

Raya Teytelbaumene With Her Friends Fira And Marite



I, Raya Teytelbaumene, am on the right in a blue shirt, my friend Fira in a light dress is next to me, Marite is between us. Marite Zokrus has been my housekeeper since my son's death. She helped me survive. The picture was taken at my place in Kaunas in 2000.

My son loved me very much and didn't share his problems with me. It turned out that he had heart pains and did not see a doctor. He didn't take good care of his health. In 1990, when he was only 44, my Simon died suddenly of a heart attack. It was a great grief for me. I kept to bed for the first time. I couldn't do anything at first. I even had to hire a housekeeper, who took care of me and gradually helped me regain my footing.

I have been practically by myself since then. I hardly communicate with my daughter-in-law. My only joy is my grandson Solomon. He finished the art academy and became a rather famous artist. Solomon lives in Vilnius. He often has exhibitions there. He has traveled all over the world. His art is popular and his pictures cost a lot of money.

After my husband died, I went to Israel twice. I loved the people, their mode of life. It is a pity that I couldn't find strength to move to Israel earlier. I visited all my kin and regained communication with my brother. Boruch was a widower when I came to Israel for the second time. He started talking me into moving to Israel and staying with him until the end of his days. I agreed and started processing the documents. When I was busy with all those formalities, I received a telegram from Israel saying that my brother had died. Now, I am totally alone.

I live comfortably. However, I have a minimal pension – 350 litas [about 130\$] – and get 35 litas for my husband. The newly-gained independence of Lithuania had a negative impact on the well-being of the people, including me. We pay a lot for utilities. When we have to pay for heating in

winter time, it comes to about 100 litas. But I get by, because I lease a room to a student. Besides, the Jewish community helps the remaining Jews a lot. We get food rations, medicines. I have lunches at the canteen of the community. It means a lot to me. Besides, a community worker helps me about the house. I am a very old person and it is hard for me to take care of myself.

Now, as I am old, I adhere to Judaism again. I fast on Yom Kippur, cook Jewish dishes, and celebrate holidays in the community. Soon my friends and I are going to attend the Rosh Hashanah celebrations at the community. My only grandson doesn't forget about me. He often comes to see me. He enjoys my Jewish stew and tsimes. Unfortunately, he isn't married. I don't have any great-grandchildren. I hope I will live to see that joy and look after them.