

Polina Leibovich



This is me, Polina Leibovich in my apartment. This photo was taken in Kishinev in 2004.

Perestroika changed the Jewish life in Kishinev, Jews sort of woke up. At first the Sochnut came up. I wasn't fully informed to describe this process completely, but I remember that young people took a big part in it. They arranged Sabbath celebrations, sang Jewish songs and opened a club for young people. When in the early 1990s in Kishinev they began to enroll children into a Jewish school, I went to the director of this school and told him I wanted to work for them. I was eager to work with Jewish children. He offered me to teach Moldovan. They didn't study French, they studied English. I was also involved in the enrollment of the children. It was a secular school, but they also studied Jewish traditions and Hebrew. I worked in this school for about four years. Then the school moved to another building in a distant district of the town and I had to quit. I was 72 already and it was hard for me to commute so far, though we had a school bus to take us to school.

However, I couldn't sit at home and so I went to teach Moldovan in specialized English school #53, near my house. Then there was a conference arranged by either Joint, or Sochnut where I met the directress of a Jewish kindergarten. Her children performed a concert for the participants of the conference. She offered me to work for them. When the academic year began I thought, 'I teach Moldovan at school #53, and the Jewish kindergarten isn't far from the school, so why not work there, too?' And I made a decision to teach two hours in the afternoon in the kindergarten, but at the age of 73 I had a hypertension stroke and I had to quit the school and the kindergarten. Later, when I felt better, I went back to the kindergarten and I don't regret it.

Our Hesed Jehuda helps me and other Jews a lot. They are doing a great job since there are many needy pensioners. I also go to the warm house. It's great that we can talk and support each other telling what we remember about Jewish traditions. Some of us study the traditions fundamentally reading modern literature on this subject. We also have common memories of our childhood years in Kishinev, about studying in the gymnasiums. Sometimes young people from the Gilel organization visit the warm house. They have so much energy of the youth. They tell us about the

Jewish culture and sing songs. However, it was different in my childhood. There was no propaganda of Judaism as there is nowadays. Jews just observed their traditions, and this was their way of life. They couldn't live otherwise. Now they sort of open the gates for us: some accept it and others don't. I've felt ill lately. My strengths are deserting me. Human life is so short to manage it all. My son and my daughter-in-law invite me to join and live with them. They are concerned about my health, but I don't feel like leaving Kishinev, everything is so familiar here.