

Samuel, Nina And Olga Sukhenko



This is me, my wife Nina Alexandrovna and our daughter Olga at an exhibition in 1965, on the day of awarding the winner of the exhibition. I started my education at the age of four. My grandmother took me to cheder, which was a 15-meter-long room with wooden floor and two benches. The rabbi was an old man. I studied there up to the age of eight. We read stories about the Jewish people. The tuition was in Yiddish. At home we spoke only Yiddish. At home I was called 'Shmilik'. My friends called me 'Milia'. In 1936 everybody had to receive his passport. Passports were written by students themselves. My colleagues asked me, 'What name do you want in passport?' 'Samuel', I answered. It was the first name that came into my mind. I began to speak Russian approximately at the age of six, because my sister Taube went to gymnasium and brought me her ABC book, which I learned very quickly. When I turned eight, my father decided that I need to know the Russian language and sent me to the parish school. I was the only Jew in that school. I was immediately taken to the second grade because I could read. I had a very clear articulation, and I read from the Gospel. And it was the Gospel that led me to atheism. In our small town I never felt any anti-Semitism - we all were one family. At the age of 15, I graduated from the seven-year school and went to the city of Tiraspol. There I worked as a carpenter at a factory. There were a lot of Jews in Tiraspol. Mainly they worked at the big fruit-processing factory, but also in various crafts. In 1926-1927, I lived with a Jewish family. Almost all shoe-makers, bakers and shop-keepers of Tiraspol were Jews, and we didn't feel any anti-Semitism there. Then I realized that I needed to study.