



# 105 Years Young

It's not clear whether she's the oldest Jewish woman in the world, but her grandchildren say she is certainly the most charming. They believe her historic birthday, celebrated recently in London, is not just a family event—it carries messages for all of us.

Yes, they have documentation— 105 years ago, on July 11, 1920, baby Rachel (Renee) was born in London to Jewish immigrants who had fled from Romania and Russia. During World War II, she worked as a typist in the British postal service, living through the Nazi blitz on London. After the war, she married Grandpa Joe (Yosef David), and they had two sons, Shlomo and Anthony. The family earned a living from a clothing

manufacturing business. Joe passed away at age 74, and Renee continued to run the business successfully until she retired.

Shlomo moved to Israel when he was young, thus creating the Israeli branch of the family.

Today Renee has seven grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. One of the grandchildren, Rabbi Yair Binstock of Efrat, recounts: “On the wall of Grandma’s small apartment hang two framed letters—one from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on her 100th birthday, and a new one from King Charles and his wife Camilla in honor of her 105th.

“Grandma organized her own birthday party. She greeted us standing upright, smiling, perfectly lucid, and spoke for 18 minutes straight. She personally thanked each family member and friend who came to celebrate with her, for everything they had done for her—especially in recent years. Her first thanks went to the Master of the Universe, for the privilege of reaching such an advanced age.

“All her life, from early childhood, Grandma has been meticulous in living a fully observant Jewish life. Her devotion to mitzvot was such that at age 99, when the UK was in full lockdown during COVID, she cleaned and kashered her home for Pesach entirely on her own—just months before her 100th birthday. On Rosh Hashanah, during that same lockdown, the shul’s rabbi came specially to her home to blow the shofar for her.”



Rabbi Binstock shares that at the birthday celebration last week, he sat with his cousins trying to figure out her secret. They came up with two answers:

“First, she’s interested in everything. For example, whenever my cousin, an economist, comes to visit, she asks about his work in such detail that he finds himself explaining to her complex economic concepts while she listens intently.

“Second, she doesn’t dwell on life’s heavy and painful points. It’s not that she isn’t sad when something happens, or that she forgets—it’s that she won’t allow it to weigh her down for too long. She moves on.”

The birthday girl is exceptionally independent, and only after turning 100 did she agree to have a live-in helper.

When she was born, the Jewish population in the Land of Israel numbered about 84,000. She has always been a strong supporter of Israel, but since October 7 her connection has deepened; she prays regularly for the hostages by name, keeping their pictures before her. Even in her birthday speech she said: “I love Israel not only because my family is there. It’s deeper than that. It’s our life. It’s there for us. We must all strengthen Israel.”

Happy birthday, Renee, and mazel tov on 105 years of Jewish life, not only in quantity, but in quality.■

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