

# JECO

## The Jewish Ecological Coalition

### JECO eNews for August 2012

Rabbi Jonathan Keren-Black looks at the month of Elul which starts at sunset on August 18.

"A GOAL FOR ELUL – and the rest of your life!

The first of Tishri is the New Year for the calendar, but the first of Elul is also a new year - the new year for animal tithes\*. It was used to determine the start date for the animal tithe given to the priests in ancient Israel. Therefore, since the destruction of the Temple and the end of tithing, this new year has no longer been observed, although of course the month of Elul does mark the beginning of preparations for Rosh Hashanah.

It's always worth reviewing our traditions from time to time – perhaps there is a new interpretation or use we can put them to - and indeed this could be one! In times past, giving up an animal was a real sacrifice, since it was a substantial and measurable portion of your wealth. But today most of us eat animals without more than a passing thought to the life that was ended so that we could tuck in to a tasty bird or steak. We probably know that too much red meat, at least, is bad for us too. And it is really bad for the environment, especially for the rainforest that is being destroyed and the energy used to raise cattle, and not least the surprisingly large quantity of climate warming gasses produced by each animal! It is also bad for our fellow human beings, who are hungrier because of our affluent appetite for meat in place of staples. Yet, with the US, our meat consumption in Australia is almost the highest in the world, (beaten only by Luxembourg!), and almost three times the world average, at 123 kg/person/year!

So let's make Elul a month to reflect on what we eat – after all, during the High Holyday period we reflect on who we are – and, as the old adage says, 'we are what we eat'! Let's reflect on the meat, and resolve to show more respect for the life that it sacrificed so that we could eat it. If it is too much to give up eating meat 'cold turkey', let's commit to eating less – how about three times less, taking us down to the world average? How about saving it for Shabbat and Festivals, if that is what makes our meals special? And making it free range and organic when we do buy it. Give the animals of the world a Happier New Year this Elul!

\*Mishna, Tractate Rosh Hashanah"

## News

### **The Great Pacific Garbage Patch**

Listen to an interview with Marcus Eriksen who is one of the first researchers to visit the Great Pacific Garbage Patch since the 2011 Japanese tsunami. <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/plastics-the-key-problem-with-pacific-garbage-patch/987626>

### **Australia's Newest and Largest Conservation Zone**

Aboriginal land owners have signed an agreement with the federal government to protect the ecosystems and cultural sites of over 10 million hectares in the southern Tanami Desert.

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2012/s3543169.htm>

### **Meet Ten Israeli Environmentalists**

Environmental awareness has often taken a back seat to other issues in Israel. More and more Israelis are realising the importance of sustainability and protecting the environment. Meet ten Israeli environmental leaders.

<http://israel21c.org/environment/the-top-10-environmentalists-helping-green-israel/>

### **The \$9 Cardboard Bicycle**

Izhar Gafni was told by experts that he couldn't build a bicycle out of cardboard, but he went ahead and did it anyway. The cardboard bicycle is easy on the pocket and the environment.

<http://www.greenprophet.com/2012/07/israeli-bike-made-of-cardboard-makes-cycling-even-greener/>

## Calendar

### **Keep Australia Beautiful Week - Monday, August 20 to Sunday, August 26**

This year Keep Australia Beautiful Week is targeting motorists and holiday-makers to stop rubbishing.

<http://kab.org.au/keep-australia-beautiful-week/>

### **BZE Discussion Group - Monday, August 6**

Hear Andrew Reddaway of the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) on the future for rooftop solar. 6:30 - 8:00 pm at Fritz Loewe Theatre (entry via level 2), McCoy Building, University of Melbourne, Cnr Elgin & Swanston Streets, Carlton

## Upcoming JECO Events in September

### JECO Movie Screening of "No Impact Man" - Sunday, September 2.

Can a guilty New York liberal save the planet by turning off the electricity, buying only locally grown food, walking or using a bicycle for one year? What happens to his coffee drinking, TV watching, retail obsessed wife and their two year old daughter? Don't miss this entertaining movie which will be shown at the Blake Street Shule. After the movie stay for a discussion and compare notes on living like "No Impact Man". Entry by gold coin donation.

### JECO and the City of Port Phillip Free Bike Riding Skills Course - Sunday, September 9.

It's never too late to learn to ride a bike or improve your bike riding skills. This course aims to increase your knowledge and riding skills with both theory and practice on your bike. The course caters for any age from twelve and places are limited.

Further details at [www.jeco.org.au](http://www.jeco.org.au).

## What's happening in your shtetl

Council	Date	Event	Link
Glen Eira	August 9 7:00 - 9:00 pm	Annual Community Environment Forum	Ring 9524 3333 Sally Stewart or <a href="mailto:sstewart@gleneira.vic.gov.au">email:sstewart@gleneira.vic.gov.au</a>
Port Phillip	August 16 6:00 - 9:00 pm	Sustainable Solutions for Apartments, Docklands	<a href="http://www.envirohub.com.au/whats-happening-in-your-hood/events-calendar/event-item?eventId=508">http://www.envirohub.com.au/whats-happening-in-your-hood/events-calendar/event-item?eventId=508</a>
Stonnington	August 20 7:00 - 9:00 pm	<b>Gardens for Wildlife and Sustainable Garden Design</b>	Banquet Hall, Malvern Town Hall, corner Glenferrie Road and High Street, Malvern
Boroondara	August 23 9:00 am - 12:00	A walk and talk along Koonung Creek wetlands with experienced bird specialists from Birdlife Australia.	<a href="http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/our-city/parks-gardens/walk-talk/bird-watch">http://www.boroondara.vic.gov.au/our-city/parks-gardens/walk-talk/bird-watch</a>

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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.