

Congregation Bet Haverim

HaMaagal September 2003

Georgia Interfaith Power and Light

At the Pride Seder June 27, CBH became the first Jewish congregation to sign a congregational covenant with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL). GIPL is a new organization that "seeks to engage communities of faith as stewards of God's Creation by promoting energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy and related sustainable practices." The Tikkun Olam committee will be responsible for our congregation's fulfillment of the covenant. The covenant can be viewed online at <http://gipl.org/documents/CongregationalCovenant.doc>.

Prior to the signing, Tikkun Olam committee member Bill Witherspoon presented the following explanation of the committee's initial GIPL plans, including fun and education around Hanukkah.

In this week's parsha, "princes" of the twelve tribes are sent to spy out the land of Canaan and its inhabitants. They report that the land flows with milk and honey, but the inhabitants are numerous and well-armed. Joshua and Caleb rejoice that the land is good and expect that G-d will deliver it into their hands, while everyone else hears only the bad news and kvetches about having fled Egypt only to die in battle. The faithless multitude are then sentenced to wander for forty years in the wilderness, with Joshua and Caleb to be the only adults who will survive to see the Promised Land.

This parsha is about faith and fear. Joshua and Caleb believe in a future that flows with milk and honey and a G-d that will propel them there. The others see only the obstacles. In both the Pride Seder and the covenant we have signed with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light (GIPL) we are daring to be more like Joshua and Caleb. The gays and lesbians who founded this congregation created a space in which people are freer to be themselves, and Gay Pride is about claiming that kind of a world. When we sign the GIPL covenant, we claim a future that flows with milk and honey, a world of abundance and health for future generations.

It has been told recently that the real reason we had to wander in the desert for forty years was because we had all-male leadership. By reputation, men never ask for directions. Truly, we must educate ourselves if we are to move in the right direction. Therefore, in an effort to gain understanding, the first priority is to address the item in the GIPL covenant which reads: **"Educate our congregants on energy production and usage in relation to global warming, air quality and environmental protection."** We propose to do this through a Hanukkah "One For Each Night" compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) campaign.

For those of you who don't know this wonder product, a CFL fits a light bulb socket but only uses a quarter of the energy to provide the same light as an incandescent bulb. It also lasts about 11 times as long, and over its lifetime, can save you many times its price in energy costs. It's also a great investment in the planet's future. By reducing the demand for electricity, it cuts back on human impacts such as global warming, smog, acid rain, nitrogen pollution, nuclear waste, and mercury contamination.

Our campaign's goal is that every night of this coming Hanukkah, in every CBH household, a standard bulb will be replaced with a CFL. When you change the bulb, you will share a brief reading about a way in which your action helps to free this and future generations from the tyranny of waste and pollution. Included in the "One for Each Night" kit, along with eight CFL's and nightly readings, will be a list of other, often cost-saving ways, by which you can give freedom to future generations.

Obtained through GIPL, the CFL's sold to congregants will be a modest fundraiser for the congregation. We propose to share the set of nightly readings, which CBH members will develop, with the larger Jewish community in Atlanta and elsewhere.

If this doesn't sound like enough fun by itself, we invite congregants to invent and contribute light bulb jokes to liven up the readings. Each joke should mention CFL's and should contain at least one Yiddish expression. (There are books like *Meshugganary* if you need help). Example (because we know you can do better!): How many Jewish family members does it take to screw in a CFL? Answer: Two. One daughter to put the bulb in, and one mother to *kvell* on and on about what a smart investment her clever daughter has made.

Please send your jokes to the Tikkun Olam committee, care of Bill Witherspoon or Dan Cohan, by August 15th.