

Peklach by Beulah Gross

According to Leo Rosten, (*The Joys of Yiddish*) a pekl is a 'bundle, parcel or little package'. All those mysterious things we Jews carry wherever we go - plastic bags, brown paper parcels precariously tied with string, haversacks, backpacks, string bags and other types of carry-all, oozing goods of every description, are therefore peklach or peckles. Things in pockets, items carried underarm, everything known to the Aussie as 'swag', are also peklach. Peklach can be anything and everything but always, they will include some food.



Who carries peklach? All Jews, male, female, young, old, everywhere, at some time or another carry innumerable, odd-shaped and difficult to balance peklach. It seems as if none of us feels complete without something to carry and the heavier and more unmanageable the better.

Why do we carry peklach? This is the million-dollar question and you probably have your own theory but, for what it's worth, here is mine.

We Jews schlep peklach because we have a predisposition to do so. It gives us a sense of security to heft as much as we can, whenever we can, wherever we can. For over 4000 years, we have carried our belongings with us as we were hounded out of our homes in numerous countries. Our ancestors were nomadic and the longest we remained in one place in those far-off days was 430 years in Egyptian bondage. After that we spent forty years wandering around the desert till we were declared fit to enter the Promised Land. Once there, we still moved around a lot.

We schlepped around for centuries due to the Diaspora, the Crusades, Russian pogroms and the Shoah, (although we did have a Golden Age in Spain and Turkey for some time), always taking our peklach, our worldly goods, with us. We became adept at packing and moving quickly

Peklach have become an integral part of Jewish life. We have learned that nothing is permanent or safe, no matter how secure it seems and peklach, with their inevitable food content, symbolise our readiness and ability to move immediately should it become necessary.

Peklach, therefore, are a traditional, inherent and almost hereditary part of the Jewish psyche. Without them, we would be the same as everyone else and who wants to be that?

Pecklach by Beulah Gross

A word about me:

My husband, Richard aka Rachi and I live in Gosford, about 80 km north of Sydney, Australia. He is a retired GP and I used to be his practice manager. We now live in a great retirement village called Pine Needles.

I was born in Johannesburg and Rachi was born in Brakpan, Transvaal, not far from Springs. I worked in the Johannesburg Public Library until just before our son was born and after that became a full-time mum until we emigrated here in January 1975. I gained a diploma in book-keeping so that I could do the books in the surgery.

I've done a lot of creative writing, did few courses, had a few published, won some prizes in literary competitions and then led several courses for U3A (University of the Third Age). I've also researched and completed my maternal family history and Rachi's family history.