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THE SHOPPER

COMMUNITY AND NATIONAL NEWS AND PHOTOS

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GETTING

FIT

According to Chazal

Rabbi Reuven Kigel is Spreading the Torah's Approach to Healthy Eating

There have been many diet fads over the years, some of which have proven more successful than others. What people looking to get into shape may not know is that there is an approach to healthy eating that is much older and derived from a much better source than any of these diets.

In fact, this approach to healthy eating is found in the words of Chazal and codified in the Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah.

After discovering this approach, Rabbi Reuven Kigel has brought it to others. Dozens of frum men have had their lives changed by trying Chazal's healthy eating system. And R' Kigel hopes to introduce this lifestyle to many, many more.

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After discovering this approach, Rabbi Reuven Kigel has brought it to others. Dozens of frum men have had their lives changed by trying Chazal's healthy eating system. And R' Kigel hopes to introduce this lifestyle to many, many more.

R' Kigel is a kiruv rabbi who has been working in Jewish outreach for 14 years as part of an organization called Emet Outreach, which connects college students with their heritage in many meaningful ways.

Emet is based in Queens, New York, and does outreach work on numerous college campuses in the area, as well as with couples and young professionals through their programs, Shabbatons, and trips.



Rabbi Kigel with college students

Through his kiruv work, R' Kigel has dedicated his life to helping his fellow Jews, and he more recently embarked on another way to help Jews – by helping Jewish men improve their health and live an all-around healthier lifestyle.

R' Kigel relates, “I come from an athletic background and have always been in pretty good shape, although I noticed that many people around me were not. In 2015, I saw an article in a business magazine that said that 80% of cases of the machlah can be traced to poor nutrition. After further research, I learned that the vast majority of cases of Type 2 Diabetes, as well as the vast majority of heart attacks, had the same cause, as did most cases of Alzheimer’s. It was also more recently seen that those who were out of shape were more susceptible to suffering more from COVID than fit people.

“That article really affected me. I care about Yidden and work to help them in their ruchnius. I now saw a way to help Jews in another area – by getting them to be more fit and altogether healthier.”

According to statistics, over 70% of Americans are overweight and generally out of shape. The percentages in the frum world seem to be about the same. As we all know, food plays a major role in our lives, and quite a bit of the foods we eat at simchos, on Shabbos and yomtov, etc., are not the healthiest.

It was at around this time that R' Kigel came across a Gemara in Maseches Shabbos, Daf 10, that he was learning that shed a lot of light on the view of Chazal on the matter. The Gemara speaks about the proper time to eat one’s first meal of the day, and basically concludes that it is best not to eat a full meal before the 4th hour, speaking quite negatively about those who eat earlier.

From this Gemara, R' Kigel was directed to the Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah in Orech Chaim 157, where the Torah view to eating is discussed at length. From these sources, he was able to determine Chazal’s approach to eating right and living a healthy lifestyle.

He also continued to research healthy eating and found evidence that it is best not to combine carbohydrates and protein, never to eat too much food early in the morning, and, most importantly, that a high carb-low fat diet is detrimental to one’s health. Of course, this is only a reiteration of what Chazal already said many hundreds of years earlier.

Seeking to bring this approach to others, R' Kigel initiated a program called “The Fit Jew”, where he invites others to join in a 14-day challenge to follow the approach of Chazal and see if it works for them.

80 people responded to an ad and joined the first group, including a few yungaleit in BMG, with most of them seeing incredible results almost immediately. About two-thirds of the men completed the program, and all of those saw significant

weight loss. About a third of the group lost between nine and 14 pounds in just two weeks. Another third lost between five and nine pounds.

The program included coaching from R' Kigel, informative videos, and the opportunity for personal guidance and receiving answers for all questions the participants had.

When asked to describe the program in simple terms, R' Kigel says, “It is a system to healthy eating based on the words of the Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah and a common sense approach to eating.”

He sums it up in five aspects. 1. Everyone should be guarding their health by eating non-processed foods that are delicious and can even be fattening and are still good for you. People should also be avoiding sugar as much as possible. 2. Everyone should be eating according to the zemanim Chazal set for us. A large breakfast is a western invention and the Gemara does not talk kindly about people who eat before the fourth hour. The Mishnah Berurah explains that although there is a concept of Pas Shacharis, this refers to eating less than the amount of a k’beitzah. 3. Everyone should feel energized by food instead of wanting to take a nap after they eat 4. A person should not be meshubad to food. He should be able to say no to a rugelach, mini-muffin, or the like. 5. If one follows these rules, he will lose weight and stay at the weight he should be.

Although it is a challenge to convince people that they can steer clear of rugelach, pastries and Cheerios, which are foods that R' Kigel describes as being very detrimental and the cause of many ailments, those on the diet are not going hungry. They still enjoy delicious meals, like a scooped-out bagel with lox for lunch and a 12-ounce steak

for supper.

The participants were eager to share their feedback with Rabbi Kigel and with the public. Below are some of the replies:

“I can’t believe how full I feel.”

“My energy level is way up. I feel 10 years younger.”

“Want to hear something crazy? I woke up at 5am, before my alarm rang, feeling all energized.”

“Eating this way has given me such clarity of mind, such a g’shmaka davening, such a deep sleep. Thank you!”

“I am eating more than ever, and if I continue to see results, this will be an awesome gamechanger for me.”

“I feel great, I’m full all the time, not starving in the least bit. Aderabah, I feel like I never ate this much in a day.”

“I’m doing well and I’ve picked up some good habits along the way. I >>>

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COVER STORY

see a real difference in how I feel and people around me notice the difference. Hopefully, I'll stick to my new lifestyle."

"The idea that this system comes from the Shulchan Aruch was really what convinced me to join up, and I couldn't be happier that I did."

Finally, one man reports, "I just went on vacation and I hiked up a mountain and ziplined down. If you would have told me five years ago that I'd be hiking up a mountain, I'd have said that you're crazy."

R' Kigel sums it up by saying, "Lots of people ask what kind of diet this is. Is it paleo? Intermittent fasting? The low-carb diet? It is none of those. It is just eating the Jewish way. It is eating

"I SEE A REAL DIFFERENCE IN HOW I FEEL AND PEOPLE AROUND ME NOTICE THE DIFFERENCE"

according to Chazal. It happens to be that many diets incorporate parts of this methodology, but we had it first. Chazal said it long ago. Chazal, the Shulchan Aruch and Mishnah Berurah had it right all along!

"As frum Yidden, we don't follow the American lifestyle in most aspects of our lives, so why should we copy the American diet? Why should we emulate the 70% obesity rate?"

While the program is still in its beginning stages, R' Kigel has ambitious goals. The ultimate goal is to bring Chazal's approach to healthy eating to 100,000 frum men and their families.

He says, "We are in the process of creating a web site with lots of free information, and we will continue with group coaching, which allows people to become self-sufficient in this methodology within a month. We are also working on making the material available to the olam who are not connected to technology."

The second group to take on the 14-day challenge has just begun. Anyone interested in joining a future group can Whatsapp R' Kigel at 1-862-800-6546.



Some of the meals of the chazal diet