

Ivan Moshkovich



This is a picture of me at the synagogue. The photo was taken in Uzhgorod in 1994. A Jewish community was formed in Uzhgorod in the late 1980s. My son and I began to go to the synagogue on a regular basis. My son knows the prayers and prays like I do. Jews have always had their own way of life in Uzhgorod, only during the Soviet regime they had to do it in secret [during the struggle against religion]. Later, when so many Jews were moving to Israel, there were hardly any left to go to the synagogue. There were times when there weren't even ten people at the synagogue and we had to go home. [A minyan, that is, ten male adults are needed in order to hold a prayer service.] After Ukraine gained independence Jewish life improved. I happened to be the only Jew that could say a prayer properly. I was always asked to say prayers. I refused since my ill wife was waiting for me at home. She needed me. Then I was elected chairman of the Jewish community of Uzhgorod. Now I teach people to do things appropriately, how to pray and follow all Jewish rituals and traditions. We are all very close in our community. We had guests: rabbis from America and Israel. They liked the services in our synagogue. We are not concerned that a prayer would have to be cancelled: there are always many people at the synagogue. On Friday evening we give them two buns and challah to celebrate Sabbath at home. On Saturday we arrange for a meal. Women come to the synagogue on holidays, four times a year: on Pesach, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Purim. I'm happy that Jewish life will continue when old people die. We invite children to the synagogue to teach them and give them gifts on holidays. In 1999 Hesed was established in our town. It provides big assistance to people. Hesed doesn't only support people in this hard time, but also gives them a chance to keep in touch and attend various clubs, get involved in Jewish culture that was outlawed for so long. People visit Hesed with their families and all generations can find what they are interested in there. The most important thing is that our children and grandchildren are raised as Jews and are proud to be Jews.