*CLEP-Judaism Connection*, talk give by Myron Katz at Chabad House, New Orleans, June 8, 2019.

I want to do something good: to use the skills God gave me genetically and those I’ve built over years of honing expertise, so that what I give back, is all of me. I have a lot to give; I worked hard. In that journey, I learned that the world has a major environmental problem. ***Global Warming*** (a.k.a., Climate Change) has the potential to make the Holocaust a footnote in history, because it has the potential to kill billions of people and put last century’s tragedies, not the least of which is the Holocaust of the Jews — all footnotes.

There are win-win-win-win-win solutions — that support the ecology; poorest people; existing, emerging and market-transforming businesses; electric utility; social structure and save lives. We need not sacrifice one of these to benefit all others. The best place I found to do this is problem-solving within energy conservation and electric utility advocacy — so I became a building energy performance expert and an advocate of progressive electricity pricing policy.

4 years ago, I invented Customer Lowered Electricity Price (CLEP)… I will not bore or dazzle you with what it is nor its equations. But, I will tell you: that CLEP, among its many benefits, allows us as electricity customers to know when and how to avoid inadvertent theft from each one — something we all do every day. And as we do, we steal from the poor and the environment.

For me, **good** must come from Judaism. So, I ask how is ***protecting the environment*** Jewish?

1. Obligation to not steal: There is a paradox here, because we are unintentionally stealing, which violates the *criminal* definition of stealing — which requires intention. However, if you are Jewish, your obligation to **creation** does not depend on your intention.
2. God = Creation: One key idea in Judaism is the notion of creation. Our notion of God and of his/her creation is not divisible. There is God and there is creation; they are one thing, not two. If you think you have an obligation to God and not creation, you are wrong.
   1. ***Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabba*** 7:13 expresses human responsibility toward nature as follows:

“the Holy Blessed One took the first human and passing before all the trees of the Garden of Eden said: ‘See my works, how fine and excellent they are? All that I created for you. Reflect on this and do not corrupt or desolate my world; for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you.’”

1. Wilderness. Some authors think that the notion of wilderness is not a revered Jewish concept; I beg to differ. Some of you have heard my *Midrash* on the example from the Dead Sea Scrolls that shows that the *midbar* means wilderness, not desert, so wilderness is important, because that is where the Jewish people transformed from slaves to free people competent to run a country. So, I believe that wilderness is central to Judaism, and I will give you an example you can see at our shul and service.
2. The *Haftorah* *Bamidbar* is the reading: *Hosea* chapter 2, verses 1-22:

Previous to verse 16, *Hosea* tells how his wife had taken another lover, and continues

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the ***midbar*** and speak tenderly unto her, and I will give her vineyards from thence, and the valley of *Achor* for a door of hope and she shall respond there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”

Hosea took his wife into ***midbar***. My question is: was that a desert or a wilderness? How do we know? The Treasure Scroll says that many talents of silver were buried between two wine or olive presses in the valley of *Achor*. Thus, *Achor* is not a spiritual place, it’s a physical place. If it had vineyards and fruit presses, it was not a desert. This is the wilderness that Hebrews passed through from Egypt enroute to the land of Israel.

1. The cacophony in this shul is remarkably beautiful. We fully participate in disorder, and if any of us were to stop and listen to those praying around us and how we are not in synch, pitch, or volume, we would rejoice in it and not be put off. That is the same experience we get in the wilderness. That wilderness is given to us by God; it is our heritage to preserve.

Wilderness is an integral part of Judaism. CLEP helps us protect that.

1. CLEP – Customer Lowered Electricity Price — is a market-based utility rate design that pays customers to lower a utility’s cost of energy and power by paying them almost all the savings they cause. CLEP is a voluntary program — using only opt-in participation — and works without any subsidies. CLEP also addresses environmental issues, including global warming, and helps to make utility services far more affordable for low- and middle-income consumers.

* ***CLEP penalizes us when we purchase electricity when it’s more expensive and rewards us when buying electricity when it’s less expensive.***
* ***If electricity costs less, it almost always has a smaller carbon footprint and if electricity costs more, it almost always has a larger carbon footprint.***
* ***CLEP’s design synergistically solves economic and environmental problems.***

1. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Germany, 1808-1888:

“One glorious chain of love, of giving and receiving, unites all living things.

All things exist in continuous reciprocal activity – one for all, all for one.

None has power, or means, for itself;

Each receives only in order to give, and gives in order to receive, and finds therein the fulfillment of the purpose of its existence.

*Ha-Shem*.

‘Love,’ say the Sages.

‘love that supports and is supported in turn’ –

That is the character of the universe.”