

Shlima Goldstein

Shlima Goldstein

Kishinev

Moldova

Interviewer: Zhanna Litinskaya

Date of interview: July 2004

Shlima Goldstein and her husband met me in the yard of their house. They live in a nice two-bedroom apartment on the second floor of a five-storied brick apartment building. Shlima introduced herself and said that she was more used to being addressed by her second name of Dora. She is a short, sweet, round-faced slender lady looking young for her age. Her husband is a short, friendly and nice man. He asked us about our work and the objective of this interview with great interest. Their apartment is clean, bright and cozy. There was a smell of cookies spreading from the kitchen: Shlima is a wonderful baker, and she still spoils her husband making all kinds of cookies and cakes for him. Their pet, a shell parakeet, regularly interfered in our discussion.

[My family background](#)

[Growing up](#)

[During the War](#)

[Post-war](#)

[Glossary](#)

My family background

My life started from a tragic event in our family. I was born the day after my father, Shloime Gersh, died from tuberculosis. My mother named me Shlima in his memory. Shortly after I was born, a young wealthy man visited my mother. He asked her to name me after his wife Dvoira, who had died a short time before. He offered my mother some money, and she promised to give me the second name. The man insisted that I was called Dvoira every day and my mother unwillingly kept her word. That's how it happened that I have two names: Shlima and Dvoira, but I'm more used to the second name. I've always been called Dora, while my name Shlima is written down in my passport.

My tragic appearance in this world had an impact on my childhood and girlhood. My father's parents, brothers and sisters actually turned away from our poor family. I know little about them, as it happens. My grandfather, Moishe Gersh, born in the 1870s, was a hereditary shoemaker. I don't remember my grandmother's name. They were both born in the main town of Bessarabia [1](#), Kishinev. Moishe and his family lived in a big two-storied house on Pavlovskaya Street in the center of the town. I remember their house. My mother used to take me there on Sabbath. There were candles burning in a big room - it was always dark there as there were heavy velvet curtains on the windows. I enjoyed breathing in the sweet smell of the candles. My grandmother used to make delicious Jewish food on holidays: stuffed fish, chicken broth and stew, tsimes [2](#), pies and cookies. I enjoyed eating the food, always being hungry. Regretfully, I only visited my grandfather's

house a few times.

My grandfather had a shop on the first floor of his house where he worked with his sons who followed into his footsteps. Moishe was a very religious man, a Hasid [3](#). He had long payes and always had a head piece on: a kippah at home and a wide-brimmed hat to go out. Moishe went to the nearby synagogue of shoemakers every day. My grandmother was a housewife. She had to take care of the house, their vegetable garden, poultry yard where they kept chicken and ducks in the back yard, so my grandmother had a great deal of things to take care of. She was also religious. She went to the synagogue on Sabbath and on Jewish holidays, of course. They strictly observed Jewish traditions at home, followed the kashrut and celebrated Sabbath and all Jewish holidays. They raised their children according to the rules followed by all Jewish families at the time. The boys went to cheder and when they grew of appropriate age, they started assisting their father, helping him in the shop. The girls were involved in housework.

There were five children in the family: two sons and three daughters. My father Shloime, the oldest in the family, was born in 1904. After him came his brother Gersh, sister Sima, sister Ester and another sister, whose name I don't remember. They were born two to three years one after the other. Uncle Gersh was a shoemaker, like my father and grandfather. His wife Ida, a Jew, was a beauty. They got married in 1940. They had no children before the Great Patriotic War [4](#). Gersh was recruited to the Soviet army and fought at the front line. Ida stayed in the occupation. She and her sister, Tsylia, also a beauty, were raped by fascists. Ida was very ill for a long while, but she survived. When Gersh returned from the war, he couldn't forgive her for becoming a victim of brutal beasts, and left her. Gersh married Frida, a Jewish woman from Kishinev. They had three children. His children Mikhail, Haya and Lev moved to Canada in the 1990s where Gersh died in the early 1990s. Ida, his first wife, didn't live long after the war. Her humiliation and Gersh's betrayal were too much for her to handle. She became mentally ill and died in a psychiatric clinic a few years later.

My father's sister Sima was also married. Her family name was Roitman. Her daughter, Sarah, was born in 1935. Sima's husband perished during the Great Patriotic War. She and her daughter were the only ones in the family to evacuate. After the war Sima remarried and had a good life with her second husband. She died in 1984. Her daughter Sarah moved to Israel in the early 1990s.

I can hardly remember my younger aunts, but they had a tragic life. Grandfather Moishe and his younger daughters decided against evacuation. My grandfather remembered the Germans from the time of World War I. He and many other Jews thought the Germans weren't going to do any harm to the Jews. Besides, he was sorry to leave his house and everything he had earned by working very hard. They stayed in Kishinev and were taken to the [Kishinev] ghetto [5](#). The fascists raped and brutally killed the girls before my grandmother's eyes. My grandmother couldn't bear it and began to scream. One fascist just killed her and my grandfather.

My father finished cheder and worked with my grandfather and Gersh in the shop. Once he saw my mother, and he fell in love with her. A few days later a matchmaker visited them and my parents got married. This happened in 1924. I didn't know my maternal grandfather. According to what my mother told me, my maternal grandfather, Ruvim Reznik, born in the early 1870s, and my grandmother, Malka, were rather wealthy. My grandfather was a successful businessman. He was a sales agent who traveled to China, where he sold goods from Europe and purchased oriental goods:

sweets, fabric, jewelry and souvenirs. My grandfather was thinking of moving to China with his family. He built a house in China, took a picture of it and brought the photo to show it to my grandmother in Kishinev. This wasn't to be.

Almost on the first day after his arrival, my grandfather fell on the street and died from infarction. My grandmother had to take care of their three children. She was born to a wealthy family in Kishinev in 1875. She married my grandfather when she was young. He provided well for her and she didn't have any problems. They rented an apartment in a small one-storied house on Aziatskaya Street, but they were rather well off. When my grandfather died in 1926, my grandmother had to go to work and she worked till the end of her days. She went to a bakery early in the morning to buy rolls and buns by wholesale prices to sell them on the streets. She picked any job she could: she cleaned and did the washing for wealthier people, and nursed elderly people. My grandmother was a kind person. She had many Jewish and Moldovan acquaintances. My grandmother told me that during the Kishinev pogrom in 1903 [6](#), her Moldovan neighbors gave her and her two children shelter in their house. My grandfather was on one of his trips, as usual.

Malka had three children: the sons, Srul and Isaac, and my mother Polia, born in 1906. Srul was much older than my mother. He was very ill and didn't live long. Srul died shortly after my grandfather died. Isaac was a sales agent like my grandfather. He was married. I don't remember his wife's name. Their daughter's name was Anna. Isaac disappeared during the Great Patriotic War. I don't know whether this happened on the occupied territory or elsewhere. His wife and daughter managed to evacuate. I saw Anna once after the war, but I don't know anything else about her.

My mother, Polia, graduated from a Jewish elementary school. She could read and write in Yiddish. My mother rarely saw her father, who always traveled. My grandmother, who was very religious, raised my mother to become a real Jewish girl respecting and observing Jewish traditions. We still keep old silver candle stands that belonged to my grandmother. She lit candles in them on Sabbath. Recently, I gave them to my daughter to keep the memory of our Jewish ancestors. At the time when my mother was a child Bessarabia belonged to Russia and my mother could speak Russian. My mother was a beautiful girl. Her thick hair that she wore in plaits was particularly attractive. Matchmakers didn't take a long time to marry her. My mother and my father's families were rather wealthy and there were no problems with agreeing about the wedding. The wedding was traditional Jewish and took place in the most beautiful synagogue in town, with a chuppah, and a klezmer band, and the tables were covered with traditional Jewish food.

I guess everything nice and good ended with my mother's wedding. She and my father settled down in a small apartment on Alexeyevskaya Street. Nine months later, in 1925, my older sister, Sarah [Alexandra], came into this world. In 1926, my father was recruited to the Romanian army, but he didn't serve there for long: the doctors discovered that he had tuberculosis, and he was demobilized. When my father returned home, my mother was glad at first, but then, when he became bed-ridden, our family lived the hardest years of our life. In 1927, my brother, called Ruvim after my grandfather, was born. After the Great Patriotic War my brother changed his name to the Russian [Common name] [7](#) name of Grigoriy. By that time my mother, my father and the children moved in with my widowed grandmother. On 16th February 1930 my father died. On 17th February 1930, the day after he died, I, Shlima Dvoira Gersh, was born.

Growing up

After my father died my mother didn't recover for a long time. However, she had three kids and she had to provide for us. My grandmother worked hard selling buns and rolls, and doing her daily work, but she couldn't provide for all of us. My father's relatives incited my aunt, Sima, to tell us that it was my mother's fault that my father had died because she hadn't taken good care of him. She said that they weren't going to support us and that their kin ended with my father's death. Only rarely did they allow my mother and us to go visit them. We were starving and my mother had to send all three of us to an orphanage. My brother was sent to an [Jewish] orphanage for boys and I went to an [Jewish] orphanage for girls in Kishinev. The director of my orphanage was Tsylia Mikhailovna and Pograbsinskaya was a nurse. There was also a janitor in the orphanage. His wife was a cleaner. The two of them were Moldovan.

The orphanage was established in a two-storied house. There were two bedrooms on the first floor, one for older girls and one for small kids. There was a big dining and living room on the first floor where we had meals, played and where older girls did their homework. We wore black uniform robes with white collars and had them washed once a week. We also had a shower once a week in the orphanage. Once a month we went to a public bath. In the bath our clothes were treated to protect them from lice while we were taking a bath. Once, I stayed in the bath until late and was late for dinner. The cook gave me the leftover soup: it was thick, with noodles, beans and the meat and I ate to my heart's content and remembered this soup for a long time thinking how lucky I had been.

We didn't have sufficient food in the orphanage. We mainly had cooked cereals like porridge, pearl barley, millet, and at lunch we had thin soup with a slice of bread, but with no butter or oil, this was low calorie food, and we got little of it, we rarely had meat or fish - only on holidays. I remember I always dreamt of having as much food as I wanted, and the other girls felt the same. We had meals at set hours and even had drinks at the same time. We lined up to take a sip from one mug. We used to cling to the cup to drink water, but then they grabbed it from you to give it to another girl. In the afternoon we were supposed to take a nap, but we weren't allowed to go to the bedroom and had to lie down wherever we could manage.

We didn't feel like sleeping, but the older girls watched on us saying that those who didn't go to sleep would get no afternoon snack. I learned to dodge them. I didn't sleep, but when it was time to get up, I stretched my body and yawned as if I had just opened my eyes. We had a slice of bread and baked apple slices that tasted like a delicacy to us. Apples were picked in the garden which belonged to the orphanage. There was a high fence around it and we could only see the top branches of the old trees. We weren't allowed to go to the garden. When we began to study religion, I learned about hell and paradise. I imagined this garden was paradise and I wanted to go there so much.

We observed Jewish traditions in the orphanage. On Friday we went to the synagogue. The older girls stood at the entrance with big mugs where parishioners dropped money for the orphanage and we stood beside them. In the evening the older girls lit candles in the orphanage and we celebrated Sabbath. We also celebrated Jewish holidays in the orphanage. On Chanukkah we had potato pancakes, doughnuts with jam and were given little gifts. If only they had given us more pancakes and doughnuts - I could never have enough food. On Purim we had costumes made for

us: paper collars and masks, and we sang merry songs about Purim, had fun playing with rattles and ate hamantashen.

My favorite holiday was Pesach. A few days before the holiday the janitor and his wife whitewashed the building, changed the curtains and tablecloths and we knew the holiday was forthcoming. We sat at the festive table and waited for the patroness of our orphanage, Helena Babich, and her husband. I don't know what her husband did, he may have been a businessman, they just always came together. He was a handsome man: tall, smart, and neatly dressed. They always came in for the first seder to read the Haggadah and prayers and celebrate with us. I don't remember whether there was all food according to the Haggadah on the table, but we were happy to have hot beef broth, chicken, eggs, potatoes - there was plenty of food to make us feel happy.

Girls had the bat mitzvah ritual when they turned 13. They also fasted on Yom Kippur walking pale and swaying a bit as if they hadn't eaten for a month. My sister was with the older girls. She felt jealous about me since when my mother visited us at the orphanage I climbed onto her lap begging her to take me home. My mother got angry and hushed me, and my older sister pinched me pulling me down. I didn't understand how hard it was for my mother to know that I was so unhappy in the orphanage. I envied my little brother who was at home. He couldn't stay in the orphanage. He cried even more than I did. One day my grandmother went to the orphanage and saw him so small, thin and weak. He might have been disposed to tuberculosis having been born from our ill father. He was crying repeating, 'Grandma, take me home.' She grabbed him and took him home and he stayed there. My grandmother visited me more often bringing buns and rolls, cuddling and kissing me. Sometimes she came with my brother, whom I loved dearly. When my grandmother met the older girls coming from school to the orphanage she always gave them something for me.

At the age of seven I went to the Jewish vocational school. We studied in Yiddish, but we also knew Romanian. We studied general subjects for four years and did a vocational course during our fifth year at school. My sister studied dressmaking. I was to become a carton folder, but I never went to study this course - the Soviet regime was established. Our dear patroness, kind and fair Helena died in 1936, but her husband continued her charity initiative.

We lived a rather secluded life in the orphanage. Later, I heard about Zionist organizations and clubs for young people that were numerous in Kishinev, but we had no access there. We went to the Jewish Theater once or twice in all those years. So we didn't know about what had happened in Bessarabia in the late 1930s - about the fascist party of the Cuzists [8](#); we became aware of their anti-Semitic demonstrations much later. Therefore, I didn't know why people were so happy to greet the Soviet army on 28th June 1940. We went to Alexandrovskaya Street wearing our robes where we joined the exultant crowd shouting, 'Here come our liberators!' That same day my mother rushed to the orphanage. She hugged Tsylia Mikhailovna, my tutor, who was also happy to greet the Soviets.

During the War

I didn't know about the situation around or that the Soviet authorities had arrested and deported many leaders of Jewish organizations. There were some changes in the orphanage. We didn't have to sleep in the afternoon or, if we felt like having a nap, we were allowed to go to the bedroom. But most importantly, they opened the gate to the garden and I ran there climbing a tree and breathing in fresh air thinking that this was 'paradise.' However, we had to say 'good by' to our

religious ideas as the Soviets declared a war [struggle] against religion [9](#), and we were told there was no God, but I've always had Him in my heart. We became pioneers [see All-Union pioneer organization] [10](#) at the ceremony in the new House of Pioneers in the center of the town where we went as frequently as we used to go to the synagogue before.

In November 1940 all children's homes were clustered, both Jewish and Romanian. We were taken to a big orphanage in the former German colony [11](#) in Alexandrfeld district. The Germans had been deported before we arrived there. [The forced deportation of Germans in the Soviet Union was carried out without exception in 1940. Men between the ages of 16 and 60 were sent to 'Trudarmija' a special prison camp, where they were treated as enemies of the state. Their possessions were seized and they weren't permitted to return to their communities.] I cried so bitterly saying 'good by' to my mother, as if I knew I wasn't going to see my relatives for a long time. In this new orphanage we were assigned to groups and each group stayed in a house. My sister was also there, but we rarely saw each other, as she was in a senior group. In September we started our studies in Russian. It was hard to learn new words or understand what they were saying in Russian. We only spoke Yiddish and sometimes Romanian to one another.

That was where we were, when the Great Patriotic War began. I remember this bright summer day. There was some tension in it. The older girls were whispering to one another. We didn't know what was happening. We were told to go to bed in our clothes. We were awakened late at night. There were oxen-harnessed wagons in the yard. The younger children were told to get into wagons and we moved on. I didn't even have time to say 'good by' to my sister. We were taken to the railway station, when an air raid began. We scattered around seeing horrible black planes. When the raid was over there were dead people on the ground, but fortunately we all survived. We were scared seeing death on the first day of the war.

We were told to board a train. We boarded a passenger train. There were trains full of soldiers going past us. They shouted something and waved their hands to us. We also shouted to them our warm words wishing them victory to come soon. Everybody believed the victory wasn't to be waited for long. Two days later we arrived at a children's home in the town of Ananyevka, Odessa region. We washed ourselves, had a meal and got new clothes. The war seemed to be far away. I missed my mother and grandmother. I didn't know where they were. A few days later the older girls arrived. My sister was with them. I rushed to her and asked her to let me stay with her, but my strict and cruel sister strictly told me to go back to my junior group. She didn't want to let me stay with her for at least a few days.

I was so overstressed that I fell asleep for almost 24 hours, when I went back to my junior group. We stayed in this children's home for a few weeks. It was warm and everything seemed to be all right. I also believed that my mother would be there soon looking for me. In July we evacuated again. This time the children from Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan children's homes lined up together to march to the east. The food ration - a little bread, margarine, dried bread, cookies, tinned beans - that we received, was gone very soon and like hungry pups we scattered into the field as soon as we saw something edible there like tomatoes, cucumbers or sunflowers. We walked during the daytime and stayed at places overnight. As soon as we settled down for the night another air raid began. Somebody spread the rumor that the chief of this column was a traitor who had signaled to the German planes with his torch.

I don't know whether this was true or not, but only 350 out of 1,200 children reached the destination point, Dnepropetrovsk [420 km from Kiev] having covered 250 kilometers, the rest died from hunger, exhaustion, or perished under the bombs. They were left in roadside ravines. I had a thorn in my foot that caused a big abscess. If we had had to walk further I wouldn't have been able to do it. Everything comes from God. He wanted me to survive. In Dnepropetrovsk we boarded a freight train to move on. I don't know how long the trip lasted, but I remember the horror and fear of the bombings. We arrived at a settlement. I think this was a resort in Rostov region. We were taken to the public bath, where we had our hair shaven and were given new clothes. When we came out of there we couldn't recognize each other as we looked so awful. We were treated well.

We were provided with three meals a day, but we were so starved that it was never enough. So, we went to the backyard of the kitchen to pick any food leftovers we could find. We stayed in this village from August till November 1941. In November we moved to the East again. We arrived in the village of Ladovskaya Balka in Stavropol region. We were freezing during our trip. It was almost winter-time, but we didn't have warm clothes. We were kept in an isolation ward for almost a month. When we were allowed to come out of there, it was the New Year. There was a Christmas tree brought for us, miserable wanderers. We were so happy. I recalled the central park in Kishinev where there was always a Christmas tree put up on New Year. [In the Soviet Union, a Christmas tree, deprived of its religious meaning, was put up for New Year.]

We stayed there till July 1942. This was probably the best time of my wartime wanderings. We went to school and had suitable meals in the children's home. In July 1942, the fascists came close to the village and we had to evacuate in a rush. We walked in a single file, mostly at nighttime. We were told that we were heading for Armavir, 80 kilometers from there, where we were to take a train to be safe. One morning we came near a village and approached a bridge, when an air raid began. There were our and German planes flying in the sky and bombs seemed to be falling from everywhere. We were running around on the bank, and the military shouted to us that we should run away. We ran over the bridge and when we crossed, it collapsed. The retreating Soviet troops blasted the bridge. We hid in a corn field.

There was fighting all around us. There was a horrific battle in the vicinity of Armavir. As it had happened before, I fell asleep from fear. When I woke up, it was dark. The battle was over and my friends and I left our shelter. We walked on, trembling from fear, little homeless kids caught in the war. We were even more scared than those children whose mothers, grandmothers or whatever relatives were with them. We reached a trench where there were people hiding. They started yelling to us to go away before the fascists saw us. A woman called us to come closer. She asked us who we were and where we were from and we stayed beside her. She was a common Ukrainian woman, kind, fair-haired. She had a kind face. Her name was Yelena Ivanovna. From then on we stayed with her. We followed her like ducklings following their mother duck. There were ten of us. She took us out of the combat area. We met retreating Soviet troops on the road. Yelena Ivanovna talked with an officer for quite a while. He advised her to go to a village where we might be safe. He said the army was retreating, but that they would come back.

We found a haystack to stay in overnight and got going at dawn. We walked a whole day till we reached the village of Slobodka in Krasnodar region. Soviet authorities had evacuated: the chairman of the local kolkhoz [12](#) and secretary of the party unit. We were accommodated in the vacant hut of the chairman. The locals brought beds from the local school; we stuffed the

mattresses with straw and settled down to live there. Yelena Ivanovna and the older girls went to work in the village, and I also joined them to go there. I had just turned twelve and was the youngest in the group. The rest of the girls were no older than 15. There was one thing that made me different from the rest of the girls - I was the only Jew in the group. Most of the villagers were former kulaks [13](#), whom Soviet authorities had deported from central Russia. These villagers were looking forward to Hitler's forces and gave them a cordial welcome. So it happened that we stayed in the occupied territory.

On the day the fascists came to the village, Yelena Ivanovna told me never to mention that I was a Jew. I could hardly speak any Russian, so we decided that I would feign a Romanian, though I had a clear Jewish accent. Yelena Ivanovna told me to stay away from the fascists and avoid them as much as I could. She also told the girls that if one of them ever spoke out that I was a Jew she would tell the fascists that this girl's father was a communist. The fascists also killed communists. Fortunately, the fascists only occasionally came to the village. On the first days of their regime they placed an order to report on military prisoners, communists and Jews or they were going to kill those who didn't. Of course, the villagers could guess I was a Jew by my looks and accent, but they didn't give me away. The locals supported us as much as they could by bringing eggs, a piece of meat, vegetables, potatoes - whatever they could share.

We also did some cleaning for them and helped them to harvest their crops - they had vegetable gardens. They treated us well and pretended they didn't know who I was. Many times in those long years of occupation they warned us, 'Germans are coming' and I rushed into the fields to take hiding in the fields of corn, haystacks, or in the attic or basement. About one month after the occupation began we heard machine guns firing in the village, when we were in the fields. One woman said the Germans were shooting Jews in Mikhailovka, a village nearby. When I heard this, I dropped the tomatoes I was gathering into a basket. Yelena Ivanovna hugged and kissed me and said she would take care of me. Since then I called her 'mama.' As it happened, the fascists killed Jews in a Christian chapel. They didn't fear the closeness of God.

Yelena Ivanovna was a smart and strong woman. I wasn't the only one she helped. Soldiers of the Soviet army, who were behind their units, and wounded, happened to be in the rear of the enemy, also came into the house where they could always have a meal and stay overnight. Partisans also came into the house. We were growing fast and understood that we weren't supposed to talk about it. We learned to keep silent. The girls and I were happy when those soldiers stayed overnight. We believed that our forces weren't far away and were going to liberate us. Once, the girls and I watched Yelena Ivanovna giving food to one such soldier. His name was Yuri. He was thin and unshaven. He finished his soup, wiped his mouth and looked at me from the corner of his eyes. 'Is she a 'zhydovka?' [kike], Yelena Ivanovna replied that I wasn't a 'zhydovka', but a 'yevreyka' [Jewess]. Yuri said he hated 'zhydy' [kikes].

We listened silently to Yelena Ivanovna shaming the visitor. He left and we forgot about this incident. Some time later, one of our girls came to the field where we were picking tomatoes. She told me to hide away. She said Yuri was a policeman serving for the Germans, and now he was looking for me. Yelena Ivanovna told him that the Germans had taken me away quite a while before. I was hiding in the field until Yelena Ivanovna came for me. Yuri came again after the New Year, 1943. Yelena Ivanovna hid me in the attic and went to meet the visitor with a bottle of homemade vodka as if he was a dear guest. Yuri asked her at once, 'Where's the 'zhydovka'? I

want to make her bleed!' I heard it all, being there in the attic. I started praying that God helped me and Yuri didn't find me. He said, 'I'll be back, Yelena Ivanovna, but if I find her, you'll be lying beside her.' She was a brave woman. She said, 'Our troops are coming back, they will hang you on the first rope at hand.' 'No, they won't. I know what I'm doing' - and he left.

When he left, my adoptive mother took me to the poorest woman in the village. She knew that the Germans, if they came, stayed in wealthier houses ignoring the poorer ones. This woman accommodated me in the shed and I fell asleep embracing the calf. In my sleep I felt so warm and nice - as it happened, the animal warmed me with its warm urine. In the morning the woman took me back to Yelena Ivanovna, she didn't want to take the risk of keeping me at home. The next day Yuri sent a local policeman, a villager, whose name I don't know, to find me. Yelena Ivanovna offered him a drink and talked him out of looking for me. There were many such incidents; it's hard to remember them all. Before the Soviet army, the Romanian units came to the village.

I quietly translated what they said to Yelena Ivanovna. They heard this and I had to tell them I was Romanian. I introduced myself as Valia Berdici, recalling a Romanian girl in our children's home. They were so happy to hear this: they hugged me and called me their sister. They decided I should go with them. Yelena put me in hiding again. In March 1943 we heard distant roars of the battle, and then Soviet tanks entered the village. I cried, oh, how I cried - Russian tanks, our troops are coming. We rejoiced, cried, laughed and hugged our liberators. When they saw me, they exclaimed 'She is a Jew!' Yelena Ivanovna replied, 'Yes, I've rescued her.' They said, 'You are a heroine then.' She replied, 'No, I'm a common Ukrainian woman.' Policeman Vania was arrested, but Yuri wasn't found - he had left with the fascists.

Yelena Ivanovna helped the girls to go to work and sent me to a children's home in the village of Konstantinovka, Kurgan district, Krasnodar Krai. She also went to look for her son and mother whom she had lost during the war. Saying 'good by' to me, my adoptive mother promised to take me away from the children's home, but this didn't happen. I stayed in this children's home for three years. The tutors were very good to me. I was very obedient and humble having grown up in an orphanage where I learned to obey adults. However, here I was also the only Jewish child, and some children abused me, though the tutors stood up for me and shamed the offenders. I received a letter from Yelena Ivanovna. She found her family in the town of Yeisk and lived there. This was the hard period of life: we had no sufficient food or clothing. We studied at school before lunch, and in the afternoon I had to shepherd cows.

At first, I was a little afraid of cows, but then I liked to take them far away from the village. The village housewives sent their cows for me to take them to pastures and paid me with food: eggs, milk or bread. So this was how I managed. I was constantly hungry. I've starved my whole life. I used to sit, when the maids were giving us bread and looked. I often addressed God - this is how we were taught, when we were small children - God, please make it so that there was bread on the table and that I wasn't hungry any longer. I remember the Victory Day [14](#). We were asleep, when our tutor ran in, turned on the light and shouted, 'Victory!' My heart started beating faster from happiness. I didn't think I could live over this moment. The next day there was a meeting in the village, the people were rejoicing, but all I could think about was where my mother was.

Post-War

In 1946 all girls between 14 and 16 years were sent to various vocational schools. I was sent to the cotton spinning factory in the town of Balashikha near Moscow. I studied in a vocational school and was also an apprentice at the factory. After finishing the vocational school I became a worker at the factory. Students were provided with food and uniforms. I lived in the dormitory where I shared a room with nine other girls. We got along well and helped and supported each other. At the age of 16, I already worked eight to twelve hours like an adult worker. We ate potatoes, bread and macaroni. We only had meat on big holidays, but I was no longer starving. I had forgotten my native Jewish language [Yiddish] by then. I could only speak Russian.

One of our friends went to visit her friend, a student of another vocational school in the town of Ramenskoye. She met a girl from Romania, who asked her about me. This was Raya Falkman, my friend from the Kishinev orphanage. I went to see Raya. We were so happy to have found one another. Raya and I spent a weekend together talking about our wanderings during the Great Patriotic War. Raya and I lost each other during the battle near Armavir. Raya and other girls from the orphanage were taken to a ghetto. The only thing that saddened our reunion was that due to the transportation problem I went back to Balashikha too late and didn't go to work the next day. At this time one could be taken to prison for such failure, but the foreman of the shop where I worked, Khadzimurat, a man from the Caucasus, told me off for my absence at work and sent me to work at the most hazardous site - in the painting shop. There was yarn and fluff flying around and also, there was the smell of paint. Many workers had tuberculosis as a result. I thought this was all the punishment for my absence.

A week later Raya came to see me again. She had received a letter from her friends in Kishinev. They wrote that my mother was looking for me. Raya gave me my mother's address in Kishinev. It's hard to describe the overwhelming joy I felt. So, God had heard me and had mercy on me. My dear ones were alive. I wrote my mother a letter. It's easy to say - I wrote a letter. I wrote the lines while crying, tore the paper and then rewrote the letter till I finally did it. Shortly afterward I received her response. She wrote that she, my grandmother and my brother had been in evacuation - I can't remember exactly where they had been, somewhere in Siberia. She had been looking for me and had also written to the central inquiry office in Buguruslan and they replied that Shlima Gersh had disappeared in the vicinity of Armavir.

My mother wrote that my brother, Grigoriy, was coming to take me home. One night the janitor of the dormitory woke me up, 'Your brother is here!' A handsome slender guy was standing by my bed. He had curly hair, bright eyes and had a pilot's cap on. He was handsome, but he wasn't the same person I remembered. Furthermore, I had forgotten my grandmother's name during the occupation. All I remembered was that my mother's name was Polia. The other girls woke up and we sat down to have some tea. I was trying to get used to the thought that this handsome guy was my brother. I asked him about the family. He said they had no information about our sister Sarah. Grigoriy slept on my bed and I slept with one of the girls. In the morning my brother told me to go quit my job and we would go to Kishinev.

I wrote a letter of resignation, but Khadzimurat wrote on it, 'She isn't to be dismissed since she is under investigation.' This way I found out that a criminal case had been instigated against me for my absence from work. I went to the women's council at the trade union office of the factory and while sobbing, I told them my story. The chairman of the trade union, a strict Russian woman, called a doctor asking him to help me. She told me to lie to the doctor, saying that I had a stomach

ache, when I was absent from work. The old gray-haired doctor smiled and issued a certificate stamping it by the date of my absence. Khadzimurat grumbled when he looked at the certificate, 'Well, haven't you outwitted me!' I resigned from work and my brother and I headed home. This happened in 1947. I can't remember whether it took us two or three days to get home.

I remember that we arrived in Kishinev at night. My mother and my grandmother rented an apartment in Romashkovka [an old district of the town], my brother and I walked home. How happy I was to be in my hometown! I didn't recognize it - it was in ruins and besides, I had left it when I was just a child, but this was my homeland. My mother cried and kissed me. My grandma couldn't say a word between her tears. She looked so small and old to me. My mother spoke Jewish [Yiddish] to me, but I couldn't remember a word. We sat down to dinner. I hadn't had meat for so long, and I almost fainted inhaling the smell of the real Jewish stew. However, I was a little shy to eat too much. When my mother threw the leftover meat to the dog, I felt like taking it away from the dog. Then she took me to the bath. She washed me and cried again.

A few days later, my mother helped me get a job at the confectionery in Kishinev where she was working. I was an apprentice and my instructor was the best confectioner in Moldova. I was a good student. I probably had a talent to this vocation. In due time, I replaced my tutor and became one of the best confectioners. My hands could make lovely confectioneries: for party and governmental officials, for various exhibitions, cosmonauts - my creations were awarded the best diplomas on international exhibitions. This only happened later, when I became a famous master confectioner.

When I was still an apprentice, there was a company of young men showing signs of attention to me. I distinguished a handsome short guy among them. He was Dmitriy Goldstein, who was a worker in our shop. On 1st May 1948 he invited me on a date. We walked along the festive Lenin Street [former Alexandrovskaya Street]. We saw each other for half a year. I got to know more about him and we fell in love with one another. He was born in Kishinev in 1929 and was given the Jewish name of Mordechai at birth. Dmitriy's father, Zelman Goldstein, was engaged in book publication and sales, and his mother, Zlota, was a masterful seamstress. Dmitriy's family was religious and observed Jewish traditions. He studied in a Romanian school. In the 1930s Dmitriy's family lived in Bucharest. They moved to Kishinev as soon as the Soviet regime was established.

During the Great Patriotic War, Dmitriy's father was drafted to the army. Dmitriy, his mother and sister evacuated to Nizhniy Tagil. After the liberation of Moldova [15](#) the Goldstein family returned to Kishinev. Dmitriy introduced me to his parents and sister and our relatives already thought us to be engaged. On 18th December 1948, Dmitriy and my brother, Grigoriy, were recruited to the army. I promised Dmitriy that I'd wait for him. A few days later Dmitriy returned home. He weighed 47 kilograms while the minimal allowable weight for a soldier was 50 kilograms. The medical commission demobilized him. We dated for another three years. We were seriously preparing for our future life as a family. We even bought a wardrobe from our few months' savings. We had the wedding appointed for 31st March 1951, when a few days before the wedding Dmitriy was summoned to the military registry office again. He had gained sufficient weight and was fit for the military service.

31st March 1951 was a Saturday. I was allowed to finish work a little earlier, and Dmitriy and I registered our wedding at the district registry office. We took each other's hand and walked home like we were used to walking holding hands. So we've gone through life hand in hand. In the

evening we had a wedding party at Dmitriy's home. There were Jewish dishes on the table. Our mothers borrowed some money and cooked sweet and sour stew, stuffed fish and salad with beetroots and prunes. There was no music; we just sang popular Soviet and Jewish songs sitting at the table. Our wedding was more like a farewell party.

On 2nd April Dmitriy was regimented to the army. My husband served for three years and eight months. I looked forward to his coming home. I became an activist and joined the Komsomol [16](#). I had grown up in the children's home and was a big patriot. I believed everything the communists promised. I remember how our staff at work and I grieved after Stalin died in March 1953, how I cried at the mourning meeting. I was waiting for Dmitriy to return home. When I read the order on demobilization I rented the shed that our neighbor had prepared for a goat in our yard. The shed was whitewashed and very clean. However, the windows were small and there was tape instead of glass. I bought a bed, a floor mirror, hung nice curtains, and met my husband in our apartment. Probably, we had the happiest time in this little hut of our own.

In November 1955 our daughter, Ella, was born. The delivery was very hard and I was begging the Lord to have no more children. Ella is our only daughter. I remembered how our mother had to send us to the orphanage due to poverty and I didn't want any more children. I wanted our only daughter to grow up happy in the family and in wealth. I didn't know a thing about cooking or housekeeping. When my grandma added carrots and onions to the broth, I thought, 'why is she doing this?' I didn't know about cooking having grown up in the orphanage. So, when I was cooking, I thought, why waste money, when I have to pay 150 rubles rental fees. So I was saving on carrots and onions.

When I had the baby, I thought why waste money on milk, when I could save by buying a bottle of soda. I didn't know that the baby couldn't drink soda water. It took time to learn. It was slow and difficult to learn. I went to work one month after Ella was born. My mother, my mother-in-law, and my grandma took turns to take care of Ella. Life was hard. We had small salaries and there was nobody to support us. At times we didn't even have money to buy bread before our payday, but we never gave up and fought through the hardships. Gradually life was improving. Our factory was recognized for its performance and we began to earn more.

We didn't observe Jewish traditions in our family. However, my mother and my grandmother followed the kosher rules, celebrated Sabbath and went to the synagogue till their last days. We also joined them to celebrate Jewish holidays paying tribute to family traditions. On such holidays we just got together for a meal. When my mother returned from the synagogue, she served the table with traditional Jewish food. My husband and I enjoyed the family eating together. There were no rituals or prayers in our presence. My mother and my grandmother also celebrated Sabbath, lit candles and prayed over them, but I never joined in.

My grandmother helped me a lot, particularly when our daughter was born. She was cheerful and hardly had any health problems, though by the end of her life she lost her hearing and almost grew blind. She didn't hear the approaching train crossing the railroad track, and the airflow threw her under the train. This happened in 1961. She died at once.

My mother married Volodia Nudelman, a Jew, the janitor of our confectionery, in the late 1960s. They lived for eight years together. He died in the late 1970s. My mother fell severely ill. She died in 1980. My second mother, Yelena Ivanovna, also died in 1980. We had corresponded, maintained

warm relations and sent each other treatments and gifts. We also visited each other. I've always remembered that I owe my life to this common Ukrainian woman.

I've only seen my sister once in all those years. In 1947 my mother received a letter from Alexandra Sergeyevna Chahlova. She wrote that she knew where my sister was. My mother wrote back and then it turned out that this Alexandra Chahlova was my sister. I still can't understand why she hadn't written at once. Sarah married Chahlov, a Russian man. He must have been a real anti-Semite. My sister didn't only change her name, but also her nationality. She always wrote in documents that she was Moldovan. They lived in Tomsk, Russia. My sister didn't get along with her husband and remarried twice. None of her husbands was Jewish. Her second husband's surname was Mikhailov, and the third was Kravchenko. In the mid-1950s Alexandra visited Kishinev with her daughter Nathalia. We were different people and my sister didn't even pretend that we were a family. She despised Jewish traditions or any talks on Jewish subjects. This was the only time I saw my sister. She corresponded with my mother. When I wrote to her that our mother had died, she blamed me for this and wrote that she didn't want to know me any longer. My brother's wife and I called her in 1984, but Alexandra said she had no relatives in Kishinev. So this is all I know about my sister or her daughter.

My brother returned to Kishinev after the army. He married Bella, a lovely Jewish girl. We were friends. Regretfully, Bella fell ill and died at the age of 48. Cancer 'burned' her down in one month. My brother never remarried, though recently he started living together with an old woman. He worked at the aerodrome. He had many friends among pilots and technicians. Recently, my brother had a heart attack. He is in hospital. His daughter Anna lives in the USA and his son Semyon lives in Tumen in Russia.

My daughter, Ella, studied well at school. After finishing school she decided against entering a college. Anti-Semitism was strong in those years and a Jewish girl had no chance to enter a higher educational institution unless she bribed the officials, but we had no money for bribes. Ella went to work at a computation center in a design institute. At that time the first computers were commissioned and Ella maintained them. She went to a resort in Odessa where she met Vladimir Denisov, a Russian guy from Moscow. He fell in love with her. He visited us in fall and then began to visit us frequently. They got married and my daughter moved to Moscow where Vladimir had an apartment. Ella's husband was a great metal artist, a jeweler. He worked with precious metals, and in the Soviet times the state had a monopoly for the manufacture and treatment of jewelry, and any private business in this regard was forbidden.

Most likely, their neighbors reported on my son-in-law and one night, when my daughter was in the maternity hospital, he was arrested. The apartment was searched and whatever belongings they had was retained. Vladimir was allowed three months of delay till Ella had the baby. This was their second child. Their son Denis was born in 1979. In 1982 Dina was born. At the trial the attorney managed to have the verdict of deportation to distant areas. My daughter had to raise two children alone. My husband and I worked overtime to send her whatever we could earn. I could never afford to go to the Caucasus or Crimea [primer resorts in the Soviet Union] on vacation. We could only afford local resorts where we could go for free. I sent my savings to my daughter.

I dreamt of the sea and resorts where my friends went, but I comforted myself that I felt well wherever with my beloved husband at all times, and this is true. Vladimir returned a few years later

and began to feel jealous about Ella, he even hurt her. Though Ella had waited for her husband for a few years, she lost her patience and applied for a divorce. They got a divorce. Ella didn't want to return to Kishinev. She had a nice apartment after her divorce and she worked as a technician in a design institute. Ella only asked us to take Dina to live with us. She was four, when she came to Kishinev. My husband and I were happy and thought that we would have another daughter. I worked and managed to raise a nice girl. Dina lived with us for twelve years and we hoped that she would never leave us. But then something that nobody expected happened: the break-up of the USSR, and it became difficult for the Russian-speaking girl to study here.

All Russian schools were closed; there were only Moldovan schools left. She didn't know the language. We also lost our savings like many other people. [The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 also resulted in the newly independent states introducing their own national currencies. Soviet Ruble ceased existing. Many people lost their life-time savings.] When Dina turned 16, she moved to Moscow. She graduated from a hairdresser's school. Now she is a professional hairdresser. She is married, but has no children as yet. Denis studies in a college and dates a nice girl. They will be married soon. My daughter has also found her happiness. She remarried. Her second husband is Russian. His name is Sergey. I didn't ask his surname since Ella kept her family name Denisova.

My husband and I have lived a hard life. We worked hard and hardly ever had a rest. We had to refuse ourselves many things for the sake of our daughter and grandchildren, but our love and mutual understanding has always been with us, we've enjoyed being together. We hoped to be able to visit our daughter and spend vacations together and see our grandchildren. When the Soviet Union collapsed, this became impossible. The price of the cheapest ticket to Moscow was twice as much as my pension. We've lost our savings. My daughter and grandchildren also can't visit us often, and this is a real problem. I grew up in the children's home, and have always been sociable.

I've been enthusiastic about all communist ideas of equality and fraternity, I've been a patriot and I can't get used to this breakup of the Soviet Union. We've never considered moving to Israel, because we are patriots. We felt ourselves to be a part of a big country that was the Soviet Union. The only thing we are happy about is that Jewish communities have revived in the independent Moldova. There are charity organizations: Joint [17](#) and Hesed [18](#), they help us to have a decent life. We've come back to the observation of the Jewish traditions that we've known since childhood. We celebrate all Jewish holidays with our friends whom we meet in Hesed. Besides the material support we can also feel the closeness and support of Jews all over the world.

Glossary

1 Bessarabia

Historical area between the Prut and Dnestr rivers, in the southern part of Odessa region. Bessarabia was part of Russia until the Revolution of 1917. In 1918 it declared itself an independent republic, and later it united with Romania. The Treaty of Paris (1920) recognized the union but the Soviet Union never accepted this. In 1940 Romania was forced to cede Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to the USSR. The two provinces had almost 4 million inhabitants, mostly Romanians. Although Romania reoccupied part of the territory during World War II the Romanian peace treaty of 1947 confirmed their belonging to the Soviet Union. Today it is part of Moldavia.

2 Tsimes

Stew made usually of carrots, parsnips, or plums with potatoes.

3 Hasid

The follower of the Hasidic movement, a Jewish mystic movement founded in the 18th century that reacted against Talmudic learning and maintained that God's presence was in all of one's surroundings and that one should serve God in one's every deed and word. The movement provided spiritual hope and uplifted the common people. There were large branches of Hasidic movements and schools throughout Eastern Europe before World War II, each following the teachings of famous scholars and thinkers. Most had their own customs, rituals and life styles. Today there are substantial Hasidic communities in New York, London, Israel and Antwerp.

4 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 o'clock in the morning Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

5 Kishinev Ghetto

The annihilation of the Jews of Kishinev was carried out in several stages. With the entry of the Romanian and German units, an unknown number of Jews were slaughtered in the streets and in their homes. About 2,000 Jews, mainly of liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, engineers), and local Jewish intellectuals, were systematically executed. After the wave of killings, the 11,000 remaining Jews were concentrated in the ghetto, created on 24th July 1941, on the order of the Romanian district ruler and the German Einsatzkommando leader, Paul Zapp. The Jews of central Romania attempted to assist their brethren in the ghetto, sending large amounts of money by illegal means. A committee was formed to bribe the Romanian authorities so that they would not hand the Jews over to the Germans. In August about 7,500 Jewish people were sent to work in the Ghidighici quarries. That fall, on the Day of Atonement (4th October), the military authorities began deporting the remaining Jews in the ghetto to Transnistria, by order of the Romanian ruler, Ion Antonescu. One of the heads of the ghetto, the attorney Shapira, managed to alert the leaders of the Jewish communities in Bucharest, but attempts to halt the deportations were unsuccessful. The community was not completely liquidated, however, since some Jews had found hiding places in Kishinev and its vicinity or elsewhere in Romania. In May 1942, the last 200 Jews in the locality were deported. Kishinev was liberated in August 1944. At that time no Jews were left in the locality.

6 Kishinev pogrom of 1903

On 6-7 April, during the Christian Orthodox Easter, there was severe pogrom in Kishinev (today

Chisinau, Moldova) and its suburbs, in which about 50 Jews were killed and hundreds injured. Jewish shops were destroyed and many people left homeless. The pogrom became a watershed in the history of the Jews of the Pale of Settlement and the Zionist movement, not only because of its scale, but also due to the reaction of the authorities, who either could not or did not want to stop the pogromists. The pogrom reverberated in the Jewish world and spurred many future Zionists to join the movement.

7 Common name

Russified or Russian first names used by Jews in everyday life and adopted in official documents. The Russification of first names was one of the manifestations of the assimilation of Russian Jews at the turn of the 19th and 20th century. In some cases only the spelling and pronunciation of Jewish names was russified (e.g. Isaac instead of Yitskhak; Boris instead of Borukh), while in other cases traditional Jewish names were replaced by similarly sounding Russian names (e.g. Eugenia instead of Ghita; Yury instead of Yuda). When state anti-Semitism intensified in the USSR at the end of the 1940s, most Jewish parents stopped giving their children traditional Jewish names to avoid discrimination.

8 Cuzist

Member of the Romanian fascist organization named after Alexandru C. Cuza, one of the most fervent fascist leaders in Romania, who was known for his ruthless chauvinism and anti-Semitism. In 1919 Cuza founded the LANC, which became the National Christian Party in 1935 with an anti-Semitic program.

9 Struggle against religion

The 1930s was a time of anti-religion struggle in the USSR. In those years it was not safe to go to synagogue or to church. Places of worship, statues of saints, etc. were removed; rabbis, Orthodox and Roman Catholic priests disappeared behind KGB walls.

10 All-Union pioneer organization

a communist organization for teenagers between 10 and 15 years old (cf: boy-/girlscouts in the US). The organization aimed at educating the young generation in accordance with the communist ideals, preparing pioneers to become members of the Komsomol and later the Communist Party. In the Soviet Union, all teenagers were pioneers.

11 German colonists/colony

Ancestors of German peasants, who were invited by Empress Catherine II in the 18th century to settle in Russia.

12 Kolkhoz

In the Soviet Union the policy of gradual and voluntary collectivization of agriculture was adopted in 1927 to encourage food production while freeing labor and capital for industrial development. In 1929, with only 4% of farms in kolkhozes, Stalin ordered the confiscation of peasants' land, tools,

and animals; the kolkhoz replaced the family farm.

13 Kulaks

In the Soviet Union the majority of wealthy peasants that refused to join collective farms and give their grain and property to Soviet power were called kulaks, declared enemies of the people and exterminated in the 1930s.

14 Victory Day in Russia (9th May)

National holiday to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany and the end of World War II and honor the Soviets who died in the war.

15 Moldova

Historic region between the Eastern Carpathians, the Dniester River and the Black Sea, also a contemporary state, bordering with Romania and Ukraine. Moldova was first mentioned after the end of the Mongol invasion in 14th century scripts as Eastern marquisate of the Hungarian Kingdom. For a long time, the Principality of Moldova was tributary of either Poland or Hungary until the Ottoman Empire took possession of it in 1512. The Sultans ruled Moldova indirectly by appointing the Prince of Moldova to govern the vassal principality. These were Moldovan boyars until the early 18th century and Greek (Phanariot) ones after. In 1812 Tsar Alexander I occupied the eastern part of Moldova (between the Prut and the Dniester river and the Black Sea) and attached it to its Empire under the name of Bessarabia. In 1859 the remaining part of Moldova merged with Wallachia. In 1862 the new country was called Romania, which was finally internationally recognized at the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. Bessarabia united with Romania after World War I, and was recaptured by the Soviet Union in 1940. The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic gained independence after the break up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and is now called Moldovan Republic (Republica Moldova).

16 Komsomol

Communist youth political organization created in 1918. The task of the Komsomol was to spread of the ideas of communism and involve the worker and peasant youth in building the Soviet Union. The Komsomol also aimed at giving a communist upbringing by involving the worker youth in the political struggle, supplemented by theoretical education. The Komsomol was more popular than the Communist Party because with its aim of education people could accept uninitiated young proletarians, whereas party members had to have at least a minimal political qualification.

17 Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee)

The Joint was formed in 1914 with the fusion of three American Jewish committees of assistance, which were alarmed by the suffering of Jews during World War I. In late 1944, the Joint entered Europe's liberated areas and organized a massive relief operation. It provided food for Jewish survivors all over Europe, it supplied clothing, books and school supplies for children. It supported cultural amenities and brought religious supplies for the Jewish communities. The Joint also operated DP camps, in which it organized retraining programs to help people learn trades that

would enable them to earn a living, while its cultural and religious activities helped re-establish Jewish life. The Joint was also closely involved in helping Jews to emigrate from Europe and from Muslim countries. The Joint was expelled from East Central Europe for decades during the Cold War and it has only come back to many of these countries after the fall of communism. Today the Joint provides social welfare programs for elderly Holocaust survivors and encourages Jewish renewal and communal development.

18 Hesed

Meaning care and mercy in Hebrew, Hesed stands for the charity organization founded by Amos Avgar in the early 20th century. Supported by Claims Conference and Joint Hesed helps for Jews in need to have a decent life despite hard economic conditions and encourages development of their self-identity. Hesed provides a number of services aimed at supporting the needs of all, and particularly elderly members of the society. The major social services include: work in the center facilities (information, advertisement of the center activities, foreign ties and free lease of medical equipment); services at homes (care and help at home, food products delivery, delivery of hot meals, minor repairs); work in the community (clubs, meals together, day-time polyclinic, medical and legal consultations); service for volunteers (training programs). The Hesed centers have inspired a real revolution in the Jewish life in the FSU countries. People have seen and sensed the rebirth of the Jewish traditions of humanism. Currently over eighty Hesed centers exist in the FSU countries. Their activities cover the Jewish population of over eight hundred settlements.