

Faina Saushkina



I, Faina Saushkina, photographed in 2002 in Lvov.

In 1990s, during perestroika period, many enterprises were closed. First my daughter Tamara and then my son-in-law lost their jobs. Joseph is a pensioner and Tamara is a volunteer at the local Hesed - she helps Hesed employees to do their work. My granddaughter Luba went to Israel in 1994 under a students' exchange program. In Israel she got married. She has a daughter (she is my great-granddaughter) named Diane. Tamara and her husband visited her in Israel and we've taken a firm decision to move to Israel even though the country is on the verge of a war, but I feel like going home and living among our own people. I look forward to the time when I won't hear "zhydovka" or "zhydy" any longer. Some people explain that many people living in Lvov came from Poland and "zhyd" means "Jew" in Polish, but I still believe that they use this word intentionally to abuse Jewish people.

After my parents died I never celebrated Jewish holidays or bought matsah since I was a member of the Communist party, I didn't take part in any activities - I just couldn't be bothered, but I couldn't observe Jewish traditions either. Firstly, it would have been against my atheist's convictions and secondly, I might have faced problems at work if they had found out. In 1991 I tore my Party membership card - I was ashamed for having joined the Party that broke hopes and faith in ideals of so many people and brought so much sorrow to their own people. Since then I began to go back to Jewish traditions. There is a Jewish community in Lvov - "Sholem Alechem", Hesed, and I am happy to recall what I absorbed with my mother's milk: the Jewish language - Yiddish, culture and traditions. Of course, we didn't follow the kashrut in our family, but we celebrate all Jewish holidays. We don't follow all rules, though - I don't remember prayers, but we cook traditional Jewish food, light candles at Shabbat, get together for a family dinner and read the Torah in Russian. I read Jewish newspapers. My daughter and son-in-law often go to concerts of Jewish amateur groups. They often take me to the Daytime center in Hesed where I enjoy getting together with friends - we have a common history putting us together as well as all hardships of life that we've lived.