



# JECO

The Jewish Ecological Coalition

## JECO eNews for December 2014

### Happy Hanukkah



Our JECO Vice-president, Helen Garner, writes about Chanuka and renewable energy:

We all know that Chanuka lasts 8 days because it took that long to prepare the purified oil which could be dedicated for use in the Temple. The process - including taking olives from the tree, pressing them, transporting them, and preparing the oil for Temple purposes - took time. The oil – or chanuka candles - couldn't simply be picked up from your local shop.

Olive oil was a precious commodity. The miracle of Chanukah demonstrates that energy resources are limited and require time to be produced and prepared. In ancient times, people understood where their energy came from and the effort needed to develop it for use. Energy was treated as a limited resource, which needed to be used thoughtfully and took time to be prepared (and in the case of olive oil, also required time to grow on the tree). As a result, people were careful with their energy resources. Today, we seem to have lost our connection to the source of the energy we use, and with it, our understanding that our energy resources are precious and limited.

The Torah mitzvah, “Bal Tashchit”, is understood to prohibit unnecessary waste. This also applies to our energy use. In the Talmud <sup>1</sup>Rav Zutra says, “One who covers an oil lamp, or uncovers a naphta lamp, has violated bal tashchit.” Rashi on that section explains: *Doing either of these things causes the fuel to burn faster and uses up more than is necessary.*

But despite the necessities of resource management, the requirement to avoid waste is not only a practical one. There is also a spiritual element. The Sefer HaChinuch explains<sup>2</sup>: *The purpose of this mitzvah (bal tashchit) is to teach us to love that which is good and*

*worthwhile and to cling to it, so that good becomes a part of us and we will avoid all that is evil and destructive. This is the way of the righteous and those who improve society, who love peace and rejoice in the good in people and bring them close to Torah: that nothing, not even a grain of mustard, should be lost to the world, that they should regret any loss or destruction that they see, and if possible they will prevent any destruction that they can.*

Becoming aware of the sources of our energy, and avoiding waste of all kinds, helps us to grow as human beings. At the same time, avoiding waste will help us restore our planet to a more sustainable balance. By understanding and internalizing the Torah's teachings about how we relate to our world, we can become more conscious of the limits on our resources. We can learn new ways to relate to our energy resources, and take action to address the energy and environmental challenges we face today.

1. Masechet Shabbat 67b; 2. Sefer Hachinuch, Mitzvah #529

This article has been largely taken from <http://canfeinesharim.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/flyer-the-wisdom-of-olive-oil.pdf>.

You can now make an online tax deductible donation to JECO at <http://www.givenow.com.au/jeco>.

JECO is on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/JECO.AUS>.

## Calendar

**Sunday, 30 November, 2:30 - 4:30, JECO AGM, Lamm Library,**

Guest lecturer Brett Hedger, the City of Port Phillip's Greenhouse Programs Officer, will speak on his many years of environmental work. Read more at <http://www.jeco.org.au/>.

## News

### **Climate Change, Rising Seas and Australia's Forgotten People**

For the 7,000 people that call the Torres Straits home, the reality of climate change affects their everyday life.

Read more at <http://theconversation.com/rising-seas-pose-a-cultural-threat-to-australias-forgotten-people-34359>.

### **Spray on Solar Cells**

Researchers at the University of Sheffield have developed a technique to make solar cells from pervoskite. The process is cheaper and more eco-friendly than conventional methods. Read more at <http://www.greenlifestylemag.com.au/features/20312/spray-solar>.

### **Israeli Invention to Help Alleviate World Hunger**

An Israeli start-up, Pimi Agro, has invented a natural product to extend the life of produce and prevent fungus during storage and transportation.

Read more at <http://www.timesofisrael.com/could-an-israeli-created-innovation-end-world-hunger/>.

## What's happening in your shtetl

### **Glen Eira**

Permaculture Gardening

Wednesday, 3 December, 7:00 pm, Glen Eira Town Hall

Permaculture is a design science that is based on nature. The aim is to create systems that are ecologically sound and economically viable.

More info at [http://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Community/Environment\\_Sustainability/Sustainability\\_community\\_presentations/Permaculture\\_gardening](http://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/Community/Environment_Sustainability/Sustainability_community_presentations/Permaculture_gardening).

### **Port Phillip**

Christmas Pedal to the Penguins

Thursday, 18 December, 6:00 pm, Start at Eco-centre

By bicycle visit the St Kilda Twilight market, the Little Penguins and The Espy Hotel.

Book at <http://www.trybooking.com/Booking/BookingEventSummary.aspx?eid=108898>.

### **Stonnington**

Commuter Cyclist Program (Intermediate)

Sunday, 7 December, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm, T.H King Oval Lower Car park, Glen Iris

Cost: \$10

Book at <http://www.stonnington.vic.gov.au/explore-stonnington/sport-and-recreation/>.

### **Bayside**

Sustainable Homes Program - Solar Workshop

Thursday, 4 December, 6:30 am - 9:00 pm, Council Corporate Centre, 76 Royal Avenue, Sandringham

Book at [http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/caring\\_for\\_bayside/Sustainable\\_Homes\\_Program.htm](http://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/caring_for_bayside/Sustainable_Homes_Program.htm).

### **Boroondara**

Faith Responses to Natural Disasters

Join Professor David Karoly, University of Melbourne School of Earth Sciences and a panel of interfaith speakers.

Sunday, 7 December, 6:00 am - 8:00 pm, The Augustine Centre, 2 Minona Street, Hawthorn

More info at <http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/utilities/calendar/2014/12/7/faith-responses-to-natural-disaster>.

### **Frankston**

Frankston to Seaford Ramble for Seniors

Wednesday, 3 December, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm, Visitor Information Centre

An easy 5.5 km ramble along the Kananook Creek trail.

More info at [http://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Things\\_To\\_Do/Events/Whats\\_On/Frankston\\_to\\_Seaford\\_Ramble\\_for\\_Seniors](http://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Things_To_Do/Events/Whats_On/Frankston_to_Seaford_Ramble_for_Seniors)

### **Green Tip**

Use a green personal air conditioner this summer. Keep a spray bottle of water in the refrigerator and spritz yourself regularly.

You should do your own appraisal of products and services reported. JECO cannot take any responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided.

The JECO Committee welcomes input to and comments about JECO eNews.

JECO works to deepen the Jewish community's commitment to caring for the earth. We believe there is a religious as well as a moral obligation to protect the environment. To this end we work with Jewish, secular and multi-faith groups in supporting activities that promote sustainability.

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