

## Hana Rayzberg



This is me, Hana Rayzberg, at the Pesach celebration in the Rahamim social center of our Jewish community in Riga. This photo was taken in Riga in 2005.

The Jewish life revived during perestroika. The Jewish community of Latvia was re-established, and also, the Latvian Association of Jewish Culture LAJC was opened. There was a Jewish family living nearby, and we were friends. They were going to emigrate, but they told me they would not move till they took me to the community. I didn't feel like going anywhere, and they put me on the

community list themselves. Volunteers started visiting me. I realized that somebody needed me and remembered about me, and this was very important for me, particularly after my mama died and I was absolutely alone. I began to regain my senses. I visit the community and have many acquaintances and friends there. This is my other home now.

Our Jewish choir is 15 years old, and all these years I've been its monitor. I remember how it all started. About ten of us got together in a park and started recalling the Jewish songs of our childhood. Someone had an accordion and started tuning up and playing quietly. We were recalling the forgotten songs by words and lines. A hooligan approached us yelling some anti-Semitic crap. We left the park and went to the LAJC where we stayed in the hallway. Hana Finkelstein, chairman of charity center, saw us there and suggested that we rehearsed in the center. She gave us shelter and supported the choir. The center purchased costumes for our performances. We began to collect songs and music and also searched for the people that wanted to sing in the choir. We rehearse a lot, and tour across Latvian towns that have a Jewish population. The participants of the choir are old and ill, but when they sing you only see inspiration on their faces. They sing with their hearts, not with their throats. And, I guess, it will live on. We are like a family. We celebrate birthdays and Jewish holidays.

I wouldn't say I'm religious, but I pray every day. I didn't remember the prayers of my childhood, but I have a prayer book for children, and it helps me to recall the old prayers. Every morning I thank the Lord for giving me another day, that I am healthy, can get out of my bed and talk to friends. Before going to bed in the evening I thank Him for the past day and that it was a good day. I pronounce the words of prayers in Hebrew and I understand what I am saying. I believe this helps.