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## **‘WHAT SHALL WE EAT? WHAT SHALL WE DRINK?’**

### **FOODS AND DIETS AS PER BIBLE PRECEPTS**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper proposes an overview of the main food consumption and nutrition as per Bible precepts in order to explain their efficacy in terms of scientific observation. A meal based mainly on consuming whole grains (and derived products), vegetables, fruits (and derived products), and sometimes dairy products and fish may be able to provide the main nutrients (carbohydrates, dietary fibers, lipids, proteins, minerals, and vitamins) needed for a healthy body. However, it is questionable whether elimination or low and selective meat consumption may or may not deprive the human body of certain nutrients useful for its growth, development, and normal function.

*Keywords:* biblical, times, diet, healthy, body

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#### **1. Introduction**

One of America’s most discussed books, re-edited for almost a decade under various titles, is ‘The Maker’s Diet’ [<https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-88419-948-9>]. It refers to a 40-day detoxification and slimming program based on four health pillars: physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional. The author (Jordan S. Rubin, nutritionist and naturopath) said he was inspired by the Bible, and the nutritional component of his diet was made up of old Jewish rules and health principles that Jews received from God. According to books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, he stated that certain foods are definitely ‘unclean’ and therefore are prohibited. Rubin’s diet plan is rich in whole organic foods, being based on fish and red meat, vegetable oils, butter, cheeses, milk and seeds, nuts, cereals, broccoli, cauliflower, berries or grapes. It is very important that all foods to be consumed in their natural state or as little heat-treated as possible. As expected, the opinions regarding this diet were divided, critics claiming that Rubin had used God’s name to promote a regime that cannot be respected because of the chemicals used today to process even the healthy foods. Some declared that a ‘true diet’ lasts not only for 40 days, but for a lifetime; others

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have been challenged to read the Bible, checking if Rubin's statements are real or just preconceived interpretations. The 'Modern Mediterranean Diet' is also popular because of its favourable effects on the body, contributing to prolong life and to prevent coronary heart disease, cancer or other chronic diseases. Built on the foundations of a diet specific to Crete Island (but with similarities throughout the Mediterranean basin), it promotes the consumption of "olive oil, olives, cereal grains, pulses, wild herbs, and fruits, together with limited quantities of goat meat and milk, game and fish". These can be associated with "apples, grapes, wine, pomegranates and sheep" [1, p. 96-97]. According to some Israeli researchers, the 'seven species' mentioned in the Bible (wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and date honey) and a few other specific Middle East foods are now recognised 'as healthy food' and could further improve the beneficial MedDi [2].

Obviously, the theme of diet and nutrition is just one of the many approaches of the Bible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Combining of the biblical information with other antiquity documents and the results of more recent research provides an interesting link between geographical characteristics of the area, specificity of agriculture and peculiarities of the Jewish food. There are enough evidences from daily life in biblical times to indicate the value of the Mediterranean diet, when its patterns are applied to the Israelites. Some researchers state that even if not all the inhabitants of the region looked "slim and trim", most of them "were not overweight, due to their diet and the strenuous physical activities in which they were engaged" [3]. Their physical aspect was compared to the representatives of other populations than Israelites (Judges 3.17). Eating well and right was always important, as implied by Deuteronomic statement: "When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee" (Deuteronomy 8.10). Food and blessing were therefore bound together, both being conditioned by the observance of rules established by God. Like theologians who emphasize the symbolic connotation of food, anthropologists and archaeologists see in the dietary patterns some "conservative symbols of ethnicity". The food itself becomes "one of the primary symbols manipulated by people seeking to maintain their cultural identity and group solidarity" [4, p. 206]. Yet, going beyond the philosophical symbolism of food in the Bible, at the present there are two currents that debate with scientific pros and cons, the healthiness of the diet from biblical times. Basically, the literature that sustain nutrition as per Bible precepts are doing lobby for one or more of the foods prepared according to the Holy Book recommendations. Starting from these considerations, this paper proposes an overview of the main food consumption in accordance to the biblical directives, in order to explain their usefulness in terms of scientific observation. The review survey was conducted for the main groups of aliments that are mentioned in the Bible and were analysed in several books and articles cited in scientific databases.

## **2. Results**

In biblical times, the food substrates were of vegetable origin (cereals, oil, vegetables, and fruits) or of animal origin (animal by-products, fish, and meat). Usually, two meals were consumed daily (Exodus 16.12). The breakfast was frugal, avoiding the reproaches of feasting in the morning as it is underlined in Ecclesiastes 10.16. The Old Testament praises also mention the wise woman who “gets up while it is still night” to prepare food for her household (Proverbs 31.15). In fact, the importance of breakfast in decision making is one of the current concerns of multidisciplinary teams (nutritionists, biochemists, sociologists) [5]. In the evening the dishes were more elaborate; according to the Bible and to other historical sources (i.e. Flavius Josephus’ writings), the main meal of the day was eaten even before or immediately after sunset. Ordinary meals consisted of bread made from wheat and barley, parched grain, olive oil and olives, stews from lentils, beans and vegetables as well as all kinds of fruits. In addition, fish and dairy products like curd and cheeses were served from time to time. The typical diet is illustrated by Abigail, the wife of Nabal, who provided David’s men with bread, wine, parched grain, raisins, and fig cakes (1 Samuel 25.18). She also took with her several sheep, but the provided meat was not eaten as a daily meal [6]. In fact, it was consumed rarely, as a part of sacred meals and during the most festive occasions. Abraham, for instance, served his guests with a sumptuous meal based on bread, dressed calf meat, butter, and milk (Genesis 18.6-8). The meal was served in a common pot into which everyone dipped their bread (Matthew 26.23) as well as all dishes being habitually shared. At the end, the dish was also wiped clean with the help of a piece of bread. Water, wine, and milk could also accompany the meal. The variety of meals was conditioned by social/occupational status, by spatial-temporal geographical disposition (proximity to trade area, seasons’ alternation) or by political factors. Overall, food eating was framed into a necessity’s triangle dictated by the questions “what, when and why” [7].

The key elements of the ancient Israelite dietary regimens or the principal sources of their ‘natural wealth’ include grain (wheat and barley), olive oil, and grape products (juice and wine). Known as the ‘Mediterranean triad’ because of its prevalence in the Mediterranean basin, these three edibles were synonymous with divine blessing that would be earned by obedience to God’s rules for living: “So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today — to love the LORD, your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will send rain on your land in its season, autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil” (Deuteronomy 11.13-14). The same three products were promised by God to the priests of Israel: “I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the LORD as the first fruits of their harvest” (Numbers 18.12) and to all those who repented before the Creator: “I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy you fully” (Joel 2.19).

## **2.1. Grains**

In the Bible, the cereals are seen as essential for life. They were some of the easiest natural foods to keep preserved for years. Providing Israelites with 70–75% of the calories in the average diet [8], both wheat and barley were consumed raw and unprocessed, boiled in water, fried or milled and baked. At the beginning of spring, cereals grains, being still green and soft could be eaten as such or roasted (Leviticus 2.14, Ruth 2.14). This is what the evangelists mention in their Gospels: “At that time Jesus went through the wheat fields on a Sabbath day. His disciples, being hungry, plucked the ears of corn rubbing them in their hands and began to eat them.” (Luke 6.1, Matthew 12.1, Mark 2.23) By rubbing or roasting, the young grains became sweet as a result of starch’s transformation into dextrin. Bread was obtained from cereals through a rather difficult and lengthy process. As a basic food of the family in biblical times, the importance of bread in daily life is confirmed by the ‘Lord’s Prayer’ (also known as the ‘Disciples’ Prayer’): “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6.11). In many paragraphs of the Bible, eating bread was the equivalent of nourishment. There were many rules showing the respect that bread was treated on (Matthew 15.26). Any bread crumbs bigger than an olive were gathered and never discarded. In the Bible, everything connected to bread, from the sowing of the seed to the baking of the loaves, is done in the name of God. The sacred meaning of bread is strengthened by Jesus’ allegation: “I am the bread of life” (John 6.35), hence bread is never to be cut, but always broken, as a symbol of sharing or giving. The poor ate barley bread, while the rich consumed wheat bread, the price of which was at least twice as much. The explanation is found in the environment where the cereals were grown: wheat was cultivated in the fertile coastal and inland valleys, while barley could tolerate marginal areas with less rain and poorer soil. The grains were ground between two millstones, at home or in courtyards, between houses (Matthew 24.41), in a large concave stone basin, using a convex upper stone. It is estimated that almost 3 hours a day were necessary to produce the flour for a family of four to five people [9]. The dough was worked in kneading-troughs. Very strong millets were used to make the barley yeast which allowed the heavy bread to rise. Oil or water, and salt were added to the flour; then the mixture was baked. Usually, the loaves were round (small or large) or flat and thin (like paper) shape. Because bread would become mouldy very soon, one would only bake enough for a day or two. Although in the Bible there is no information about the gender distinctions in food production, there are many examples of the role of each, man and woman, in baking bread; while the bread preparation was delegated to men in an urban or temple context, women were responsible for grain processing and bread production for the family. Whole grains consumption may increase dietary fibres intake as well as mineral pools and B vitamins content which is beneficial to good health [10]. Consumed in a balanced way (avoiding excess) and associated with vegetables [11], the cereals provide the basic nutrients necessary for a good functioning of the body. The dough could be enriched by the addition of flour

from legumes (Ezekiel 4.9), as well as fennel and cumin for flavour. Often, the bread was soaked in vinegar (Ruth 2.14), olive or sesame oil for extra taste [12].

## **2.2. Grapes products**

Along with the wine and raisins, grapes are mentioned throughout the Bible all the way from Genesis to Revelation. They became a symbol of the fertility of the Promised Land (Numbers 13.24-24), thanks to the climatic conditions favourable to the vineyard culture: hot and dry summers, and wet, cool winters. Consumed fresh or dried in the sun, pressed into cakes (Song of Songs 2.5), as juice or vinegar (John 19.29), grapes formed no small part of the ordinary food. Ripe grapes were dried into raisins which represented not only a desirable dessert, but also an important source of energy. The increased sugar content allowed grapes to be processed into alcoholic beverages such as wine. In a land with insufficient sweet water, the grapes juice and wine became the principal drinks. At that time, the addition of wine to the water was a common procedure, which can be explained by its usefulness to cancel infestation with various pathogens existing in the water. The restarting of the fermentation process of the sugars under the action of the wine yeasts was a helpful action in sterilizing water from unsafe sources [13]. On the other hand, even water supplied general hydration (Genesis 26.20, Exodus 17.1-2, 1 Samuel 25.11, Mark 9.41, 1 Timothy 5.23), wine was more available than grape juice because of the fermentation process that occurred quickly in such a warm climate. The keeping of grape juice from fermenting was accomplished by boiling the juice down to syrup or by separating the fermentable pulp from the juice of the grape by means of filtration. The grape juice were poured in jars, then sealed and immersed in a pool of cold water. Salt, sea-water, lime, pitch, sulphur fumes were used to prevent wine from becoming acid or smelly [14].

Wine was frequently associated to well-being (Isaiah 25.6), joy and festive occasions (Judges 9.13; Psalm 104.15; Ecclesiastes 9.7, 10.19; John 2.1,10), acquiring symbolic, cultural, civic and existential significance (Numbers 15.5; Lamentation 2.12).

Some researchers consider that today's wine is much stronger than the wine used in biblical times, due to the absence of water addition [13]. The practice of adding water into wine was very common due to the increased alcoholic strength of wine and the large amount of reducing sugars in it, which made that wine almost impossible to drink without the addition of water. After harvesting, the grapes were placed on mats in the sun and dried out so that the wines had a high alcohol content. Nevertheless, if this wine is diluted by too much water, due to the osmotic pressure exerted by the alcohol concentration, the reducing sugars and the other wine compounds concentrations would decrease, which would favour the proliferation of yeasts-originating microorganisms and re-fermentation process.

An analysis of biblical text reflects the ambivalent attitude for and against the wine consumption. Theologians believe that a clear distinction must be made between “unfermented” and “fermented and intoxicating wine” [15]: while the first is the symbol of divine blessing and material prosperity (Genesis 27.28, 49.10-11, Deuteronomy 33.28), also designed for the Messianic epoch (Joel 2.18-19, Jeremiah 31.10-12, Amos 9:13-14), of the grace of God (Isaiah 55.1) and of the joy that God gives to His people (Psalm 104.14-15, 4.7), the latter affects the sensory, intellectual and moral capacity of man (Leviticus 10.9-11; Genesis 9.21, 19:32; Habakkuk 2.15; Isaiah 5.11-12). By deforming reality (Isaiah 28.7, Proverbs 23.33), because of excessive wine or other alcoholic beverage consumption, a person can be disqualified from both civil and religious, spiritual responsibilities (Proverbs 31.4-5, Leviticus 10.9-11, Ezekiel 44.23, 1 Timothy 3.2-3, Titus 1.7-8). According to supporters of the ‘Mediterranean Diet’, a moderate consumption of wine during meals contributes, through its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, to the prevention of cardiovascular diseases and cancer [16, 17]. Yet, the effects of alcohol consumption vary depending on the amount consumed. Some researchers warn that although a certain quantity of wine can help with cardiovascular disease, it may also increase the risk of certain types of cancer [18].

### **2.3. Olive oil**

An important place in the ancient diet had olives, which became a popular appetizer, starters and desserts, especially in the Roman world [19]. However, the Bible does not mention the olive consumption as fruits perhaps because of their bitterness [20]. In its turn, for Israelites the olive oil represented a main source of fat and an important ingredient of bread or other dishes. It was more adaptable and longer-lasting than the sesame oil, having also a better taste. During the drought, Elijah asked the widow of Sarepta to prepare for him “a small loaf of bread” from a “handful of flour” and “a little oil” (I Kings 17.12-13), the two elements – together with the water (I Kings 17.10) – being the condition of survival.

The olive oil was produced by crushing olives by foot, by pounding them with a mortar, or on a larger scale with a beam press. Cold pressed and stored in dark, opaque glass containers (to avoid the powerful oxidative action of sunlight), the unprocessed olive oil had multiple meaning: as aliment, medicine, ointment, cosmetic, and fuel for lamps. Many of the Bible passages also refer to its use in cultic ceremonies and in ritual prescriptions such as the “daily sacrifice”, where the beaten oil (Exodus 29.40, Numbers 28.5) was mentioned. Often associated with selected dishes, such as honey and fine dough (Ezekiel 16.13, 19), olive oil was mixed with flour, used for frying or cooking meat, and eaten with bread and stews. If, initially, the consumption of olive oil (especially of the good quality) was somewhat limited, due to its high price – the poor having access to cheaper and unhealthy types of olive oil or at low-priced substitutes of it – later, it became one of the basic products in the daily diet.

According to the Jewish oral traditions, after the Roman conquest, it became one of the four essential foods that a husband had to provide to his wife, contributing with about 11% of the total calories or the equivalent of 160-230 grams per week [21]. The Romans considered the olive oil a strategic food, introducing it in the ration of a soldier (approximately 70 mL per day). During their war campaigns, replacing olive oil with butter was considered a tough test [22]. Sensing the role of olive oil as a dietary fat – its antioxidant and protective character given by mono-unsaturated fatty acids (mainly oleic acid), non-vitamin antioxidants (phenolic compounds), squalene, and vitamins – the Israelites exploited its nutritive and healing power, highlighting the importance of quality and purity in food and medicine.

#### ***2.4. Other vegetables, fruits and nuts***

Although a series of vegetables and fruits are mentioned in biblical texts, it is difficult to determine the role they played in the daily diet. Cultivated on smaller or bigger land or grown in the wild, they constituted or supplemented the food of the Israelites, being both delicacies and the only resources in times of famine. They were consumed raw or boiled, simple or mixed, depending on their properties. Some of the vegetables provided seeds that could easily be stored and used in the long run as an important source of proteins, lipids and carbohydrates; others were consumed fresh, being rich in vitamins and fibres [23]. Esau's gesture to sell his firstborn right for a dish of lentils with bread, highlighted red lentils and beans as among the most used vegetables (Genesis 25.33-34; 2 Samuel 17.28, 23.11-12; Ezekiel 4.9). Their nutritional qualities (a good source of vitamins A and C, valuable proteins and essential amino acids) have made them popular among the poorer inhabitants of the country. Melons, cucumber, leeks, onions, and garlic that were usually consumed in the slavery time in Egypt, became vague memories during Exodus (Numbers 11.5). Garden herbs like mint (Matthew 23.23), rue (Luke 11.42), wild herbs like mallow, juniper root and vetiver (Job 30.4), as well as bitter herbs like chicory and sea lice [24] were consumed together with the lamb meat during Passover (Exodus 12.8).

Intervention trials showed that pulse consumption has good effects on the prevention and management of chronic diseases [25]. Pomegranates – one of the 'seven species' in the Land of Israel, with highly beneficial anti-tumour, anti-inflammatory, and anti-oxidant properties – were usually consumed fresh, pickled or could be processed to get juice or even wine (Song of Songs 8.2). They have played an important role in the Israelites' diet (Numbers 20.5, Deuteronomy 8.8) and their symbolic significance has been reproduced in a series of biblical passages. Not accidentally, the pomegranate plant appeared as the ornaments on the mantle of the high priest, on the temple pillars and on the coins (1 Kings 7.18, 20).

The carob or locust fruits, very nourishing and easy to digest, could be prepared as a porridge easy to consume by the elderly. The beans of the carob tree, commonly called '*Saint John's bread*' recalls the diet of the saint in the

wilderness (Mark 1.6), that consisted of wild honey, roots and locust (either being considered by some scholars the wild fruits or the insects according to others).

Nuts were used as food, to obtain cooking and lighting oil, while the bark was used to make paints. Almonds and pistachios – both mentioned among the ‘choice fruits of the land’ sent by Jacob as a gift to the ruler of Egypt (Genesis 43.11) – were used as a food appetizer, as an ingredient for various dishes, in the preparation of pasta and oil, while the shells were used as fuel.

Apples, apricots, quinces or oranges [26] were added to the oatmeal to improve its flavour; crushed fruits were added to the dough to act like yeast, making the dough grow. Dates were used alongside nuts if unexpected guests arrived. They were consumed fresh or dried, pressed into cakes (2 Samuel 6.19, 1 Chronicles 16.3), but mostly boiled into thick, long-lasting syrup, which served as a sweetener. Some scholars believe that honey from a well-known biblical expression “a land flowing with milk and honey” was date honey [27]. The figs, like wheat, olive oil, and grape were one of the Promise Land staples (1 Samuel 25.18, 30.12; 1 Chronicles 12.41). They were eaten fresh in the summer, as delicacy because of their sweetness. In the other seasons, the dried figs were chopped and pressed into a cake, then stored as an important winter provision, being sliced and eaten like bread. The consumption of fruits and vegetables rich in fibres, vitamins and minerals contribute to assure body’s homeostasis [28]. In addition, it was recommended to avoid the excess of sweet foods, the consequences of which were associated with greed (Proverbs 23.19-21, 25.27).

## **2.5. Dairy**

Milk and dairy products are often mentioned in the Bible (Genesis 18.8, Judges 4.19, 1 Samuel 17.18, 2 Samuel 17.29) providing an important amount of the Israelites’ diet. The sheep, especially the goats, were the animals preferred in the region, being nourished with leaves, dried herbs or the bark of the trees. The Bible researchers believe every mention of milk in the biblical texts is related to goat’s milk (Proverbs 27.:27) for being easier to digest and less perishable than the cow’s milk [29]. Camel milk (Genesis 32.15) and sheep milk (Deuteronomy 32.:4, 1 Corinthians 9.7) were also consumed, but the lack of clear references leaves space for interpretations. Even if fresh milk was a valuable food (Judges 4.19, Song of Songs 5.1, Isaiah 55.1), most of the time it was preserved or turned into products such as yoghurt, cream, cheese or butter.

Scientific research has shown that this food group – present also in the Mediterranean Diet – represents a source of calcium in a highly bioavailable form, that is easily assimilated by the body (by contributing in assuring bone and dental density) [30]. Equally, it provides a superior biological intake of proteins and vitamins such as B<sub>2</sub> and A.



The cheese mentioned in the Bible (2 Samuel 17.18, 29; Job 10.10) was obtained by using the sapwood of any part of the fig tree (instead of the animal enzymes, according to the law of not mixing meat with milk). Pressed and dried in the sun, the cheese could be kept longer and re-hydrated at the time of use. In turn, the butter was a kind of sour cream, like the product offered by Jael to Sisera, the Canaanite commander (Judges 5.25). Dairy preparation began with milk claddings, which traditionally consist of stirring of the milk in goat leather bellow hanging on a wooden stand longer than two hours. The whey was not thrown away, but used as a separate, being both energetic and refreshing drink, knowing that it contains sugar (lactose), minerals and proteins (lactalbumin) [31].

## **2.6. Fish, eggs and meat**

Foods in this group became a part of the diet in biblical times, even if they were not very diffused in the common meal. The fish, for instance, had to be purchased by Israelites because their access to the sea was quite limited. In fact, the fish is rarely mentioned in the Old Testament as a food source, even though Jerusalem had a 'Fish Gate' (II Chronicles 33.14; Nehemiah 3.3, 12.39; Zephaniah 1.10) used by fishermen from the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River to bring fish to market.

The fact that Jesus shared bread and fish to thousands of people (Matthew 14.16-18, John 6.9-11), then prepared fish for his disciples as a meal (John 21.10-13), is probably more symbolic in nature than menu-related. According to the Jewish dietary laws (Leviticus 11), fish was divided into clean (with scales and fins, except eels) and unclean (such as shellfish). Fish could be consumed fresh or dried, cooked, salted or pickled. Nowadays epidemiological evidence shows the benefits of a diet rich in fish, due to the rich content in omega-3 fatty acids, which may reduce the risk of developing heart disease and other medical problems [32].

Regarding to the eggs, it is also difficult to know if Israelites ate chicken, geese, ducks or pigeon eggs or eggs of other wild creatures such as turtle-doves, rock pigeons, quails or partridges (Deuteronomy 22.6-7, Jeremiah 17.11, Isaiah 10.14).

However, perhaps the most complex issue is meat consumption. Some theologians or nutritionists argue that Adam received precise directions to only eat vegetation (Genesis 1.29-30), but the text does not exactly prohibit the eating of meat. Other researchers consider that the meat consumption appeared as a measure of conjectural adaptation in Noah's time, due to the lack of plant resources (Genesis 9.3). Certainly, a whole list of animals whose meat could be consumed, as well as the criteria for distinguishing between clean and unclean animals are contained in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. In fact, the Bible expressly forbids blood consumption (Genesis 9.4; Leviticus 7.26, 27) as well as meat consumption of dead animals of natural causes or killed by wild beasts (Leviticus 11.31). Excessive meat consumption was considered greed, and there

was a limitation on the slaughter of animals because of the difficulty of keeping meat debris under the climatic conditions of the East. That is why animals were sacrificed only on occasions when there were more guests at the table or on special occasions (holidays, weddings, etc.). Smoking, drying, and salting methods were used to assure meat preservation. The meat was cooked with water or stewed with garlic, leeks and onions, cumin and coriander (Judges 6.19-20, Ezekiel 24.4-5). Roasting meat over an open fire was less common, especially for the 'Passover lamb'. The frequency of meat consumption in biblical times depended on the social-class status: regular for the elite (priests and royalty, and their circles), but not essential for most Israelites. Daniel's diet containing plain fruits, grains, vegetables (simply prepared), and lots of pure water was proved to be much more beneficial for the health of young Hebrew prisoners in Nebuchadnezzar's court (Daniel 1.8-15) when compared with the other servants that ate the reach-meat dishes from the emperor's table. This Bible story represents the first recorded nutritional experiment with human subjects. Daniel's fast (involving a 21-day *ad libitum* food intake period based on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, and de-voiding of animal products) was reported to improve the selected markers of metabolic and cardiovascular disease risk as well as the antioxidant status in both men and women [33]. Yet, the exclusive vegetarian diet is questionable from both biblical perspective and historical reconstruction: in the wilderness, God provided the Israelites with manna (Exodus 16) while later Elijah received bread and meat (1 Kings 17.6). Daniel's vegetarianism was also conditioned by the Jews' dietary laws, the mentioned fast implying that at other times he consumed meat. Obviously, those studies, that contradict food consumption according to biblical precepts, argue that inadequate intake of nutrients due to elimination or low and selective meat consumption can deprive the human body of certain compounds useful for its growth, development and normal function [34].

### 3. Conclusions

In biblical times, the amount of food was significantly reduced (food sources were less accessible, and their lengthy processing required a significant physical effort) when compared with the modern consuming period. The primary food substrates were minimally processed, ensuring the optimal amounts of nutrients in appropriate ratios, in the finished food products. A meal based mainly on the consumption of whole grains and derived products, vegetables and fruits, olive oil, dairy products and fish may be able to provide the basic nutrients (carbohydrates, fibres, lipids, proteins, minerals and vitamins) needed for a healthy body. The meat consumption can provide the human body with nutrients useful for the growth, development and normal functioning of tissues and organs. And, perhaps not by chance, in the book of Ecclesiastes, moderation is a key word: a moderate consumption of certain foods and a balanced diet remain vital for a healthy lifestyle.

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