

## Fira Usatinskaya



This is a photo of me, taken during my vacation in Miskhor in 2002. My husband Michael Aronovich died of stomach cancer in 1983. He was buried in the town cemetery. His death was an irreplaceable loss for me, but sometimes I think it was better that he didn't live to see perestroika: the fall of communism and all ideals that he had held sacred his whole life. I'm being supported by my son Felix and also by Hesed. I don't receive any material assistance from them since my son provides for everything I need, but I enjoy their cultural programs. I have friends there and we celebrate Jewish holidays in the so-called Jewish house and attend parties at Hesed. I also celebrate Sabbath and light candles at home. I've been abroad several times. I went on tour to Czechoslovakia in 1986. In those years, when there wasn't enough food in our country, I was struck

by how much they had of everything. In recent years I visited a friend of mine in Germany, my brother in Edmonton, Canada, and my husband's brother in Los Angeles, America. I've also been in Israel. I liked everything there. I admired and felt proud seeing the garden in the desert that my people had created. I visited several towns and bathed in three seas. I went to the Wailing Wall and visited Christian relics. This is such a Holy Land! I like traveling, learning new things and meeting with friends, but I always remember a Russian proverb which says, 'East or West, home is best'. Everything I saw abroad is also in Ukraine now: plenty of goods, beautiful cottages and cars. I like it that people have an opportunity to improve their life and do business, earn money and become rich. I don't suffer from the terrible poverty that fell on many lonely pensioners. My son supports me financially, buys me expensive tours to health and recreation centers and I share with him what I have saved: the warmth of my soul.