



Lechaim!



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The holiday promised to be a great success and then disaster struck! In all the stress my family forgot to buy apples. And what is Rosh Hashana without apples and honey! There is no doubt that for the big holiday you need the best apples that only a connoisseur can choose!



It was the first night of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, since our *mischpoche* - which means family in Yiddish - had moved to Germany.

For two days now, the entire Chorweiler neighbourhood had breathed in the fragrant, divine smells from apartment 42, Osloerstrasse, where Grandma was working her magic in the kitchen.

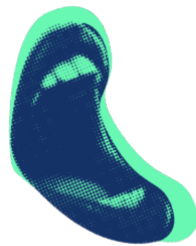
The rest of the family tried to follow all her instructions for preparing the Jewish holiday table: Gefilte fish, pomegranates, dates Don't be such a *schlamassel* - cut the carrots more finely she told me, don't forget the pomegranates, and in this roast there should be more sauce Grandma told my older sister, while giving instructions to my mother who was flying back and forth in the kitchen listening to the Jewish chef.

What to say: Grandma was a born leader, had charisma, was very creative and had a friendly nature, and was the person who surrounded everyone with warmth.

My grandfather was the complete opposite of his wife; he was remembered for loving to read the newspaper in silence or play chess, but despite this, they lived together for many years in love and harmony.

My grandfather lived to the age of 97, saw a lot, lived through Second World War, knew a lot and read a lot.

My Jewish grandfather (like all Jewish grandfathers) is a treasure trove of wisdom and family stories. He is the one everyone turns to when they need to solve an important issue that requires in-depth analysis and knowledge, not counting the risks, pitfalls and money in their pocket. A Jewish grandfather is a double sponsor, because he not only sponsors his children, but usually also his grandchildren, and on Hanukkah it's not just the "Hanukkah-Gelt".



The holiday promised to be a great success, and then disaster struck! In all the stress, they forgot and didn't buy apples. And what is Rosh Hashanah without apples and honey? And of course, there is no doubt that for such a big holiday you need the best special apples that can only be chosen by a connoisseur!

So Grandma, getting hold of her favourite purse, departed.

Granma set off in the direction of the market, where she was already known and loved by everyone, despite her bad German and good Yiddish. She promised that she would be back quickly... All the others were noisily and cheerfully setting the table.

An hour passed and Grandma was gone....

Two hours later my sister and I were sent to look for my grandmother at the market.

Another hour later, tired with excitement, everyone gathered again in the living room in front of a full, divinely smelling food-table and kosher wine.

Grandma was still gone.....

Grandfather, muttering threats of reprisals against the "Apple Picker", turned to despondency, and promised to absolve her of all her "Deadly Sins", if only she would come back.

And then the door opened..... and in came Grandma! Alive and unharmed! With apples in her favourite handbag. Everyone rushed to her, with enquiries and kisses, and Grandpa came into the room.

Immediately, it got very quiet....He still smelled of valerian drops; my grandmother looked at him guiltily with her painted lips pressed together.

Everyone sat down at the table; my mother lit the candles and my grandfather recited the blessing over the bread, and the first piece of challah was dipped in honey. Then everyone dipped apple slices in honey, and my grandfather, in a beautiful, singsong voice, said the blessing:



My grandparents were always around. They spoke Yiddish amongst themselves when they didn't want my mother and us great-grandchildren to get into their adult conversations. Yiddish was their native language, the language of their parents, grandparents, relatives, brothers and sisters.

Years later, decades after the death of my grandparents, I have long since stopped understanding Yiddish conversations, and I hear them very rarely, not live, in a few movies, I am still fascinated by the magic of this language.

As a young, active Jewish generation, we gained new insights into the life and culture of Ashkenazi Jews in the millennial history of Eastern Europe, my family's roots and their long journey from Germany through Ukraine to Central Asia and back to Germany. Jewish life has existed and will continue to exist in Europe and around the world.

Today, as an adult, I rediscover my Ashkenazi roots. Now, when I go to the institute, I often hum *Tumbalalaika* to myself, or "Bei mir bistu shein" and if you ask me what I'm going to do this summer - I'll play my favourite cello in the "Klezmer Band" with my friends my great-grandmother's favourite song *Yaske Furth Avek* - because that was the name of my grandfather "Jacob," whose Family-name I proudly carry on.

Grandfather and Grandmother are no longer with us. Now my mom cooks a beautiful dinner at Rosh Hashanah...

But every year, on this holiday, I especially crave Grandma's special, juicy apples and thick honey...and all those who used to sit around the big table creating the magic of Celebration, Tradition, and Family of our Cheerful, Cheerful Jewry.

L'Chayim - Shana Tova Umetuka!