

## The Wooden Bowl –

### *Respect Your Elders*

Once a man grew old and left his home to live with his only son, his daughter-in-law, and grandson. They loved each other very much and especially enjoyed sharing family stories over dinner. Sometimes the grandfather would turn to his grandson and say, “When your father was a little boy .....” and the father would blush a little and nod. The little boy especially loved those stories.

But slowly the grandfather began to forget the stories. And he could no longer eat his food without spilling. His hand shook and after a little while, there was more food spilled on the table than reached his mouth.

This annoyed the father and especially the daughter-in-law as they were trying to teach the little boy proper table manners and Grandfather was setting a bad example. He even broke a bowl and glass.

So the next day, the little boy found a small table in the corner of the dining room, and come dinner time, the father slowly took the Grandfather’s hand and led him to the table in the corner. Then he gave him a wooden bowl and a wooden spoon to eat with.

Both the Grandfather and the little boy were very sad. This continued for some time, until one day the parents saw the little boy carving something out of an old piece of wood. “What are you making,” they asked, proud of their son’s creativity. The little boy beamed up at them with pure innocence, “I’m making wooden bowls for you when you both get too old to sit at the table.”

Well, that night, Grandpa was led back to the main dinner table, and everyone helped him eat. From that day on, the little table in the corner and the wooden bowl disappeared.

### **Background**

This story is found on countless sites from different traditions around the world to underscore the need to respect our elders as we all will qualify as elders someday, unless some unforeseen disaster befalls us.

The likely origin is from a collection of Jewish folktales commonly called the “Wise Men of Chelm,” which is the ultimate irony in using “wise” to describe this town of fools. However, we all can learn much wisdom, by learning to laugh at our faults and foolish behavior.