

Arkadi Milgrom



This is a photo of me taken on 28 September 2003, the day of interview, in Kherson.

I went to work in the port as engineer in 1952. I have retired from there in 1986.

My wife and I have had a modest life. We didn't celebrate [Jewish] holidays when we were young. We believed we were real internationalists. However, we tried to have Jewish friends to feel free in our own environment. When in the 1970s emigration to Israel and USA and Germany began, we had to consider the issue of departure like all other Jews. I told my wife then that I couldn't leave this country; this land where our dear ones were buried is our Motherland. I've visited my sister in Israel, but it only was another proof that I am closer to the spirit of my Ukrainian land. I am very concerned about the situation in Israel, though. If I were young and strong I would probably go to Israel to try to be useful to my country, but I don't want to be a dependent there. Of course, life is hard in our country now. We've lost our savings and we also lost the feeling of our big family: the State of Soviets. However, we've got opportunities for democratic development of various nations, including Jews. Now at my old age I've returned to Jewish traditions, language and religion. I am a member of a religious Jewish community of Kherson. I go to the morning and evening prayer at the synagogue every day. I cannot say that I've become religious: it's impossible to make over what has been instilled in our minds for many years, but I am trying hard to be closer to religion and to the culture and language of my ancestors. My wife and I celebrate all Jewish holidays and cook Jewish food. We enjoy going to the Jewish charity center Hesed. We study Ivrit and socialize with our Jewish friends. This makes our life easier and fills it with meaning.