

Ella Perlman With Her Granddaughter Anna



This is me with my granddaughter Anna. Each year, on 4th July, the Memorial Day for Victims of the Holocaust, I visit the memorial, installed on the site of the choral synagogue of Riga, burned down by the Germans. On 4th July 1941 Germans locked a number of Jews inside the synagogue and burned it. Every anniversary of this horrific event I bring flowers to this place of death and recall my dear ones, killed by the Fascists. This photo was taken in Riga in 1994.

During perestroika many things in our life were changing for the better. There was an openness and newspapers started writing about the things that could have been only mentioned in a whisper and to close people before. During the Soviet rule there was a ban on religion. During perestroika the authorities stopped persecuting people for religious rituals. The most joyful event for me was that we were allowed the opportunity to correspond with relatives and friends living abroad and there was no censorship, and we were also allowed to travel to other countries. I always wanted to go to Israel and I always knew that it could never come true. I prayed to God that He give me a chance to see Israel, and maybe my prayers have reached Him.

During perestroika the Jewish life began to revive, and this was very important for me. The Latvian Society of Jewish culture that was actually a Jewish community was established. From the first days we knew how much we needed it. There is a Jewish choir at the community, and I went there the moment I heard about it.

Our younger daughter Yevgenia married a Jewish man. She kept her maiden name of Perlman after getting married. In 1988 her daughter was born. She gave her the name of Hana after my mother. My granddaughter's Russian name is Anna. They lived with us. We spoke Russian with our granddaughter, but when we wanted to talk in confidence, we switched to Yiddish. So it happened that our granddaughter could understand and even speak Yiddish before going to school. We sent her to a Latvian school. My daughter thought that if the girl was going to live in Latvia, she had to know the language and history of the country. When my daughter decided to move to Israel, Anna went to the 4th grade of a Jewish school. Before moving to Israel she had a good command of Hebrew. It was a good start. Now Anna can speak fluent Hebrew.