



A Solar *Ner Tamid*: The Ultimate Rededication

A new and meaningful way to rededicate your synagogue is by installing a Solar Ner Tamid. The concept is a simple one: to power this holy light with clean, renewable energy by installing a solar panel. (There is a battery backup for rainy days.) Although this is a relatively new idea, several congregations across North America are already using them.

Temple Emanuel of the Greater Washington area has been using their Solar Ner Tamid for seven years in addition to completing regular energy audits. Rabbi Warren Stone of Temple Emanuel (and also a COEJL Board member!) recalls, "When we were redesigning our sanctuary we sought out a solar energy company to help us install solar panels on the synagogue roof to illuminate our Ner Tamid. When I approached the CEO of Solarax in Frederick, Maryland and told him of our plan, he became very excited about the prospect, as he was an orthodox Jew himself. The cost was around \$3500 for the entire installation. It was a small price to pay for its symbolic values to teach about Judaism and environmental issues."

Rabbi Stone also chairs the Central Conference of American Rabbis' committee on the environment, and was instrumental in the resolution passed at the CCAR 2000 conference calling for Reform congregations to develop environmental policies and consider installing a Solar Ner Tamid. He shares that the Solar Ner Tamid sets an important example, as it serves "to teach Jewish concern for the earth and our responsibility for using resources wisely."

The installation of solar panels for a Ner Tamid will depend on the facility, and each building will be different. Some factors include: how old the building is, the distance from the roof to the Ner Tamid, and, the orientation of the building to the sun. Some buildings may prove more challenging than others -- for instance, if the building has asbestos in the roof, points wrong direction, or doesn't get enough sun. Other facilities may be very easy and inexpensive to work with; this is especially true for a new building or a remodel. Usually, but not always, the older the building is, the harder the installation.

The first step is find a company or contractor that can look at the viability and cost of the project. Contact a local energy provider and ask them to partner (and possibly help to subsidize) the project. Many utilities are anxious to do this, especially if they already offer a renewable energy option. It gives them great PR for a relatively low cost. A solar company might also be interested in the project, and participate for free or at a discounted price, if given the right PR incentives.

Some congregations might find a donor to sponsor the conversion and have a plaque on the wall near the Ner Tamid commemorating their gift. Alternatively, your congregation may want to have some sort of community fundraiser or Tzedakkah campaign to raise money for the project.

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life of Southern California (COEJL SC), in partnership with The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LA DWP), has developed a pilot program aimed at installing a dozen Solar Ner Tamids in prominent Jewish institutions around the area. COEJL SC and LA DWP will sponsor the installations, and in return, the institutions will commit to become better stewards of creation by joining the LA DWP's "Green Power Program." By agreeing to participate in this program, they pledge to take specific actions in order to promote energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and Jewish environmental values to its members.

David Rosenstein, the director of COEJL SC explains, "When the Ner Tamid is converted to solar power it is truly "holy" light because generating it no longer causes pollution, global climate change, or other harm in the world."

For more information about Temple Emanuel's Solar Ner Tamid, e-mail Rabbi Warren Stone at warrrens@aol.com.

For more information about COEJL SC's Solar Ner Tamid Program, e-mail the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life of Southern California at coejlsc@aol.com.