



Revealing the inner beauty of the Torah in a way that touches and inspires the Jewish soul

THE DIET REVOLUTION AND SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

From Atkins to the Zone and everything in between, diet, nutrition and fitness are the all consuming topics of this generation. Countless hours are invested in trying to find that perfect combination of food, nutritional supplements and exercise. In the process, kitchens are transformed into mini-labs complete with scales and measures, herbs and sprout growers, juicers grinders and processors of all sorts. Precious space in small apartments has been dedicated to all kinds of exercise equipment. Books and magazines on health and nutrition crowd the shelves and pantries are filled with nutritional experiments.

Contemporary diet and nutrition programs have, for many, virtually become belief systems. Each dietary path has its devoted adherents - ready to defend their faith to the last spoonful. How can this be, we wonder? Health and fitness are purely a physical, factual matter - are they not? Yet people speak in terms of guilt, shame and taboo when they talk about eating. What is the deeper message in all of this from the Heavenly perspective? Is it only weight control or is there a more profound meaning to this diet revolution?

First, let us take a moment to think about just how many facets of life reflect occupation or preoccupation with food. Eating and drinking are primary pleasures that have generated a multi billion dollar industry. Today, there is virtually no taste experience that is not available to the kosher consumer and so all of the gustatory adventures available to the world at large are open to observant Jews as well. Inspired by the media and the merchandizing masters, the average person spends a startling percentage of his or her waking hours, buying, preparing and eating food and drinking beverages. In reaction, many will then invest additional time learning to resist temptation. If we add to these figures the amount of time and effort spent on learning to live with food allergies and combating eating disorders we can easily see how some enormous percent of time and energy is spent in these pursuits.

Thus, dieting has a tremendous mass appeal because it meets the diverse needs of large numbers of people. Let us return to our original question. What is it about diet - whether elective or mandated by an allergy or condition - that has become such a preoccupying factor in people's lives? Perhaps this phenomenon is a preparatory precursor to the time, in the hopeful not too distant future, when the Creator will impose a new world order known as the "birth pangs" of the the world's redeemer (Mashiach) bringing with it a new state of higher consciousness for all mankind. Therefore, perhaps, these regimented diet and exercise programs are a forerunner of this transition. You might be asking: How can we conceptualize this change in concrete terms since so much of society is wrapped up in its ephemeral pleasure seeking lives. We may wonder how these people will ever willingly follow the principles that are linked to spirituality which require considerable time, effort, energy.

Society's preoccupation with food and specifically with dieting is perhaps a part of the Divine solution to this question. For there is nothing like a diet to train a person in the skills needed to achieve the discipline of following rules established by someone other than themselves and experience the humility of trying to overcome obstacles.

Instilling belief: Dieting works best when the dieter believes in his or her chosen diet. Changing life long eating habits is challenging and for most that challenge can only be met when the dieter is persuaded that the diet will completely overhaul and change his or her life.

Disciplined Action: Once convinced of the virtues of a particular way of eating, the dieter is willing to weigh every mouthful, go miles out of the way to find certified organic foods, eat only according to a rigid schedule and learn to tolerate the physiological and psychological challenges that are a part of the process.

Reaping the Rewards: When dieters painstakingly follow their diet plan, they experience the "good feeling" that comes with gaining control and mastery over their desires. Indeed, weight control may be their first experience of self imposed discipline and restriction which leads them towards personal empowerment.



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Let us bring that intuition into focus and look at it more closely.

Towards a Universal Diet:

The new age goals of fitness and health are very important to many people. Whether prodded by their fears of gaining or losing weight, of becoming ill or of showing the signs of aging, many well intended people are willing to spend time and effort to study and investigate competing dietary claims and adhere to restrictive dietary regimens. They are willing to swallow the inflated costs of buying organic foods and nutritional supplements and endure strenuous and often monotonous exercise regimes.

For the health advocate, a profound yet practical benefit of these programs is an enhanced awareness of the significance of their actions. This awareness can lead to an heightened level of consciousness that will incorporate self control and discipline into many other facets of their lives. However this is only the beginning. May we soon see the day that those who had previously weighed and measured their portions, are weighing and measuring the consequences of their actions; monitoring and directing their thoughts and emotions in accordance with the Creator's guidelines. They will then be able to "exercise" their free will to choose to fulfill the Creator's will (mitzvot and ma'asim tovim). These acts of Divine service will then serve as spiritual "wings" to reach new supernal heights. This elevation of the consciousness will also empower them to resist ephemeral temptations as they will now see life from an ethereal position the futility of pursuing temporal goals and ambitions for an end unto themselves.

Therefore, we need not despair for any of our brethren for the Creator has already imbedded within the mundane activities of this world the potential for reconnecting transformation (teshuvah). May all of us along with this entire generation merit seeing the final redemption (geulah) soon in our days.