



WHAT BEING
REAL JEWISH
is
ABOUT...

BASED ON LIFE STORY OF
DEBORAH AVERBUKH



**MY NAME IS DEBORAH YAKOVLEVNA AVERBUKH.
I WAS BORN ON 19TH JULY 1921 IN THE URBAN-TYPE
COMMUNITY MEDJIBOZH,
WHICH WAS A JEWISH SHTETL.
TODAY IT IS IN KHMELNITSKI REGION.**



**MY FATHER, YAKOV
AVERBUKH, WAS BORN INTO
A VERY RELIGIOUS FAMILY.**

**HE HAD VERY GOOD
KNOWLEDGE OF JUDAISM
AND KEPT EVERY RELIGIOUS
TRADITION. WHEN I WAS
ONE AND A HALF YEARS
OLD, MY FATHER HAD LOST
HIS JOB AS THE DIRECTOR
OF THE YEKATERINOSLAV
YESHIVAH, BECAUSE AT
THAT TIME
THE BOLSHEVIKS
CLOSED
ALL RELIGIOUS
EDUCATIONAL
INSTITUTIONS.**

IN OUR HOME WE ALWAYS KEPT KOSHER LAWS AND OBSERVED TRADITIONAL JEWISH HOLIDAYS. EVEN THOUGH WE WERE EXTREMELY POOR, WE HAD ONE OR TWO NEEDY JEWISH STUDENTS FROM THE SYNAGOGUE, WHO RECEIVED MONTHLY SUPPORT FROM US, ACCORDING TO THE JEWISH TRADITION. TO OUR HOLIDAY TABLE ON FRIDAY EVENING AND DURING PESACH SEDERS WE ALWAYS INVITED JEWS WHO WERE VISITING FROM OTHER CITIES AND WHO HAD NO PLACE TO CELEBRATE.



**I HAD NO TOYS IN MY CHILDHOOD.
THE FIRST TIME I GOT A CELLULOID
TOY DOLL, I WAS TEN YEARS OLD. I
WAS SO HAPPY TO HAVE IT THAT I
WRAPPED IT IN A PIECE OF BLANKET
AND WENT OUTSIDE, TO THE GATES,
SINGING AS IF PUTTING IT TO SLEEP.
PEOPLE MISTAKENLY TOOK MY DOLL
FOR A REAL BABY AND SAID MY
MOTHER HAD GIVEN BIRTH
TO THE THIRD CHILD.**



THERE WAS A TIME DURING THE SOVIET RULE, AROUND 1929 AND 1933, WHEN MOST JEWISH FAMILIES WERE FORCED TO GIVE AWAY THEIR GOLD AND PRECIOUS STONES. MY FAMILY DIDN'T SUFFER FROM THIS BECAUSE THE BOLSHEVIKS KNEW VERY WELL THAT WE HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING AT HOME. DURING THIS TIME WE ALWAYS HAD SOME FAMOUS RICH JEWS, WHO LIVED IN OUR HOUSE AND GAVE US SOME FOOD IN RETURN BECAUSE THEY KNEW THEY COULD HIDE FROM ARREST AT OUR PLACE. THEY USUALLY SPENT WHOLE DAYS JUST SOFA UNDER THE BLANKET.



IN 1936 AND 1937, DURING THE SO-CALLED **GREAT TERROR**, MY MOTHER WAS SUMMONED TO THE **KGB** SEVERAL TIMES BECAUSE SHE WAS BORN IN POLAND. SHE WAS KEPT THERE FOR DAYS. THESE WERE THE MOST TERRIBLE DAYS OF MY LIFE. I WOULD HIDE UNDER THE BLANKET IN MY ROOM AND JUST HOPE I WOULD WAKE UP AND SEE MY MOTHER AT HOME!





**REMEMBER 22ND JUNE 1941, THE BEGINNING OF
THE SO-CALLED GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR,
VERY WELL. AT AROUND 4 O'CLOCK IN THE
MORNING WE WOKE UP BECAUSE OF WHAT
SOUNDED LIKE BOMBING. MY FATHER WASN'T
HOME, HE WAS IN OVRUCH. MY BROTHER SAID,
WHAT, TRAINING MANEUVERS START AGAIN!?',
BUT MY MOTHER ANSWERED, 'NO, THIS IS NO
TRAINING'. SHE HAD EXPERIENCED WORLD
WAR I, SO SHE KNEW.**

**ON 6TH JULY 1941 MY BROTHER
WENT TO THE MILITARY ENLISTMENT
COMMITTEE AS A VOLUNTEER TO FIGHT
AND WAS IMMEDIATELY SENT TO THE FRONT.
WE NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN.**



**MY BROTHER'S FRIEND SERGEY BARBAR
WORKED IN THE REAR AND WERE ALLOWED TO
TAKE THEIR FAMILIES INTO EVACUATION WITH HIM.**

**I WAS REGISTERED AS HIS
SISTER-IN-LAW, AND WE WENT TOGETHER.**

IN THE MORNING,

MY MOTHER WENT TO WORK.

WE SAID GOODBYE TO EACH OTHER.

**MY MOTHER WAS AN EXTREMELY STRONG PERSON;
IT WAS AMAZING.**

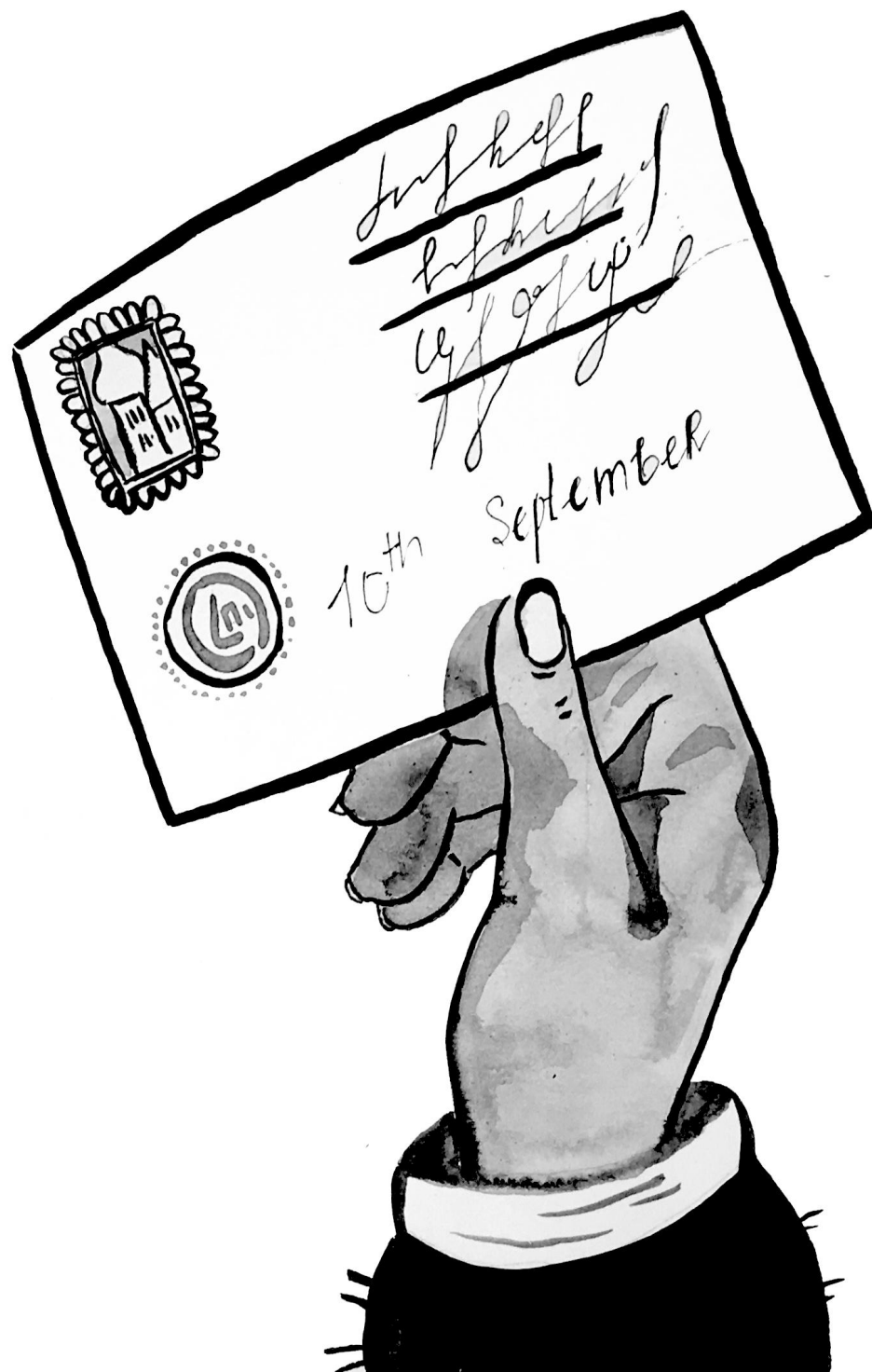
**I DON'T REMEMBER HER CRYING WHEN MY BROTHER
LEFT, NEITHER DO I REMEMBER HER
CRYING WHEN SHE SAID GOODBYE TO ME.**

THIS WAS ON 19TH JULY.

**MY FATHER BID ME
FAREWELL ON THE STAIRCASE, SOMEWHERE
BETWEEN THE THIRD AND THE FOURTH FLOOR.
HE WAS CRYING. THE ONLY PHRASE HE TOLD
ME IN YIDDISH WAS, 'ONLY MARRY A JEWISH MAN'.**

**IN KHARKOV
I RECEIVED THE LAST
POSTCARD FROM MY
PARENTS DATED
10TH SEPTEMBER.
THE GERMANS ENTERED
KIEV ON
21ST SEPTEMBER.**

**MY FATHER SAID WE DIDN'T HAVE TO
EVACUATE BECAUSE THE GERMANS
WERE HIGHLY CIVILIZED PEOPLE;
HE REMEMBERED THEM FROM
THE OCCUPATION IN 1918.
BESIDES, HE THOUGHT HE KNEW THEM
WELL FROM HIS TRIPS TO GERMANY.
HE WAS GOING TO MOVE US
TO THE LEFT BANK.
DESPITE HIS ANTI-SOVIET CONVICTIONS
HE SAID,
'THE BOLSHEVIKS WILL NEVER LET
THE GERMANS CROSS THE DNEPER'.**





**IN SPRING 1944 I GOT A POSTCARD FROM
A BOY WHO HAD BEEN MY NEIGHBOR
IN KIEV. IN IT, HE TOLD ME THAT MY
PARENTS HAD BEEN SHOT IN 1941.
ONLY LATER I FOUND OUT
THAT THE PLACE WHERE THEY
WERE KILLED WAS CALLED **BABI YAR**.**

****BABI YAR** IS THE SITE OF THE
FIRST MASS SHOOTING
OF JEWS THAT WAS
CARRIED OUT OPENLY
BY FASCISTS. ON 29TH AND 30TH
SEPTEMBER 1941 33,771
JEWS WERE SHOT THERE BY A SPECIAL
SS UNIT AND UKRAINIAN MILITIA
MEN. DURING THE
NAZI OCCUPATION OF KIEV
BETWEEN
1941 AND 1943 OVER A 100,000
PEOPLE WERE
KILLED IN BABI YAR, MOST
OF WHOM WERE JEWISH.**



COSMOPOLITAN
(C) USSR

AFTER THE WAR, THE TERM 'COSMOPOLITAN' IN THE SOVIET UNION MEANT ALMOST THE SAME AS 'TRAITOR OF THE SOVIET UNION'. USUALLY IT WAS THE JEWS THAT WERE CALLED 'COSMOPOLITANS'. ANYWAY, SO I WAS FIRED IN JUNE 1948. SO, I WAS JOBLESS. I HAD NO APARTMENT. I WAS REGISTERED IN ONE OF THE ROOMS OF THE INSTITUTE AND AFTER I WAS FIRED FROM THE INSTITUTE I COULD NO LONGER BE REGISTERED THERE. ACCORDING TO THE LAW, IF I SPENT ONE MONTH WITHOUT REGISTRATION IN KIEV, I WOULD LOSE MY RIGHT TO LIVE IN KIEV IN GENERAL.



**TODAY, MY LIFE IS BETTER THAN
EVER BEFORE; I HAVE NOTHING TO
WORRY ABOUT. I RETIRED EARLY, AT
THE AGE OF 57, AND FOR MANY YEARS
I CONTINUED TO TRAVEL AROUND THE
USSR HOLDING LECTURES. I ENJOY
READING JEWISH PUBLICATIONS,
GOING TO CONCERTS AND KEEPING UP
ACTIVE CORRESPONDENCE WITH MY
RELATIVES IN ISRAEL.**

**JEWISH LIFE IN KIEV IS VERY
DIFFERENT NOW. IT IS WONDERFUL
THAT WE HAVE HESSED, SYNAGOGUES
AND JEWISH YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS.
I'M REALLY HAPPY ABOUT THE REVIVAL
OF THE JEWISH WAY OF LIFE, IT'S SO
NICE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE
PLUNGED SO DEEPLY INTO IT.**

**THEY WILL NOT MISS WHAT BEING
REAL JEWISH IS ALL ABOUT.**