

## Esfir Dener



This is me in my apartment. The photo was taken in Kishinev in 2004. Perestroika had its impact on pensioners and we began to have financial problems. I spent my pension to pay my rent, but I always pay my bills for the apartment, power and telephone in a timely manner, so that they, God Forbid, don't take away my apartment. I've had this fear in my blood since they forced us to leave our home, when the Soviet power here started. However, I understand that perestroika made the rebirth of the Jewish life in Kishinev possible. They opened a Jewish library, the Jewish Enlightening University [Community lecture course], and the Jewish Charity Center Hesed Yehuda started its work. I attend lectures on the subject of Jewish life in the Enlightening University twice a week. They tell us how to celebrate Jewish holidays and hold lectures on Jewish history and literature: [Isaac] Bashevis Singer, for example. I also go to the warm house where I celebrate Jewish holidays with older people like myself and talk. But I'm not used to going to the synagogue. I went to the restaurant in Hesed every day before I had a micro stroke in the eye, but now they deliver meals to my home. Four years ago [2000] I had a cataract surgery. To be blind would be terrible for me. I was alone in Kishinev. My cousin sister died in 1984, her son Yakov and his family moved to Augsburg in Germany. I borrowed money ? it was a lot of money for me ? on the security of my apartment through an acquaintance of mine. I wrote a request to the Assistance Fund of Hesed. The former director of Hesed said, 'Make arrangements to leave them your apartment'. Four years have passed, but I cannot think calmly about it. I wasn't asking money for a coat, a dress or a visit to my sister. Loneliness and helplessness are the hardest things. There's nothing more important than human relations and health. My former colleagues often call me and send me their regards on New Year's, 8th March [Women's Day] and Builders' Day [one of the professional holidays in the former USSR]. Recently I got a call at midnight: 'Esfir Borisovna?' the voice asked. I replied, 'Speaking, Tarakanov'. I recognized his voice. This was Valera Tarakanov, one of my 'boys'. 'How come you call so 'early'?' I asked. He said, 'You know, I've recently come back from Israel where I was visiting my friends. Do you remember how you stood up for me, when I needed a room in a hostel?' ? We talked until one o'clock in the morning.