

Iosif Gurevich



This is a picture of me. The photo was taken for a Ukrainian passport in Uzhgorod in 2001. In the middle of the 1980s perestroika, initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev, began in the USSR. I was enthusiastic about it and believed in it. The Iron Curtain, separating the Soviet Union from the rest of the world fell, and that was a good sign. I believed that things would keep improving. Unfortunately, life's not always as we want it to be. The good beginning didn't continue. Still, the main achievement of perestroika was glasnost [openness]. We lived under the Soviet regime for 70 years, a whole epoch in history. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Communist Party of the USSR ceased to exist, and I automatically stopped being its member. Ukraine is different now. It's hard to say how things will develop. The mentality of the people has to change. It's not that easy. Every individual must develop his personality now, while we were always taught that a person is nothing without a collective. Every individual must do his work honestly to have a positive effect. The attitude towards Jews has changed. I think there is no anti-Semitism on a state level. It happens in everyday life, but not as often as it used to happen, and is demonstrated by older people. Young people probably don't know what it is about. Young Jews have no problem entering a higher educational institution or getting a job. It's a person's skills that count and nationality doesn't matter. Jews can openly go to the synagogue and observe Jewish traditions. Young people are proud of their origin. I've seen many such examples among the children or grandchildren of my

acquaintances. The Jewish way of life has revived. Young people get closer to religion and Jewish traditions. I think one can see more young people in synagogues nowadays. Hesed was established in Uzhgorod in 1999. This organization does a lot to revive Jewish life. They also take care of old Jewish people. Unfortunately I'm in no condition to go to the synagogue or Hesed. I would be very interested to meet people and attend various activities. I like reading Jewish newspapers.

Volunteers from Hesed bring them to me. I know more about Jewish traditions and holidays now. I wish I had been raised in a family where Yiddish was spoken. My wife and I have had heart attacks and my wife Ludmila [Gurevich, nee Volosova] has also had a stroke. Hesed employees clean our apartment, do the laundry and bring food and medication. We have small pensions and this is a big support for us. We are very grateful to them.