

The Life-Transforming Diet: Based on Health and Psychological Principles of Maimonides and Other Classical Sources, Updated Edition

David J. Zulberg

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Zulberg helps readers integrate twelfth-century Jewish ideology incrementally, thus removing obstacles to implementing lifestyle changes.

In *The Life-Transforming Diet*, David Zulberg demonstrates that the work of Maimonides, canonized 12th-century physician and Rabbi-philosopher (called Rambam), is relevant for dieters in the 21st century. Rambam's path to optimal health and his guarantee of lifetime wellness described in *Mishneh Torah* remains revolutionary. Zulberg helps readers take on his approach and enjoy great health.

The strategy of adopting rules one at a time over weeks to create memory "traces" (a principle described by Rambam) helps serial dieters as well as those with years of unwise lifestyle choices behind them. Readers will habituate to drastic lifestyle changes by degrees, with the ultimate goal of a change in perception. Rambam's commonsense suggestion that overeating causes disease is borne out scientifically and anecdotally.

The incremental approach is crucial, lest readers become mired in the many complicated rules laid out in this text. Some rules are direct instructions from Rambam, while others, such as the modern idea of limiting snacking to calorie-restricted choices, are not. The author also deals with the Shabbos meals delicately, since Judaism requires that people enjoy a certain variety of foods at their Sabbath meal.

Rambam wrote in a time when certain foods could not be trusted; for example, milk more than twenty-four hours old, leeks, and mushrooms are all in a category of Rambam's "bad foods." For many readers, the fact that Rambam suggested it may be enough of a reason to integrate the changes. For others, more education is crucial to cultivate the willpower necessary for long-term change.

While this book is most appropriate for Jews hoping to strengthen their faith through bringing spirituality into food choices, there is a highly interesting scientific approach here worth exploring. Most importantly, eating less and exercising more, the upshot of the Rambam approach, is likely to produce excellent weight-loss results. The book is filled with quips from success stories; often, the focus is on how great LT dieters feel, while weight loss is but a natural consequence.

CARRIE WALLACE (Spring 2014)

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