

# FOREWORD

**T**URN FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD SAYS THE PSALMIST (Psalms 34:15). As Professor Richard Schwartz effectively demonstrates in this excellent book, meat-eating today—more than ever before—is harmful in a variety of ways. Conversely, we are able to personally enhance well being for ourselves, our society, and our environment through maintaining a vegetarian diet.

I believe that there are compelling arguments to advocate vegetarianism even in an ideal human society, just as the late Chief Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook envisaged the messianic age as a vegetarian era on the basis of biblical texts. However, I recognize as an Orthodox Jew that these compelling arguments are not conclusive.

Nevertheless, under present day conditions in modern society, involving, on the one hand, so much damage and danger as well as cruelty in the consumption of animals, and, on the other, the possibilities to have a healthy balanced diet without meat, perhaps as never before it is apparent that the consumption of animal flesh has become halachically unjustifiable.

Those who seek to live in accordance with the most sublime values of Judaism will find Richard Schwartz's book an inspiration and guide for an authentic modern Jewish life that fulfills the above mentioned injunction to "turn from evil and do that which is good, seek peace and pursue it."

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# PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

**J**UDAISM AND VEGETARIANISM? CAN THE TWO BE RELATED? After all, what is a *simcha* (Jewish celebration) or holiday dinner without gefilte fish, chopped liver, *cholent*, roast beef, chicken, and chicken soup? And what about passages in the Torah referring to Temple sacrifices of animals and the consumption of meat?

Because of these factors, this book is the result of a leap of faith, an intuition that a religion that has such powerful teachings about compassion for animals, preserving health, feeding the hungry, helping the poor, and conserving resources must be consistent with vegetarianism. As I probed for appropriate Jewish teachings and concepts, I became increasingly convinced that to be more completely involved with the glorious goals and values of Judaism, one should be a vegetarian.

While Judaism emphasizes *tsa'ar ba'alei chayim*, the prohibition against causing needless suffering for animals, animals are raised for food today under cruel conditions, in crowded, confined cells, where they are denied fresh air, exercise, and any natural existence.

While Judaism mandates that we be very careful about preserving our health and our lives, animal-centered diets have been linked to heart disease, several forms of cancer, and other degenerative illnesses.

While Judaism stresses that we are to share our bread with the hungry, seventy percent of the grain grown in the United States and over one-third of the grain grown worldwide is fed to animals destined for slaughter, as millions of people die annually because of hunger and its effects.

While Judaism teaches that “the earth is the Lord’s” and we are partners with God in preserving the world and seeing that the earth’s

resources are properly used, a flesh-centered diet requires the wasteful use of food and other resources, and results in much pollution.

While Judaism stresses that we must seek and pursue peace and that violence results from unjust conditions, flesh-centered diets, by wasting valuable resources, help to perpetuate the widespread hunger and poverty that eventually lead to instability and war.

There are many indications in the Jewish tradition that point toward vegetarianism. The first dietary law (Genesis 1:29) allowed only vegetarian foods. When permission to eat meat was given as a concession to people's weakness, many prohibitions and restrictions were applied to keep alive a sense of reverence for life. After the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, a second non-flesh diet was introduced in the form of manna. When the Israelites cried out for meat, God was angry. He finally relented and provided meat, but a plague broke out and many Jews died. According to Rabbi Abraham Kook, the first chief rabbi of pre-state Israel, based on the prophecy of Isaiah ("...the lion will eat straw like the ox..."), people will again be vegetarians in the time of the Messiah.

Many difficult questions are asked of vegetarians who take the Jewish tradition seriously. These include: Don't we have to eat meat on the Sabbath and to celebrate joyous events? Isn't it a sin not to take advantage of pleasurable things like eating meat? Weren't we given dominion over animals? What about sacrificial Temple services? These and other questions are considered in this book.

There have been several recent examples of increased Jewish interest and involvement in vegetarianism. In this book I cite Jewish vegetarian groups and activities in the United States, Britain (where the Jewish Vegetarian Society has its international headquarters), and Israel. I also include biographies of famous Jewish vegetarians such as Shlomo Goren, the late Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, Franz Kafka, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and I. L. Peretz. Finally, there is an annotated bibliography with many relevant sources for those who wish more information on such issues as vegetarianism, nutrition, recipes, and ideas relating Judaism and vegetarianism.

Judaism has much to say about solutions to the critical problems that face the world today. This volume attempts to show how vegetarianism is consistent with Jewish ideals and can play a role in reducing global problems such as hunger, pollution, resource depletion, poverty, and violence.

This book is only a beginning of the study of an issue that must be considered in depth by the Jewish community.



# PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

**W**HY A NEW EDITION OF *JUDAISM AND VEGETARIANISM*? There are several reasons: Never before have the problems and threats related to animal-based diets and agriculture been so urgent. It is becoming increasingly clear that a shift toward vegetarianism is a planetary imperative. The epidemic of degenerative diseases linked to animal-based diets continues to expand. Costs related to treating diseases have been soaring, and these have caused major changes in health care systems, with decisions being made often for economic rather than medical reasons. Modern livestock farming is contributing substantially to much environmental damage, including the destruction of tropical rain forests and other habitats, soil erosion and depletion, and air and water pollution. There are frequent media reports of record temperatures, droughts, severe storms, melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, bleaching of coral reefs, and other negative effects of global climate changes. With increasing human population and greater consumption of animal products, some experts on food sustainability are warning of future scarcities.

In view of the many negative effects of animal-based diets and agriculture and the Jewish teachings they contradict, it is essential to bring to the attention of the Jewish community the connections between Judaism and vegetarianism. We need to continuously research and discuss these questions, which connect to so many basic Jewish values.

While Judaism has very beautiful and powerful teachings about acting with compassion to animals, protecting human health, preserving the environment, conserving resources, sharing with hungry people, and pursuing peace, the realities of animal-based diets and modern intensive

livestock agriculture are completely contrary to each of these values. Hence, if Jewish teachings are to be taken seriously, it is important that there be a comprehensive discussion of the many moral issues related to current typical Jewish diets, along with appropriate resolutions and actions.

Many changes have been made in this new edition, including the following:

- All material has been carefully reviewed, and revised and updated, where appropriate.
- Many new developments and much new research on the impacts of animal-centered diets on health and ecology have been added.
- Major changes in the Jewish vegetarian world, such as the opening of a Jewish Vegetarian Center in the heart of Jerusalem and recent activities of Jewish vegetarian groups, are discussed.
- The bibliography has been updated, expanded, and reorganized by subjects.
- The question-and-answer section has been expanded from seventeen questions in the first edition and thirty-seven in the second edition to sixty-two in two chapters (one on Jewish issues, and one on general issues) in this edition, with the addition of many new questions related to health, the treatment of animals, and some recent vegetarian-related issues. Responses to previous questions have also been reviewed and modified for added clarity.
- In many cases, updated sources and more scholarly authorities have been cited to give greater credibility to the thesis.
- Topics that are new or discussed in significantly greater detail include: global warming; high protein diets; the heart disease–reversal diet of Dean Ornish, M.D.; the Cornell/China/Oxford study (“grand prix of epidemiology”); protein and calcium myths; recent shifts of China to animal-based diets; early puberty among girls due to animal-based diets; questions for respectfully challenging meat-eaters; “Why I am a vegetarian”; a Jewish vegetarian resolution; suggestions for couples when one person is vegetarian and one is not; organic vegetarian food; and important Internet websites, including some containing vegetarian recipes, restaurants, and cyberstores.

This book argues that:

1. Jews have a choice with regard to their diets, and that choice should not be based only on habit, convenience, and tradition, but should consider basic Jewish values and the realities of the modern intensive livestock agriculture that produces today's animal products.

2. There is no inconsistency between Judaism and vegetarianism, since basic Jewish values point to vegetarianism as the ideal diet.

3. It is a *mitzvah* to be concerned about both animals and people. When animals are mistreated on factory farms and then eaten, there are negative effects, including damage to human health, pollution, the destruction of ecosystems, increased hunger, and the misuse of scarce resources.

As with previous editions, it is hoped that the present edition will lead to a long overdue respectful dialogue in the Jewish community and beyond on the many moral issues related to our diets, and that thereby it will help speed the arrival of that vegetarian time when "...no one shall hurt nor destroy in all of God's holy mountain..." (Isaiah 11:9)

And God said: “Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit—to you it shall be for food.”

(Genesis 1:29)

# RABBINIC ENDORSEMENT

**C**ONGRATULATIONS TO MY ESTEEMED COLLEAGUE AND friend, Professor Richard Schwartz. May G-d bless him, for he has worked hard and composed a wonderful work which describes the ideal of vegetarianism and peace of our prophets and sages of Israel as an absolute ideal toward which the laws of our codes of *kashrut* lead.

We look at the vegetarian way of life as a special path of worship and as a step forward toward the “Great Day,” i.e., the coming of the Messiah, the day where “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” (Isaiah 2:4) Bloodshed will cease, and a “Suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.” (Isaiah 11:8)

During the messianic era, when “The lion shall eat straw like the ox,” (Isaiah 11:7) people will certainly return to the first stage, in the generations of Adam to Noah, before the eating of meat was sanctioned, and the consumption of fruits and vegetables was indeed sufficient. Then there will be total, perfect peace among people as well as between human beings and the animal kingdom. “And the calf and the young lion and the fatling (shall be) together; and a little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6) Israel and the rest of the world will be blessed, as our Rabbis observed, “Peace was the source of blessings which the Almighty gave to Israel”—may it be restored in the Days to Come.

Great scholars of Israel, namely the late Chief Rabbi, Harav Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, and his outstanding disciple, my own great father [Rabbi David Cohen, “the Nazir of Jerusalem”], of blessed memory, preached and taught vegetarianism.

May it be the will of the A-mighty that the number of noble souls who make vegetarianism their way of life will increase. Blessed they will be because they will be observing the dictum of our Rabbis, "Sanctify yourself with that which is permitted unto you." May they abstain from eating the flesh of living animals and may they be satisfied with the blessings which G-d provided the earth; "And the work of righteousness shall be peace." (Isaiah 32:17)

May the knowledge of G-d be spread in this way and may the words of the prophet Malachi be realized: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the Prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the L-rd. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to their children and the children to their fathers." (Malachi 3:24)

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Translated from the Hebrew by Atara Perlman

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

FIRST, I WISH TO EXPRESS MY THANKS TO GOD BY RECITING the traditional Jewish blessing for when a person reaches a milestone in his or her life or that of the Jewish people: “Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive and sustained us and brought us to this season.”

While a switch toward vegetarianism is both a societal and a Jewish imperative, and it is essential that the issues discussed in his book be put on the Jewish agenda, I recognize my limitations in presenting this information. However, I have been very fortunate to have had input and suggestions from a wide variety of dedicated, very knowledgeable individuals.

The following (in alphabetical order) reviewed the entire final draft of the manuscript and made valuable suggestions:

1. Rabbi Yonassan Gershom: Breslov Chassid; author of *Jewish Tales of Reincarnation* (Jason Aronson, 1999); he and his wife, Caryl Rachel, are ovo-lacto vegetarians who live on a hobby farm in Minnesota, sharing the land with numerous dogs, cats, geese, chickens, and wildlife that all live to a ripe old age. His practical experience with animals was most appreciated in reviewing the manuscript, as was his help with the section on Chassidism and “raising sparks.”

2. Jay Lavine, M.D.: ophthalmologist with a specialty in medicine, including preventive nutrition; has articles in several professional journals; his first book, *The Eye Care Sourcebook*, contains much information on the nutritional prevention and treatment of eye disease; he is beginning work

on a nutrition sourcebook. He provided valuable suggestions related to diet and health.

3. Mark Nagurka, Ph.D. (MIT): Associate Professor of Mechanical and Biomedical Engineering at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His lifelong passion is love of Jews, Judaism, and Israel. Although he resides in Glendale, Wisconsin, his heart and soul are in Jerusalem.

4. Charles Patterson, Ph.D: author of *Anti-Semitism: The Road to the Holocaust and Beyond* and eight other books. His most recent books are *Angel on My Shoulder: From Concentration Camp to Carnegie Hall* and *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. His experience as a copy editor was very valuable in sharpening my writing.

5. Rabbi Dovid Sears: Breslov Chassid; author of many books, including *Compassion for Humanity in the Jewish Tradition: A Source Book* and *The Path of the Bal Shem Tov: Early Chassidic Teachings and Customs*. His research for his latest writing project, tentatively titled *The Vision of Eden: Animal Welfare and Vegetarianism in Jewish Law and Mysticism*, provided valuable sources and concepts that made his review of this book especially valuable.

6. Jonathan Wolf: his course, "Judaism and Vegetarianism," at Lincoln Square Synagogue provided the original impetus for this work. Several sections of this book reflect his ideas and those of his students with whom I have had the pleasure of studying. His thorough review of every edition of this book was extremely valuable.

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People who made major contributions to specific parts of the book include: Emanuel Goldman (Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, New Jersey Medical School, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey) and Lewis Regenstein (author of *Replenish the Earth: The Teachings of the World's Religions on Protecting Animals and Nature*, *America the Poisoned*, and *The Politics of Extinction*; president of the Interfaith Council for the Protection of Animals and Nature in Atlanta, an affiliate of the Humane Society of the United States).

I wish to thank John Robbins (author of *Diet for a New America* and several other books, and founder of EarthSave, a national group devoted to promoting vegetarianism), for permitting me to see an advance copy of his manuscript, *The Food Revolution: How Your Diet Can Help Save Your Life and Our World*, which provided valuable information. John is one of my heroes because, as the only son of Irving Robbins, the co-founder of the Baskin-Robbins ice cream empire, he gave up a very lucrative future in order to help educate people about the many negative effects of animal-based diets and agriculture.

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