

Ihil Shraibman At Work In His Room



This is me at work in my room. This photo was taken in Kishinev in 2004. This photo was made by Dorothea Greve, a German literature critic, studying Jewish literature in Yiddish.

In 1997 I published the 'Schtendik' [Always] book in Yiddish in Israel. I was invited to visit Israel on this occasion. This was my first trip to Israel. It's hard to describe my first impression. It's still vivid in my memory. Is it possible to find words to describe the excitement any Jew feels standing by the Wailing Wall? We had meetings with writers in Israel, but my meetings with my readers were the most significant ones for me. Presentations of my book took place in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Rehovot, Richon LeZiyon, Ashdod... I was given a warm welcome at those meetings. What I read was received with great attention. I remember a woman in Ashkelon. She and her husband drove us to the station from where we were to leave for Jerusalem. She said with tears in her eyes, 'We've never had such writers before.' My books were read by former residents of the USSR and nationals of Israel. Hebrew is the state language, of course, but Yiddish is also our national language. There are wonderful books in Yiddish and it shouldn't disappear from the life of Jewish people.

I was invited to foreign countries several times, but the most memorable was the Yiddish festival in Berlin in 2003. Four other writers: Boris Sandler, Mordhe Zanin, Gennadiy Eistrach and Lev Berinskiy and I were invited. Before going there I was asked to inform the organizers which works of mine I was bringing there. I sent them about 30 short stories for them to select at their discretion the ones they wished me to present at the festival, but they selected all of them. Marina and I were met by director of the festival. The evening in Berlin was brightly lighted and he took us around the town and showed us the most beautiful places. The next evening I read my short stories to the public. Lev Berinskiy read his poem before it was my turn. I read my short stories in Yiddish and then the director of the festival read their German translation. It took us a while to read 30 short stories and then 30 another time, but the public wasn't tired. They were a success, a great success.