

The Eternal Life Diet

Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are.
– Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

After a week of indulging in Matzah, potatoes, eggs, and a host of new Passover-friendly products – some of which barely resemble our usual fare – it can feel like the right time to reset our eating habits. Conveniently, the Torah provides its own set of dietary guidelines, offering a spiritual framework for mindful eating.

Unlike many popular diets that promise weight loss, fullness, or a quick boost of energy, the Torah's approach to food is rooted in holiness. Its focus isn't on how we look or even how we feel, but on how we live – and how we connect to the Divine. In *Leviticus* 11:43–44 we are told:

“...do not defile yourselves with them, and do not become impure, for I am the Lord, your God. You shall sanctify yourselves and you shall be holy, for I am holy...”

Rabbi Ovadia Sforno (1475–1549) is struck by the repeated use of the word “*holy*” in this passage. He explains that the first level of holiness involves avoiding spiritually contaminating foods—an act that prepares both body and soul for a deeper relationship with God.

The second mention of holiness, Sforno says, alludes to something even greater: the potential for eternal life. While this isn't a typical benefit advertised by modern health plans, it reflects the profound spiritual significance the Torah attaches to our food choices.

Of course, Sforno adds, eating kosher is just one part of a broader spiritual journey. One must also strive to “walk in God's ways.” Still, observing the kosher laws serves as a meaningful foundation for cultivating that relationship.

Encouragingly, Sforno also notes that God doesn't leave us to go it alone. Drawing on a teaching from the Talmud (*Yoma* 39a), he reminds us that when a person takes even a small step toward holiness, God responds with even greater support – like a divine coach cheering us on.

As we transition out of the Passover season and return to our regular routines, may we all find inspiration to begin, renew, or continue more mindful and spiritually aware eating practices. And may our choices in nourishment reflect not just care for our bodies, but reverence for our souls.

Shabbat Shalom,

Ben-Tzion

Dedication

*To my niece, Leora Spitz, on her first published scientific paper, "Advancing target validation with PROTAC technology," published in Expert Opinion on Drug Discovery.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17460441.2025.2490248>*