

Efim Shpielberg And His Wife Faina Melamed



This is me and my wife Faina Melamed at the wedding of our relatives. This photo was taken in Odessa in 1988.

In 1959 I got married with Faina Melamed a Jewish girl. We had a civil ceremony. I was 30 years old and I had a strong feeling of being able to support my family. My wife Faina Melamed was born in Golovanevsk, Kirovograd region in 1929. Her mother Leya Melamed was born in 1897. Her father Efim Melamed was born in 1895. He perished at the front during the Great Patriotic War in 1943. My wife spent her childhood in Samarkand. In 1953 she and her mother moved to Odessa. They got accommodation in a basement in 108, Ostrovidova Street. Faina couldn't find a job for a long time. As soon as they heard she was a Jew they refused to employ her. Her brother Boris helped her to get a job through his acquaintances. She worked at a trade base for 8 years.

After we got married we went to live with Faina's mother Leya. In 1960 my daughter Mila was born. I was the leader of a construction crew at the garment factory named after Vorovski, but it was difficult to manage without any additional earnings. In the 1970s I opened a private garment shop. It was a profitable, but dangerous business. [It was forbidden in the former USSR and Efim still doesn't want to speak about details.] I provided well for my family. We often traveled. We went on cruises on the Black Sea several times. We visited Sochi, Yalta, Novorossiysk, Batumi and Sukhumi. They were fascinating, but expensive trips. We were in the Baltic Republics where we visited Riga, Tallin and Yurmala. I liked Moscow and Leningrad. I went there on business, but I also went there with my family on vacation. We had a good time in Minsk. We liked the town. Faina had many friends in Samarkand. I especially remember the trip to Uzbekistan. We stayed there 2 months. My wife sort of returned into her childhood and youth. I liked Tashkent, Samarkand and Buchara. The bazaar in Samarkand is far more plentiful than our markets. Fruit, greeneries, huge heaps of dried apricots and melons getting ripe in May. We even brought little yellow melons to Odessa.

On 3 April 1989 our daughter Mila perished in a car accident. We have her two children - Igor and Yulia - our grand children left. To keep going we have them living with us. In 1995 the Jewish school Or Sameach opened in Odessa. Igor and Yulia went to this school. The children began to study

Jewish traditions, Ivrit, Jewish prayers and observe Jewish holidays. They go to the synagogue on Jewish holidays and take us with them. My wife Faina cooks traditional Jewish dishes then. When the children grew older they moved to live with their father, but they often come to see us.

We are having a hard life. We cannot manage with our small pensions, just as all pensioners after perestroika do not. But Jewish life became free and open. We receive food packages from Gmilus Hessed. They deliver Jewish newspapers Or Sameach and Shamrey Sabboth from them. They invite us to Jewish festivals and various culture events. I do exercises and go to swim in the sea in Arcadia every morning. I start swimming in April and finish in October. It helps a lot, but I am aging, nevertheless. I have been in hospital twice. I had a heart problem and pneumonia. Yuri my wife Faina's nephew paid for my stay in hospital.

I want my grandchildren to grow up decent people and I want my wife and me to be healthy and cause no problems to anybody. I want piece and wealth to rule in the world: in Israel, America and Ukraine, so that we didn't worry about our close ones. I felt delighted when Israel was established in 1948. I thought: Jews got their own country at last. I know the Jewish history very well and I know that when Jews come to live to a country its economy goes up and it becomes wealthy. They've made a blossoming garden in the middle of a desert. May wealth and prosperity come to this land. Once I thought about emigration to Israel, but now I am too old. Besides, both my grandchildren live in Odessa.