

Svetlana Benyumova With Her Son Mikhail Benyumov



My daughter Svetlana with her younger son Mikhail. This photo was taken in Kiev in 1990.

Our only daughter Svetlana was born in December 1952. After finishing school Svetlana studied in Kiev Industrial high school. After finishing it she worked as a rate setter at a plant and later she became an economist. Later she went to work as an economist at the district trade department. In August 1975 Svetlana married Igor Benyumov, a nice Jewish guy. Igor was born in Kiev in 1951. He finished a college and worked as an engineer. They had a secular wedding. Traditional Jewish weddings were very rare at that time. My older grandson Vladislav was born in 1977, and Mikhail, the younger one, was born in 1985.

In the late 1980s the Jewish life revived in Ukraine. At first these were books of Jewish writers, which had not been published in the USSR since about the 1930s. There were plays by Jewish writers staged in theaters and there were concerts of Jewish music. We were happy about it. Jewish newspapers and magazines started to be published, and various Jewish societies were established.

When the Jewish school was opened, my grandsons went to study there. They were eager to learn about Jewish traditions and the Jewish history. They also have classes where they study prayers. When in my older grandson's class the teacher asked who wanted to be circumcised, my grandson Vladislav was the first to raise his hand. The ceremony was conducted at the synagogue. My grandson went there with his father. At first the children had treatments and then the brit milah was conducted. Later my younger grandson was also circumcised. My grandchildren are religious. They have everything a Jew needs for a prayer: a tallit and tefillin. My older grandson is married and has a son. He had a traditional Jewish wedding. Chief Rabbi of Ukraine Yakov Bleich conducted the wedding ceremony of my grandson. It was beautiful and festive: the holiday that they would remember for life. My grandson's son is 11 months old. He had a brit milah, as the Jewish tradition requires. My grandson and his wife observe Jewish traditions, go to the synagogue and pray. My younger grandson is also religious. My grandsons study at the International Solomon University [Jewish University in Kiev, established in 1995], a higher educational institution. It teaches highly qualified professionals and also, the students observe Jewish traditions, and study Jewish subjects. My older grandson has graduated from Law Faculty, and the younger one is a 2nd-year student. Their life is still ahead of them and I hope they will be all right.