

In Jewish congregations, an eternal light or ner tamid is placed above the Ark of the Covenant, which holds the Torah. The eternal light represents G-d's eternal presence, and the light is never extinguished.

"I'm thrilled that we've connected The Eternal Presence with the way we observe our ark in the sanctuary," said Lisa Arkin, who chairs the congregation's K'vod Ha-Teva (Honoring Nature) Committee. "The light is a symbol of The Eternal Presence, and it is powered by the fabric of our universe - by a star."



The idea, conceived by the congregation's K'vod Ha-Teva Committee, became a reality as Jan Fillinger, a principal with Solarc Architecture & Engineering Firm, arranged the installation of the solar panel with the help of David Parker of Advanced Energy Systems. The total cost was about \$1,000, which was paid through a generous donation from congregation member Alice Resseguie. "Non-polluting the earth and diminishing global warming are matters close to my heart," she said.

The solar eternal light was inaugurated on Shavuot, the holiday commemorating the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The congregation did this "with a sense of the 'light' of Torah that teaches us to be partners in the ongoing work of Creation," Lisa explained. "What better way to symbolize our connection to an eternal spirit and presence that is the source of all life." Oregon Interfaith Power and Light Advisory Council Member, John Paterson of Mr. Sun Solar congratulated Temple Beth Israel at the June 12, 2005, ceremony.



The conventional electricity powering the congregation's previous ner tamid contributed to global warming and, in the event of a power outage, would have been extinguished. The solar-powered light of the current eternal light, however, doesn't pollute and never goes out. It is a shining beacon of Temple Beth Israel's commitment to k'vod ha-teva, Jan explained.

The photovoltaic solar panel powering the eternal light's battery is installed on the temple's courtyard roof. The eternal light itself is made of a many small LEDs (light-emitting diodes), which last up to 100,000 hours and are hundreds of times more energy-efficient than traditional incandescent bulbs. The solar panel charges the eternal light's battery, so the light stays lit all night- and even during power outages.

The synagogue's K'vod Ha-Teva committee received a Creation Care award from the National Religious Partnership for the Environment in June. This honor was given in recognition of the congregation's outstanding and ongoing efforts to build a Jewish framework for environmental action. To learn more about Temple Beth Israel and its solar-powered eternal light, visit www.tbieugene.org/kvod_hateva.html.