

# WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE GOING PLANT- BASED?

A COLLECTION OF INTERVIEWS, EXCERPTS,  
AND MORE, COMPILED BY N'SHEI CHABAD  
NEWSLETTER STAFF

**ON SHABBOS PARASHAS BESHALACH** 5741 (Jan. 17, 1981), the Rebbe said that the ideal health care is not getting sick in the first place. The Rebbe continues: How do we ensure that illness will not befall us? Through *lachmecha* (your bread) and *meimecha* (your water), the food and drink that we consume. Whose responsibility is it to see to it that the eating and drinking are as they should be? The Rebbe says that this is the responsibility of the woman, the *akeres habayis*, the mainstay of the home.

*At a farbrengen on Shabbos Parshas Pikudei/Parshas Shekalim, Erev Rosh Chodesh Adar Sheini 5744, the Rebbe was speaking about the Hatzalah vehicles parked in front of 770. Free translation:*

“...When a person walks in the street and sees in front of his eyes a Hatzalah vehicle, this reminds him and warns him that he should follow what his doctor (who is given permission and power from the Torah to heal) told him repeatedly about what to do in order to avoid illness and be healthy. He should not be *zolel vesoveh* (a drinker and a fresser). [It is helpful for him to see the Hatzalah vehicles] in front of his eyes to remind him what could *chas v'shalom* happen if he doesn't behave as he should...”

**DEFINITION: A healthful plant-based diet emphasizes consumption of healthy plant foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and legumes, while eliminating or reducing intake of animal foods and processed foods.**

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*N'shei Chabad Newsletter thanks Dr. Saray Stancic for her encouragement and for this introduction to our feature on plant-based eating:*

**NUTRITION IS ONE OF** the most loaded topics we deal with in our society today. It makes me profoundly sad that what should be the simplest, most elemental basis for good health, prevention, cure, and longevity has been hijacked in every possible way. There are hundreds of diets, protocols, programs, and solutions out there—many touted by celebrities and notable physicians and most claiming to be supported by scientific evidence. Beyond the messaging from the outside world, we get plenty of advice from our family, friends, and inner circles. Everyone feels they know what is best for us and has a powerful anecdote or guru to back it up. Nothing



**DR. SARAY STANCIC**

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feels more fraught and complicated than figuring out what comprises a healthy diet.

Patients often ask me questions like: How can it be that so many diet recommendations often directly contradict one another? How can the science be saying *eat more dairy* and *don't eat any dairy* at the same time? My answer to these questions is that people often cherry-pick data that supports their beliefs, especially

contributed to a distorted view of food and health. The saturation of media in our lives has made food and body image messaging impossible to ignore. Add to this the troubling rise in obesity and its very real associated risks, and we are understandably obsessed with the number on the scale. We resort to deprivation and starvation to try to control calories and attain impossible ideals, which often ends up backfiring into a yo-yoing state of endless losses and gains.

The number on the scale can no longer be what we pursue to the exclusion of our health. The question needs to change from, "How many calories should I stay under each day so I can lose ten or 20 pounds?" to "What should I eat to live a long, healthy, and joyful life?" We can then embrace food again and consume the bountiful amounts needed to fulfill and satiate our needs, all while maintaining a healthy weight and reducing our risk of chronic disease. We reap enormous benefits when we shift our goal

from hitting a number on the scale to overall wellness. What's more, when we engage that shift and choose foods that support wellness, increase our energy levels, and make us feel better, weight loss is very often the pleasurable side effect of this process.

So there is plenty of complexity to the question of food in our society. And yet, I am here to stand up and say: Healthy eating is actually very simple. In fact, my prescription for a healthy diet can be summed up in just three words: Eat mostly plants. 🌿

when there are financial incentives for doing so. One of my guiding principles when evaluating claims about nutrition is to follow the money. If an individual or organization financially benefits from a dogmatic approach to food, it should give you pause when listening to their message.

To be clear, I have no horse in this race. I don't sell any type of food or supplements, nor do I receive any compensation from any of these groups. I believe in presenting the best research available on nutrition and empowering people to make informed decisions for themselves. [In my book, *What's Missing From Medicine*,] I aim to convey objective, simple truths and hopefully answer many of your questions so that you can be confident that what is on your plate is serving to reduce your risk of disease and improve your overall wellbeing. I also share my personal experience with how changing my diet helped me overcome multiple sclerosis [MS] and why I believe this can work for other chronic illnesses too.

Much of the work we have to do as we begin a lifestyle transformation involves shifting our perspective. Many of us, especially women, have grown up in a pernicious diet culture. Even well-meaning cultural icons have

**DO YOU KNOW HOW** Jim celebrated after those marathons he ran? With steak dinners, alcohol, and cigars... Distorted social norms falsely lull some of us into believing that high-level athleticism is the trump card when it comes to achieving optimal health. ... this messaging can not only lead to feelings of shame for people who run more slowly or have different body types, but can also mask serious health problems hidden behind a healthy-looking body, just like Jim's.

-*What's Missing From Medicine* by Dr. Saray Stancic



# DR. STANCIC SPEAKS

# GUGGIE TZIVIN SPEAKS



**GUGGIE TZIVIN**

**I AM NO STRANGER TO DIETING.** I'm obese by nature and have been keeping off about 100 lbs. for over 30 years. I initially lost my weight with a very strict eating plan and exercise regimen. Like for most people, it's been a struggle but it was a priority for me so I fought the fight. I was up six days a week at 5:30 a.m. to exercise and I got used to feeling hungry and being in control. It mostly worked, though here and there I juggled with ten or 15 pounds up or down. On paper it seems like it was an easy process but I had to become extremely disciplined and fanatical about my routine to make it work.

At the time I already had my oldest daughter who was born by C-section. I was 250 lbs. and vowed I would not have any more kids feeling and looking this way. When she was three years old my doorbell rang and it was a Herbalife salesman. I listened diligently and 30 minutes later the guy walked out with a huge smile and a big order.

I decided not to tell anyone. I didn't want to see eyes rolling and comments like, "Well, for sure *he* was helped." That was July 5, 1985, and by August 15 I was 30 lbs. lighter and feeling hopeful and determined. At that time I was limited in what kind of exercise I could do, so I started walking. In fact I started a walking trend in Crown Heights. Til today, people stop me and say, "You were the first walker," although at the beginning I would call it strolling not walking.

It took me about a year and lots of sweat and tears to lose 100 lbs.

When I became pregnant with my second daughter, I was so scared to gain the weight back that I was insanely careful. Now my doctor started singing a whole different tune than the first pregnancy. This time he was reprimanding me for not gaining enough weight.

I laughed it off until the very end of my pregnancy when the baby seemed like she was struggling and again I had to deliver by C-section. Only this time it was much, much easier and the hospital staff treated me very differently. Sadly, it was a fact that I experienced. When I was 100 pounds heavier they practically threw me from one bed to the next; this time they actually lifted me like I was a human being. Of course it wasn't okay and should never be like that but it was a sad fact of life, for me anyways—people just treat obese women without sensitivity.

Fast forward many years later, many different diets, many miles later, my husband became diabetic. His bad habits finally caught up with him and he was warned to make extreme changes. He tried, he failed, he tried again, but unfortunately his kidneys were beginning to deteriorate and he needed to start dialysis. That was the worst news to us and our lives totally changed. Four times a week he was strapped to a machine for four hours. Maybe his kidneys were getting stronger but he was getting weaker. Hatzalah was on speed dial and my anxiety was through the roof. Our life basically became a numbers game—his sugar number, his blood pressure numbers, his oxygen numbers. I must say it was so much easier to put myself on any diet plan than another person.

About ten months after starting dialysis, our doctor called us in and said, "Aron's kidneys are failing and he needs a transplant, but I'm not sure he can survive it." I didn't give up. I knew the dialysis is killing him and we didn't have too much time to wait around, he needed to lose weight for the doctor to even consider attempting a transplant. As a family with adult kids we all got tested and my oldest daughter Gruny was

the perfect candidate. Since my husband had a store on Kingston Avenue (House of Glatt), people heard about this and I'm still in awe of how many calls we got from people offering to be tested so they could give a kidney. *Mi ke'amcha k'Yisroel!*

The day of the transplant finally arrived. The anxiety was palpable. Both my daughter and my husband were about to go under the knife. The surgeon did tell us many times that there were no guarantees; he was not sure what would be, so he would open up my husband and the other surgeon would open up my daughter simultaneously and only if he would see that it could be done would he take my daughter's kidney.

The surgery took many, many hours. I am blessed to have a very caring family. My siblings flew in to be with me and all my kids were there. Morning turned to night and finally the doctors came out with good news, and thus another journey began.

Being caretaker of two patients was hard. It was difficult to watch the pain and I was a little resentful that my daughter had to suffer this much because of my husband's bad habits, smoking, eating badly, etc. My sister-in-law Esti Duchman was my listening ear. She is a health coach and had lots of experience and success. She kept saying *let him try the plant-based diet* but I thought it was too extreme and I was setting him up for failure.

*Baruch Hashem*, the surgery was successful but what they don't tell you is the side effects from the meds he will have to take for the rest of his life.

After recovering from surgery, he still felt weak and was always angry. Again we were in and out of the hospital. Esti didn't give up, she kept saying *do the plant-based diet, you will see it will change his life* but he wasn't interested nor ready until one day during COVID he was taken to the hospital all alone and he wasn't allowed visitors. I was sick and tired of this. I took my phone and went on this plant-based chat and typed in all caps:

**IF ANYONE KNOWS A COACH FOR DIABETICS PLEASE MESSAGE ME.** I was desperate.

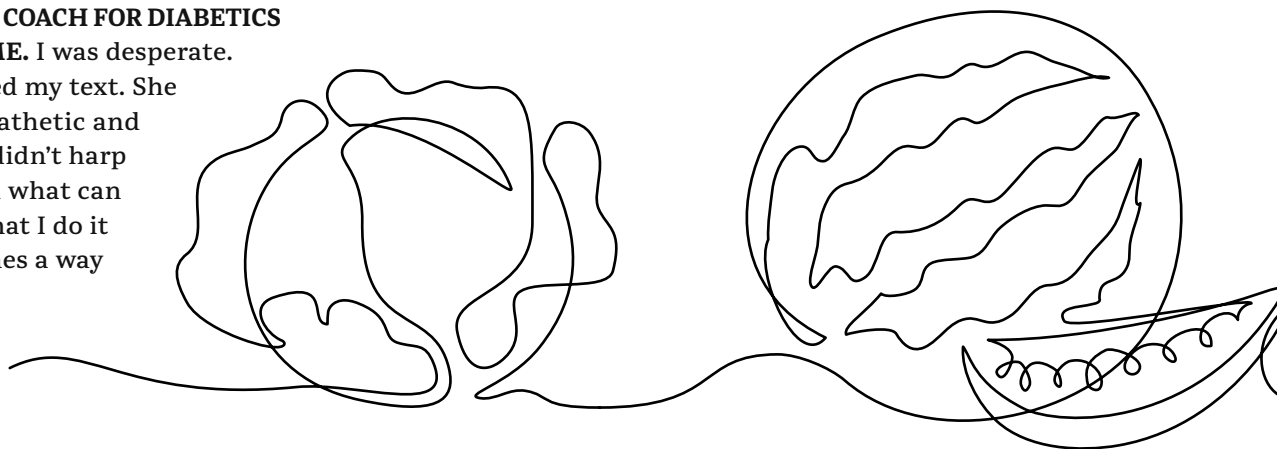
Jill Goldberg answered my text. She was extremely sympathetic and knowledgeable. She didn't harp on what was, only on what can be. She did suggest that I do it with him so it becomes a way of life. I made an appointment  
w h e n     m y

husband could join. She walked in and was extremely motivating and that very day we began our journey of eating a no-oil-plant-based diet. While all my husband's issues were happening, I had become a sugar addict. Instead of meals I was having junk food, sugary snacks, and coffee. I couldn't imagine how I would get off sugar as it was my drug of choice... and it was killing me. *[See our sugar supplement, published in Kislev 2017, at nsheichabadnewsletter.com/archives, searchword: sugar.-Ed.]* So this time we were in this together and I think that's what made all the difference. I must say it felt impossible at the time but I knew my sister-in-law Esti had saved my brother's life with this diet and frankly I was done with pacing hospital hallways. I ordered some books.

After I educated myself, I changed my pantry. I didn't throw things out, just added, because my kids were totally not interested. Seventeen days later my withdrawal from sugar went away and my husband started to lose weight and feel better. That was a huge incentive. The doctors slowly decreased his meds and slowly he began to feel better and even started to exercise. It's been about a year and his numbers became way better, his mood improved, and we stopped frequenting hospitals. I'm on a chat that's extremely supportive. My sister-in-law is always a phone call away. We live in a time that we can Google anything we need to know, recipes and anything else. Yes, the food prep does take longer, but it feels amazing to be so clean inside and I'm so grateful to be doing this. We take one day at a time and who knows, maybe one day my husband will take my grandson's advice and write a book titled *Kosher Butcher Goes Vegan!* 🐾

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*For more from Guggie on this topic, please see the recipe pages in the color section at the end of this magazine.*





# READING

**PLEASE NOTE.** People considering making dietary and lifestyle changes must educate themselves. Of the dozens if not hundreds of excellent books on this topic, we chose six books that are particularly easy to read. They hold your interest even if you're not the scientific type. If you read at least three of these books (honor system), you win a free plant-based kosher meal for two delivered to your home (offer good in Crown Heights only, email [info@nsheichabadnewsletter.com](mailto:info@nsheichabadnewsletter.com)).

## VIDEO

Please visit [nsheichabadnewsletter.com](http://nsheichabadnewsletter.com) home page to see a video of Dr. Mordechai Shani retelling the Rebbe's position on patients taking responsibility for their own health through eating properly and other lifestyle changes.

## BOOKS

*What's Missing From Medicine* by Saray Stancic, M.D.

*Proteinaholic* by Garth Davis, M.D.

*The China Study* by T. Colin Campbell and his son Thomas M. Campbell

*How Not to Die* by Gene Stone and Michael Greger, M.D.

*UnDo It!* by Dean Ornish, M.D.

*McDougall's Medicine: A Challenging Second Opinion* by John A. McDougall, M.D.

## DOCUMENTARIES

*Forks Over Knives*

*Code Blue*

# LIST

# BUT YOU ASK, WHAT DOES A PLANT-BASED DAY ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?



I know we are off sugar, meat, dairy, junk food and processed products, but what DO we eat? It is advisable to read (see reading list) and you may need a supportive friend or paid coach to help bring the inspiration into action.

Here's what nutrition coach Rochel Freundlich suggests for starters:

**START YOUR DAY WITH:**

- Lemon water
- Green juice (spinach, kale, green apple, lemon, celery, cucumber)
- Smoothies (banana, assorted berries, flax seeds, chia seeds, almond or oat milk)

**BREAKFAST IDEAS:**

- Steel cut oats with blueberries, nuts and seeds
- Steamed potatoes with sautéed onion, spinach and kale
- Fruit bowl with non-dairy coconut yogurt alternative by So Delicious

**LUNCH IDEAS:**

A big salad is always the base: 14 ounces kale or arugula or 3 hearts of romaine, chopped, topped with (you choose): peppers, tomatoes, cukes, shredded carrots, spiralized beets, quinoa, sweet potato, avocado, shredded cabbage.

Dressing: techina, chumus, pesto, lemon/olive oil/rice vinegar

**ADD A SANDWICH:**

Two slices Ezekiel bread with: chumus and tomato, or avocado and lettuce, or almond butter with banana and chia seeds, or grilled vegs with pesto.

**SOUPS!**

**SUPPER IDEAS:**

Large fresh salad  
A healthy grain with added cooked or raw vegetables.

Examples:

- Quinoa with sautéed vegetables (spinach, garlic, onion, mushroom, zucchini)
- Baked falafel, whole-grain pita, Israeli salad, chumus
- Roasted vegetables with a balsamic glaze

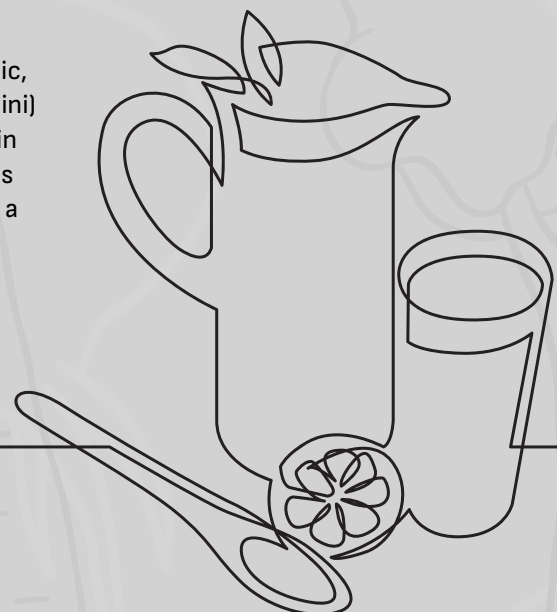
- Black bean sauté: onions peppers garlic sautéed with black beans served over brown rice]
- Panini with sautéed onions, zucchini, mushrooms, tomatoes, with cashew "cheese" and pesto
- Chickpea curry over brown rice
- Tortillas with black beans and avocado and salad
- Roasted sweet potato tops with cooked vegetables

Snack on fruits and raw vegetables throughout the day.

When eating this way, meal prep is crucial.

Make big pots of soup that last a few days.

Keep your fridge full of cut produce, cooked grains, and roasted vegetables so that putting together a salad is quick.







# RISHE DEITSCH SPEAKS



RISHE DEITSCH

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**HOW DID OUR GRANDPARENTS** eat in the *shtetl*? During good times, not during war. *Fleishigs* was reserved for Shabbos and Yom Tov, but even then, how much of it did they actually consume? Nothing like the way we Americans eat today, with a quarter or even a half of a chicken on every plate. According to my (limited) research, each family that could afford it would bring one chicken to the *shochet* on Fridays. *One*. No matter how many kids in the family, or how many grandparents or guests. Hence: soup. So, the amount of chicken each member of the family consumed was negligible. The chicken basically provided flavor, not fullness. The fullness came from the challah, potatoes, beans, beets, compote, etc. Same with *cholent* on Shabbos day. One small piece of meat (or maybe just bones) was placed in the *cholent*, for flavor. Nobody got a plate full of meat. If our grandparents would see how we Americans eat today, they would think we're out of our minds. (See Rabbi Y.Y. Jacobson's story in the article about Reb Yisroel Friedman in this issue's *chinuch* section.)

My rov has informed me that in *halachah* when speaking about the *mitzvos* connected with eating and what constitutes a meal, or which amount is needed to fulfill the *mitzvah*

of eating *matzah* or how much one must eat to fulfill the *mitzvah* of eating in the *succah*, etc., there is a *kezayis* and there is a *kebayeh*. These seemed to be considered reasonable sizes for a serving of meat.

In years gone by, in other places in the world, there was never any thought of having two or three kinds of fish on the table, then *schnitzel* AND cold cuts AND meat in the *cholent*. A hundred years ago this would be overkill by anyone's standards, but nowadays in this country this is typical on many Shabbos tables, including my own up until very recently.

Should we have special foods, even meat, on Shabbos and Yom Tov? A resounding yes. Do we have to eat the *quantities* most Americans now serve? Is it normal for one person to eat a large slice of salmon, then a quarter of a chicken, then a slice of roast, on Friday night, and then on Shabbos day two big slices of gefilte followed by a large piece of *schnitzel* together with *cholent*, one small pot of which has five pounds of meat in it?

I think not, because those quantities are leading to people expecting to be on meds by middle age. It's almost considered normal to have those diseases of affluence—because it is, when we eat this way.

It's not a matter of totally cutting out any




Esti Duchman describing her experiences to Rishe Deitsch.

foods; it's a matter of switching the emphasis. Lots of salad and vegetables and whole grains, and a small piece of the animal food, if you want it. As cardiologist and author Dr. Michael Greger wrote:

*Sometimes people's diets take on a religiosity of their own. I remember a man once telling me that he could never 'go plant-based' because he could never give up his grandma's chicken soup. Huh? Then don't! After I asked him to say hello to his bubby for me, I told him that enjoying her soup shouldn't keep him from making healthier choices the rest of the time. The problem with all-or-nothing thinking is that it keeps people from even taking the first steps. The thought of never having [pizza with extra cheese] again somehow turns into an excuse to keep ordering it every week. Why not scale down to once a month or reserve it for special occasions? We cannot let the 'perfect' be the enemy of the good. It's really the day-to-day stuff that matters most. What you eat on special occasions is insignificant compared to what you*

*eat day in and day out. So don't beat yourself up if you really want to put edible [sugary] candles on your birthday cake... Your body has a remarkable ability to recover from sporadic insults as long as you're not habitually poking it with a fork.*

We hope this feature helps you in some way. To those who say, *oh please, why all the focus on what we eat, this isn't the big problem in our society today*, I say: *Bereishis bara*. First, be healthy. Once we are healthy there's no limit to what we can accomplish in the realms of what's really important.

Disclaimer: In researching this feature and conducting the interviews, many Torah sources were brought to our attention, both *nigleh* and *Chassidus*, on the topics of eating fish and meat on Shabbos and Yom Tov, as well as on the halachic statements against gluttony and the *chassidische* view of eating for enjoyment. We didn't include these because the topic is complex and we felt it deserves an article of its own. Readers may decide to discuss these topics with their families, their *mashpiim* and their Rabbanim, or to learn about them from *sefarim*. 

*"If you think wellness is expensive, consider the alternative."*

# ESTI DUCHMAN SPEAKS



ESTI DUCHMAN

**I GOT MARRIED WHEN I WAS 19 YEARS** old. I remember being pregnant with my first baby and gaining 50 pounds. Unhappy with this, I tried to diet and I exercised a lot. After my third child was born, I began making an effort to be healthy and fit, not just thin. This decision was prompted by my husband Yossi's worsening health conditions. He had high blood pressure, was pre-diabetic and had metabolic syndrome. I learned that all these conditions could be prevented and reversed with proper diet and exercise. So I ate well and encouraged him to do the same. It was really hard! He likes pastrami and hotdogs, not beans and kale. But I tried. I knew that exercise and healthy eating are the keys to good health and longevity. Your chances of recovering from *any* illness or accident are increased tremendously when you are healthy and eating well. We Americans seem to have forgotten that. With all the taxpayer millions spent on PR advocating masks and vaccines, have you seen one billboard or heard one PSA telling us to eat healthy food?

So for years we continued on this fluctuating journey. Me, trying to cook and serve what I felt was healthy, and my husband eating foods that were not healthy whenever he could.

It was a few weeks before Pesach and we were excitedly preparing to leave to Israel for our oldest grandson's bar mitzvah. Suddenly, everything came to a screeching halt. At a routine doctor's visit we found out that my husband needed major open heart surgery. The doctor checked Yossi's calcium score to measure the plaque on his arteries. A healthy calcium score is zero, which shows no plaque on arteries.

Yossi's score was 1800.

He was on the road to a heart attack or stroke. He was in fact speeding down that road. They did more tests. The doctors recommended surgery to put in a stent.

We went for a second opinion and they performed an angiogram and said, "Forget a stent, it's too late for that, you need triple bypass *now*." They gave him ten different medications, no exaggeration. It was Thursday night, Erev Purim. We scheduled open heart surgery, a triple bypass, for that Monday.

I tossed and turned all night. *What are we doing? Is this surgery the right decision? After all, he has no symptoms, how could he need triple bypass?* I decided to go with Yossi to a cardiologist I liked because he practiced preventive medicine. We went to Dr. Michael Braun [quoted in this supplement]. After he examined Yossi and saw the results of his angiogram, he told us that this situation, as grim as it was, could be reversed through diet and exercise if we were willing to work hard. I was and at this point my husband was too. The doctor sent us home with the book *Reverse Heart Disease* by Dean Ornish.

I didn't need to change my diet but I knew that if we did it together, it would help him succeed. Open heart surgery didn't appeal to either of us. So we cut out all meat, chicken, and dairy, and began eating tremendous amounts of fruits and vegetables. We limited oils or fats. After changing our diets, Dr. Braun wasn't worried about Yossi taking the trip to Israel. His body was creating new valves and arteries. This could be seen on the CT scan. After seeing the scan, Dr. Braun encouraged us to go to Israel, to eat healthy while there, and to walk a lot. We walked all over Israel with a bottle of nitro but *baruch Hashem* we have never used it. It's still in the suitcase and *iy"H* will never be used.

We came home from Israel and went completely plant-based. No oil, no animal products at all. Over the next few months, Yossi lost 40 lbs and his diabetes completely disappeared.

I read the book *The Simple Heart Cure* by Dr. Chauncey Crandall. According to the book you can get rid of the plaque in your arteries and reverse heart disease. We went to see Dr. Crandall at his center in Palm Beach, Florida (we live in Miami Beach). Yossi was complaining the whole way, but he went. The doctor asked my husband, “Do you have any idea how lucky you are?” He was happy with the changes he saw on all the scans. He also said to have no *fleishigs* at all, no *milchigs*, no avocado, and very little salmon and olive oil, plus one hour per day of brisk walking.

After we saw Dr. Crandall, we felt hopeful, and convinced that we were doing the right thing. Yossi didn't necessarily like it or agree with it but he decided he would trust my instincts and the doctors I chose. His other option would have been open heart surgery and possibly dialysis. That's what we were told and that's what made us search for other options.

My husband drinks green juice (ginger, turmeric, celery, parsley, green apple) and lemon water every day. He eats blueberries, egg whites, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, quinoa, hummus, *techina*, salmon, brown rice, avocado (only now, not when he was recovering from real heart disease), olive oil in small amounts, cherries, kale, peppers, cucumbers, tomatoes, and eggplant. He is committed to exercising daily. I check his numbers frequently, and they look great. Every day reinforces what we hoped and believed—that a healthy lifestyle really can reverse heart disease.

Since I ended up educating myself on this anyway, I became a health coach and I have clients I see once a week or month, and they text me whenever they want. I try to motivate and encourage and inform. I teach people how to eat healthy so they will feel good and be happy. I share lots of examples of how a healthy lifestyle can affect health in a big way. I try to teach the truth about which foods are good for you. Lots of people think for example that fruit is bad. But it isn't. Fruit is energy and medicine. An apple a day keeps the doctor away but eat it, don't drink it.


People wonder how one can have a social life when eating this way. Most people we visit now know how we eat. I'm very vocal about it. We don't go to restaurants any more except the ones we know are safe as far as the food. We are going to our neighbor for a meal this Shabbos. She's in touch with me about what to make. I bring my own bread. We learn to bring our own food wherever we go.

I make all kinds of food—healthy and not—because Yossi cares a lot for our guests to have what they want, even though he won't eat it. This past Friday night, I served steaks, schnitzel, wings. Yossi had his sourdough bread and his dips, matbucha, hummus, *techina*, salad and salmon. I make Yossi quinoa cakes with Israeli salad, lentil soup. I serve unsalted pistachio or other nuts (these are fattening, must be limited if weight is an issue). I use dates and bananas to sweeten desserts. And I always have an abundance of fresh fruit. Watermelon, blueberries, pineapple are staples. Yossi mostly eats what I prepare for him (I hope). I would prefer not to make the unhealthy foods at all but I do it. Our kids don't eat like we do but at least they hear from us what's right and wrong, unlike the previous generation that really didn't know. Awareness is very important. It's almost never too late to reverse heart disease and other manmade illnesses.

People ask me, if you can avoid bypass surgery through food, why don't doctors tell people this? Doctors go to medical school where they are taught about drugs and surgery. The average medical doctor spends only a few hours in total learning about nutrition. *A few hours!* I'm not saying we never need a doctor. And, there are some very good doctors. But people need to read, to educate themselves, because they cannot rely on doctors to do that. Doctors don't want to know it, or they don't want to believe it, or if they do know it, they don't think patients can do it

There is a lot of misconception as to what is healthy. We have been misled for many years. Remember the four basic food groups? Then the food pyramid? Both of those government-imposed “facts” have now been retracted. We are slowly learning. Cigarettes used to be good for you, remember the ads?

It might seem that many people ignore all these truths and manage to function quite well. Yes, they're functioning, but not in top form. They're crawling along. They're pushing themselves, they're not feeling good, and it gets worse as they get older. They don't believe there is a better way. They blame aging. But there is a better way at any age. We are not built to die of heart attacks at 65. We are not built to slowly fall apart in our 70s and to be busy with doctor appointments in our 80s. At *any* age, food can be your medicine. Or your poison. That's the end result of all my education.

*Esti Duchman may be reached at [estiduchman@aol.com](mailto:estiduchman@aol.com) or text her at 305.742.3960.* 



# NCN INTERVIEWER CHAYA GOLDBERG SPOKE TO FOUR PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH THE WHOLE FOODS, PLANT-BASED DIET:



CHAYA GOLDBERG

- **DANIEL SHUMAN**, whose anger, fueled by knowledge of the food industry’s role in America’s obesity epidemic, spurred him to embrace a plant-based diet.
- **ZLATI MOCHKIN**, a Crown Heights *balabusta* and all-around *chevralady*.
- **DR. JOEL KAHN**, a world-renowned cardiologist and the founder of the Kahn Center for Cardiac Longevity as well as a restaurant called Greenspace Cafe. Get to know him better through his books and the documentary *Forks Over Knives*.
- **DR. MICHAEL BRAUN**, a doctor practicing good sense (and cardiology) in Aventura, Florida. Read Esti Duchman’s story here to get to know him better.

## Why did you start to eat a plant-based diet?

**DANIEL SHUMAN:** I knew I had to get my health in order. The joy of having my second child was overshadowed by the fear that I



Daniel Shuman BEFORE



Daniel Shuman AFTER

may not be around to watch my child reach life’s milestones. I was morbidly obese, sick, unhappy, and worried about losing my life. I couldn’t even qualify for life insurance because of my health.

I tried each and every diet without success. I didn’t want just one chocolate bar from the Weight Watchers program. I needed the whole box.

The diet culture surrounding weight loss is traumatic. The food obsession translates to compulsive eating, eventually causing all the lost weight to come back. The price for good physical health should not be our mental health.

I didn’t want a program because programs end. I didn’t want to put my health in the hands of just one company, remaining forever committed to them for my nutrition. I needed something different. I was involved in diet culture for too long and it just didn’t work. Regardless of the diet program, I never lost enough. I felt unhappy, food-obsessed, and the weight always came back.

My father recommended a book about plant-based eating called *Eat to Live* by Joel Fuhrman. I did research and it made a lot of sense to me. If there was a Venn diagram of every diet or regime for a healthy life, the center would be “eat less

processed foods.” Without knowing much about plant-based eating, most of us would agree that eating more broccoli and celery would be a step towards better health. So I decided to eat food the way G-d made it, unprocessed. Overnight I took on a plant-based, whole foods diet. My weight started to drop, as did my blood pressure, LDL, and cholesterol numbers. It’s been about four years now and I have lost 170 pounds.

**ZLATI MOCHKIN:** We were told about a specific vegan diet [promoted] by [author and doctor John] McDougall as a way to treat my husband’s high blood sugar level. In order to actually see the results and be able to



Zlati Mochkin

go off medication, he really needed to stick to it. I took on the diet with him as motivation. It’s been exciting to create a spread of food that’s colorful, healthy, tasty, wholesome, filling all our nutritional needs, all from plants. My husband’s numbers really did stabilize, and his blood sugar numbers dropped dramatically. Food prep takes a little longer but the results taste better and we really do feel better. We both can

report better sleep, no heartburn, and fewer digestive issues.

**Why did you decide to reject traditional medicine and begin treating patients with cardiovascular disease by changing the way they eat?**

**DR. JOEL KAHN:** I started eating vegan while attending medical school because of my kosher dietary needs. My well-being improved immediately and so I resolved to stick to it. Now, at 61 years old, I am healthier than most people my age which I completely credit to diet not genetics. I have always treated my patients through nutrition and lifestyle because of my own experience. I have a practice full of people who avoided major surgery by changing their diet. After years of study, giving hundreds of lectures, and writing six books, I am confident in the success of modified diet as medicine. I've treated my patients like this from the beginning and never had reason to vary from that.

**DR. MICHAEL BRAUN:** As a conventionally trained cardiologist for over 25 years, I referred hundreds of people to bypass surgery. Ten years ago I decided I had had enough. Bringing in millions of dollars just wasn't enough for me. No, it wasn't a midlife crisis—something just wasn't adding up. It didn't feel right to watch relatively young men have their chests cut open, have their hearts stopped, and then become return customers after successful surgery. Post-bypass surgery, most people have some form of neurological impairment

and are never quite the same. Watching my patients allegorically be hit by a truck so that they could live couldn't be the answer. Bypass surgery often bypasses the problem. I intended to truly help my patients. I started studying functional medicine, which is a combination of preventive and root cause analysis to look for why people get diseases. I came across Dr. Dean Ornish [author, together with Anne Ornish, of *Undo It* and other books] who lectured on how a proper diet and lifestyle can slow down or even reverse disease. Multiple successful studies have been done and the results are convincing. After studying nutrition and lifestyle as a prevention and cure for years, I finally decided to try to treat with this technique and saw fantastic results.

Humanity's biggest health issues were childhood mortality and infectious diseases. We've greatly improved on those fronts but we have introduced completely avoidable, manmade sicknesses instead. The western lifestyle has created diseases of affluence. We overeat and are underactive, stress too much, and don't sleep enough. Because these diseases are caused by our lifestyle, it makes sense to use lifestyle changes to reverse these issues.

The hospital was not happy to see the revenue I brought in disappear as I was a top doctor in my field when I was sending patients for bypass surgeries. Despite intense pushback, a great loss of money, broken friendships, and pain, I've changed my whole method of care.

**Why isn't this treatment mainstream?**

**DR. JOEL KAHN:** A young doctor coming out of medical school has large loans and little information, incentive, or time to explore alternate methods of care. The status quo pays the bills; educating patients does not.

The dairy, egg, chicken, and beef industries are multi-billion-dollar businesses that have lobbies and advertising budgets.

There usually isn't large-scale advertising for broccoli, lettuce, and potatoes. Medical journals have ads to eat more beef paid for not only by the meat industry but by our government! Doctors, like the general public, are addicted to sugar, cheese, meat, and processed foods. Cutting these out includes a withdrawal process similar to stopping drug use.

Medical schools choose not to focus on nutrition or holistic values of care. Practically, it's easier to do a drug study. Monitoring two groups getting different pills is a lot less complex, invasive, and time-consuming than tracking people and their lifestyle changes. Doctors and healthcare professionals get their nutrition information from the same place the public does: headlines, articles, and magazines. Unfortunately, there is so much misinformation between the advertisements and paid contributors, it's hard to know what's true.



Dr. Joel Kahn

**DR. MICHAEL BRAUN:** The current business model of medicine is such that the money is in diagnostics and drug and surgical treatment rather than in education and prevention. Doctors have limited time. They can fill their schedule with a cheap \$85 coronary artery calcium scoring test or a stress test for \$1,200. A calcium scoring test, probably the most powerful screening tool for cardiovascular

disease available today, measures calcium-containing plaque in the arteries that can cause obstructive growth. A stress test tells of imminent danger, usually when it's already too late to take preventive steps. I choose (and recommend strongly) to run the cheap test as opposed to the usual stress test on all males over 40. While the economic choice is obvious, it's nice to make \$1,200 a pop, I'd rather get the results while surgery is still preventable. Because most doctors choose the stress test route which detects acute illness, surgery is the only option.

**DANIEL SHUMAN:** Dr. Kim Williams, a well known cardiologist, once said, "There are two types of cardiologists—vegans and those who haven't read the data." While doctors are not trying to keep you sick, they just don't know better than what conventional medicine prescribes. Plant-based eating

isn't yet completely mainstream, but the movement is growing exponentially as younger doctors take on this method of care. Once presented with the undeniable, powerful data, most doctors tend to get hooked.


**To those finding it difficult to make this lifestyle change, what would you suggest?**

**DR. MICHAEL BRAUN:** Most people are attached to their current habits and lack the knowledge to avoid the issue. Until they are having crushing chest pain they don't think they need a cardiologist. It's easy to brand changing diets as extreme. The average American eats 170 lbs of sugar a year. Isn't that a bit extreme? Nothing tastes good enough to validate having one's chest cut open. Don't get a horrible operation. Do commit to a lifestyle change. Commit to four or five hours of exercise per week, go to sleep before eleven, eat real food not processed foods, eat less flour and sugar. Someone without pre-existing health issues can greatly benefit from even small diet and lifestyle changes.

**DR. JOEL KAHN:** The choice is between paying the price of poor health or discipline. One has to have a very compelling reason to pass up a fantastic looking burger. Issues like heart disease, arthritis, type 2 diabetes, brain health, cholesterol, some cancers, kidney disease, obesity, and blood pressure all are likely to improve by just shifting diet in a few simple ways. Doing research and eating

with intention will be a teaching moment where the whole family learns to value their health. Learn to make four or five recipes. Armed with a recipe or two, navigating the produce aisle becomes easy. With little effort three or four nights a week can be completely plant based.

**DANIEL SHUMAN:** It's important to like what you eat. Find something you really are going to enjoy. If you are suffering through it, it will not last. It's not about getting a badge for being vegan. Any step towards a less processed, more plant-based diet will impact your health. Usually, individuals eating this way will lose weight, especially if they are cutting out processed foods like sugar and oil. Still, some plant-based meals can even be unhealthy! While soda and Pringles are free of animal products, they are not the best way to lose weight or to improve health. Vegan junk foods (highly processed vegan substitutes for animal products) are just stepping stones or treats. If the goal is optimal health and weight loss, combining a whole foods, plant-based diet with some calorie counting can make all the difference.

**ZLATI MOCHKIN:** Preparing some sauces or soups in advance makes this lifestyle possible. Everyone can benefit from a lot less sugar, mayonnaise, eggs, and processed food. A goal should be to have three to four vegan dinners a week. It's very feasible and will make an obvious difference to your well-being. 



Dr. Michael Braun





# QUOTABLE QUOTES

## **ANTACIDS: THESE OVER-THE-COUNTER**

non-prescription drugs are widely used for digestive distress. Their purpose is to antagonize the acids in the stomach, which supposedly contribute to the discomfort felt by many people after eating. A little thought will illuminate what an insane notion that is. Stomach acids are essential for digestion; if the stomach is uncomfortable, why target its natural process? Why not change the input, so that the natural acids can work properly? Here, as elsewhere, I think of Dean Black's comment in his book, *Health at the Crossroads*: "Nature has its own laws, and does not tolerate intrusion without revenge." –Annemarie Colbin, author of *Food and Healing*; *Food and Our Bones*; and *Book of Whole Meals*

**ACCORDING TO A** landmark American Institute for Cancer Research report, any effect of plant-based diets is "likely to be due not only to the exclusion of meat, but also to the inclusion of a larger number and a wider range of plant foods, containing an extensive variety of potential cancer-preventive substances." In other words, it may not be enough to cut down on meat; you need to eat as many whole, healthy plant foods as possible. Meatless Mondays are great, but even more so when followed by Tomato Tuesdays, Watercress Wednesdays, and so on. ...Different vegetables may target different cancers—sometimes even in the same organ. For example, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts are associated with lower risk of colon cancer in the middle and right side of your body, whereas risk of colon cancer farther down on the left side appears to be lowered more by carrots, pumpkins, and apples. An extraordinary study published in the journal *Food Chemistry* pitted 34 common vegetables in vitro against eight different types of human cancer cells: breast cancer, brain tumors, kidney cancer, lung cancer, childhood brain tumors, pancreatic cancer, prostate cancer, and stomach cancer. Take breast cancer, for example. Seven vegetables (aubergine, bok choy, carrot, tomato, endive, fennel bulb, and romaine lettuce) appeared useless, suppressing breast cancer cell growth no more than the control.

Six vegetables (orange pepper, English cucumber, radicchio, jalapeño, potato, and beetroot) nearly halved cancer growth, but five veggies (cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, green onion, leek, and garlic) "abolished" cancer growth completely, stopping breast tumor cells dead in their tracks. There were two take-home messages to come out of this remarkable study. The first is that you should eat a portfolio of vegetables. Radishes, for example, are completely unable to stop pancreatic cancer cell growth. However, radishes were 100 percent effective at halting the growth of stomach cancer cells. Orange peppers were useless against stomach cancer, but they were able to suppress prostate cancer cell growth by more than 75 percent. In the words of the researchers, "a diversified diet, containing several distinct classes of vegetables (and hence of phytochemicals) is essential for effective prevention of cancer." –Dr. Michael Greger in his book, *How Not to Die*

**THE MORE BURKETT** studied, the more convinced he became that the answer to the vast majority of diseases of modern man was not more advanced surgical procedures or better drugs but rather a complete change in our diet. He noticed as I eventually did myself that medicine was not curing diseases but simply managing their symptoms and in best cases slowing or halting their progression. Why, he wondered, did doctors not seek to achieve what would be a real boon for their patients: preventing disease in the first place? Imagine, he wrote, a cliff where people keep falling off and dying. Instead of erecting a sign at the top of the cliff, warning people not to approach, modern medicine just places ambulances at the bottom. –Dr. Garth Davis in his book, *Proteinaholic*

**WHO KNEW THAT** the herbs and spices you've been tossing into sauces and sprinkling onto dishes could



have so much impact on your health? Work your creativity in the kitchen and spice up your meals and drinks to make them more flavorful and more healthful – but don't forget the quarter of a teaspoon of daily turmeric. I am sufficiently convinced by the available body of evidence to single turmeric out as something everyone should add to their daily diet.

-Dr. Michael Greger in his book, *How Not to Die*

**...THEN, IN THE** late 1950s, came that medical watershed I have already described: For the first time in human history, our biggest threats came not from infectious diseases and malnutrition but rather from chronic disease and rising obesity... the supply of food—especially meat—was going up while the cost was going down. People were eating more animal protein and rapidly gaining weight and with more and more Americans eating like royalty, more and more of them were suffering the afflictions heretofore reserved for royalty: obesity, gout, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. -Dr. Garth Davis in his book, *Proteinaholic*

**BEYOND CHICKEN PALES** in comparison to the nutrition found in the soya beans, yellow peas, and amaranth grain of which it is made. Of course, people choosing the alternatives are not standing in the supermarket agonizing between Beyond Chicken



Grilled Strips and a bowl of legumes and whole grains. So if fajitas are the foregone conclusion, then it would certainly be healthier to choose the plant-base mock meat to the meat itself. I see the value of these meat-alternative products as healthier transition foods to wean people off the standard American diet. Even if you just stopped there, you'd be better off, but the more you can move toward whole-food nutrition, the better. -Dr. Michael Greger in his book, *How Not to Die*

**...A WOMAN WITH** breast cancer should be given a fighting chance for life, and one painless step toward winning this battle is to eliminate the factors that caused the cancer. Even the American Cancer Society now [this was written in 1985] believes that the American diet is one of the major factors involved in causing breast cancer. ...a cancer [patient] should follow a diet opposite to the one that made her ill. This ... should be standard practice today, but the treatments for disease have always tended to change very slowly. If history repeats itself, at least two more generations of women will have to suffer needlessly before the information now known will be put into practice with breast cancer. -Dr. John A. McDougall in his book, *McDougall's Medicine*

**PREVENT, DON'T STENT.** – Dr. Joel Kahn

**...JAPANESE PEOPLE LIVING** in Japan had a fraction of the heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer that we have here in the United States. Their population has a wide spectrum of different genes, just as we do in this country—but because their national diet and lifestyle were high in whole, plant-based foods and low in meat, most people didn't get chronic diseases even if they were genetically predisposed... However, those Japanese who moved to Hawaii had a significantly higher rate of developing these diseases, and those who migrated to San Francisco suffered even more illnesses. Why? They began eating more animal protein, dietary fat, cholesterol, and refined carbohydrates in Honolulu than in Japan, and even more when they moved to the U.S. mainland. -Dean Ornish, M.D., and Anne Ornish, in their book, *UnDo It!*

**IN OVER 11** years of practice as a cardiologist, not a single plant-based patient under my care has gone on to have another heart attack, need another stent, or need bypass surgery. -Heather Shenkman, MD

**YOU AND I** and everyone else have been



programmed to regard protein as the perfect nutrient, the more the better. -Dr. Garth Davis in his book, *Proteinaholic*

**THE CDC REPORTS** 60 percent of Americans are living with at least one chronic disease, and 40 percent with at least two. That means more than half of our population is sick. Does that make any sense? This is nothing short of a medical, economic, and societal disaster. How can we hope to keep up with such vast rates of illness? Will we have enough

doctors? Will it bankrupt us? Doctors, hospitals, and insurance companies are frantically trying to mop up this crisis, all while failing to see or address its cause. -Dr. Saray Stancic in her book, *What's Missing From Medicine*

**VINEGAR MAY ALSO** help with polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), improve arterial function, and help reduce body fat. A daily tablespoon of apple cider vinegar restored ovarian function within a few months in four out of seven women with PCOS. A tablespoon of rice vinegar was found to acutely improve artery function in postmenopausal women. -Dr. Michael Greger in his book, *How Not to Die*

**WHILE I GENUINELY** believe that most doctors are *not* in the field for the money, any discussion about the problem in medicine would be incomplete without a look at the financial incentives built in for surgery and pharmaceuticals. Sadly, I feel that the main reason nutrition and preventive measures are rarely, if ever, practiced is because there are no financial incentives to do so. -Dr. Saray Stancic in her book, *What's Missing From Medicine*

**NO DISEASE THAT** can be treated by diet should be treated by any other means. -Maimonides

*Food is the most abused anxiety drug.  
Exercise is the most underutilized antidepressant.*

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