

Mother, Grandmother and Great-grandmother

## *Hela Ruth Rosenheim Bamberger*

Daughter of Simcha and Bertha Bamberger

Born: July 19, 1910 - 12th of Tamuz, 5670, passed away in her sleep at the age of 104: November 26m 2013 - 23rd of Kislev, 5774

A eulogy by her grandson, Asaf Rosenheim

Everyone knows my grandmother was a noble woman who loved her family and friends with all her heart. I want to share with you some things about my grandmother that you may not know.

My grandmother taught me to turn the lights off when exiting a room, but not fluorescent lighting! Those cost more to switch on and off than to simply keep on.



My grandmother kept every crumb of bread; and every morning she rolled up the shutters in her big south-facing Kiryat Motzkin porch, making a loud noise, where the birds were eagerly awaiting their daily ration of bread. I can still hear the clanking and clacking that the shutter made and feel the sun hitting our faces .

My grandmother pedaled with me to the library in Kiryat Bialik to borrow books during our vacations. When I discovered that a book was not suitable for my age, pointing out the embarrassing parts, she just smiled and said, "Nonsense, you're old enough, but let's keep it our secret".

My grandmother and father are the most honest people I know. But when it came to physical sensations, pains or illnesses, both became masters of disguise, making sure that others did not find out they were not feeling well .

My grandmother had a talent for hiding steamed carrots and pumpkin under other foods I did like, so that by the time I found them, it was too late. Today when I try this method on Oz and Amalia I fail. Either my grandmother Hela was much more

talented than I am in the art of concealing healthy vegetables or it is just harder to trick Oz and Amalia. Either way, she installed in me her affection for dense thin cold pumpernickel bread.

My grandmother had the most enchanting garden a young grandson could wish for; not only because of the fruit trees, the names of which I still do not know, or the wonderful neighbors who stopped by to say hello every time she stepped outside, but also because of the damp shed that held tools and old typewriters which reminded me of olden times I knew nothing of .



My grandmother Hela made jams which reminded her of Germany, and blueberry compote that only adults could like. When I was in the army, she would send me home-baked cakes wrapped in newspapers and twine. My whole platoon would recognize these packages which looked the same week after week. And although the cake, by the time it arrived by the army post wrapped only in paper, was so dry you could not even eat it, I eagerly anticipated these packages from my grandmother every week .

My grandmother had a few words in German that were hers only: Liebling (love), nochmal labriut (bless you again for a second or third sneeze) and Quatsch (nonsense). When she said Liebling to me, while running her cold cold hands on my cheek, she added, "cold hands, a warm heart".

At my grandma's it wasn't always fun; I was already a teenager and sometimes I preferred to spend time with my friends. But at any age, even as an adult, staying with her were the best times I spent with my father. This should not be taken for granted -- staying with parents or grandparents doesn't always bring out the

best in all families -- but when I was at my grandmother's, my father and I were the closest.



For many years dad was her only son and then I, her only grandson. Such a waste, because my grandmother had so much love to give. So when my sisters Shiri and Tali joined with Rivka, Hela made them her granddaughters just like Grandma Berta, Rivka's mother, made me a her grandson: with great love and without restraints. And she loved her great grandchildren, Avigail,

Naomi , Ziv , Sivan , Oz and Amalia, in the same way. In the future, when the cousins share their stories, you, the older: Avigail, Ziv and Naomi, will tell the younger how much fun it was to run through the halls and the dining room of the Achuzat Biet Retirement Home and how everyone knew you were the great-grandchildren of Hela Rosenheim.

My grandmother always had candy in her pocket or purse.

My grandmother collected Israeli stamps with grand devotion, as if the Postal Service and the entire Zionist Project depends on her purchasing stamps.

Although Hela always tried to blend in the crowd, she wore the 4711 Mäurer & Wirtz perfume which attacked anyone in her vicinity without shame.

My grandmother had two sisters, one of them, Kalha, unfortunately I did not meet. But the other, Male, which our daughter Amalia is named after, we all knew well. Hela and Male were so different that I could not imagine how they were raised in the same house. Only when they were together did I see my grandmother get upset. She so wanted them to be more

alike and closer. But that did not affect their big love .

My grandma told wonderful stories about the days when she was a young girl in pre-Nazi Germany. Her great home and wonderful parents and grandparents. The massive clock in the living room that needed to be wound every few days. Her days in the seminar for teachers, her career as a kindergarten teacher and how much she loved those kids. And she spoke longingly of the tennis matches. Today, when I picture her in a short white tennis skirt playing on the field I know how happy she was.

My grandmother was an observant woman who loved God and had great respect for him. But modernity did not escape her and the covers of her thick German books made me blush more than once, even when I was already an adult.

Hela was available on her phone every day and every hour during the week, long before we all had mobile phones where the first question is always 'Where are you?' Only once a week, if I'm not mistaken it was on Wednesdays, grandma played bridge with her advance group, and in

those few hours she did not answer the phone. These were also the only times I heard my grandmother, who was never petty or thrifty, complain about someone not bringing enough refreshments or canceling at the last minute. Bridge made my grandmother a little more competitive and human and she continued to play until her last days. I never learned to play Bridge, but my grandmother and I were Rummikub partners, and we played for hours. She taught me how to play, and more importantly how to win and lose.



In one of the best stories of my grandmother, she was not in at all. I called my grandmother from the phone at my Dad's house just before Shabbat -- I was maybe ten. I conducted a long and interesting conversation with my

grandmother and before we said goodbye she said "see you next Saturday". I reminded her, with some wonder, that we do not drive on Shabbat, and she asked since when. At this point we asked each other with which grandmother and which grandson are we speaking with. And though it was someone else's, this is one of the best memories I have of my grandmother.

Although this may be a little difficult to talk about, in the pictures, Grandma is not always smiling; what happened or did not happen built some defensive walls surrounding her. However, in recent years, she became a bit childish and suddenly little things made her laugh; at the same time she also became very opinionated, as Komodo, her aide, will testify to with love.



I collected three photos today: in the first I am a baby, less than one year old, and she is holding me very seriously and lovingly, but without a hint of a smile. In the second, we are on the promenade in Hamburg licking ice cream. In this picture, my grandmother is radiant and a smile is breaking through. For years this was my favorite picture, until last summer when she met Oz and Amalia. In a moment of grace everyone collaborated, and Oz and Amalia, six months old at the time, are pictured looking at my grandmother with a smile mixed with wonder, and Hela smiles, without hesitation, the most liberated of her smiles.

Who knows how it is to be more than a hundred years old. How much reality still makes sense and how much it is some sort of a dream. But Hela enjoyed these years surrounded by new friends, whom death exchanged too often and disrupted the order of the Bridge game. She enjoyed the proximity to my father and Rivka who were with her all the time, and showed us with actions, and not only words, how to respect your parents; and indirectly what is expected from us. She greatly enjoyed her time with Shiri, Tali and Ilan and their families.

Grandma Hela always told us not to come visit; she said she was fine and that we should invest in our lives. This is the only advice I regret taking. Sometimes clichés are true: I am so sad that she did not get to meet Oz and Amalia one more time.



For those who have not visited Achuzat Biet Retirement Home, where my grandmother spent her last happy years, I will tell that there is a long corridor where on the one side there are windows looking down at the pool. Often we walked from the dining room to her room along this corridor, and Hela used to say to me that next time she might ask me to bring her a bathing suit. I think she was serious.

And wonderful Komodo who and took care of Hela with great devotion. What can you say about a woman who transported her life to a foreign country where she lived for years in the same room with my wonderful grandmother who insisted on bathing on her own and with no help even at her great age and refused to eat more than a few bites. We are grateful for your dedication. Despite the difference between you two, you were great friends.



In just over a year we lost two grandmothers; two mothers to Rivka and my dad. Women who were born in different countries, their families making decisions which at the time they did not know would determine their fates and set the course of their lives so differently until they met again as mother-in-laws. Both reached prominent ages of 102 and 103, or as my dad insists on saying the 103rd and 104th years, a logic he of course does not apply when it comes to his young age. If only we could only crack their secret, perhaps we will be blessed with longevity, surrounded by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and friends. I asked both the grandmothers what I thought everyone else was too shy to ask - what is your secret to a long life. I cannot tell you what they answered, just that their answers were different and more trivial than I expected. Maybe there is no one secret to a long and full life like they had. Perhaps that is what they trying to teach us, we must find our own way.



One day my grandmother asked me; "Asaf, you know what LOVE is? Love is when you love someone more than your own life." This was the only time she raised a topic in such a clear and assertive manner; she wanted to tell me something important. Only when Amalia and Oz were born did I understand it.

Rest in peace Savta Hela, we will continue to turn off lights, but not the fluorescent ones, we will ride bikes, feed the birds and hide the carrots and pumpkins under the potatoes. We will read books that smell of cheap romance and collect fragments of memories in the shed, so that our children can pry through them one day. We will collect stamps, eat pumpernickel bread, prepare jams and send packages to our loved ones. We will love our siblings in

simple and complicated ways, and our children and grandchildren unconditionally. We will build homes full of the love of God, where our families will dwell and strive to be good, the best. Good as you.