

Esfir Dener With Her Sister Sarah Dener



This is me (on the right) with my sister Sarah Dener in my apartment. The photo was taken in Kishinev in 1988, when my sister came from Israel to visit me . In 1988, when the relations between the USSR and Israel got warmer during the rule of Gorbachev, my sister Sarah obtained a three-month visa. I was expecting her to arrive on 5th May, but she arrived on 4th May and I didn't meet her at the station. She took a taxi. When I opened the door and saw her I exclaimed, 'Mama!' We hadn't seen each other for 48 years and I remembered her as a 22-year-old girl and when I opened the door, I saw my mother, the way she looked when I saw her for the last time in exile in Siberia. Sarah looked so much like my mother. There was so much joy and so many tears on that day. Sarah brought me many gifts from my acquaintances from Falesti who had moved to Israel. She stayed in the apartment next-door because my neighbor went to Moscow for three months. We spent all our time together. She celebrated her 70th birthday here. I invited all of my acquaintances and arranged a party for her. Then we visited friends and there were feasts and parties. Sarah didn't understand this; she would say, 'This is the wrong way to live. We live differently. We go to a restaurant, have dinner and listen to music or dance, but to cook so much! We don't cook so much.' She didn't like the shop assistants here. They weren't so friendly at that time. When we went to buy gifts for my acquaintances, Sarah was very nervous; and she was shocked by the fact that she wasn't allowed to go to Leningrad and Moscow. The authorities explained that she only had a visa for Kishinev. 'How can one live here!' she was indignant. Sarah wanted me to move to Israel but my doctors told me that the climate there wasn't for me.