

Even A Murderer Can Change!

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During the chaotic period of the Communist Revolution in Russia and its street warfare between the “reds” and the “whites,” marauding bands looted and harmed civilians all over the country. Moshe Tzadok was a rare Jew who took part in this criminal behavior and even went so far as to murder innocent people.

Later, when Moshe was wanted by the government for his crimes, he fled to Uman and went underground. But when it came time for him to recite Kaddish for his father, he resurfaced. Despite his pleas, every synagogue rejected this man with Jewish blood on his hands – except the Breslover *kloyz*.

After Moshe Tzadok finished saying Kaddish, Reb Yankel

Zhitomer came over to him and asked gently, "Since you already said the Kaddish, why not put on *tefillin*?" Patiently, he helped Moshe lay *tefillin* for the first time in many years. This marked a turning point in Moshe's life. Slowly but surely he did heartfelt *teshuvah* (repentance). Before long, it was common to see Moshe crying while reciting Psalms or *Likutei Tefillot* (Reb Noson's prayers).

When the Communists closed the mikvehs, Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender said to Moshe, "Moshe! You killed Jews – now give them life! Build a mikveh. This will fix your past."

Moshe was a wagon driver by trade. He made up his mind to dig into the hard earth below his stable until he found water. After digging down a full 50 meters (164 feet) – an almost impossible feat without machinery – he struck water. His mikveh was the only one in Uman for many years. Moshe also gave food to whoever needed it.

When Moshe Tzadok began to do *teshuvah*, the other townspeople derided the Breslovers for accepting him. "Those Breslovers even took in a murderer!" they jeered.

But afterwards they changed their attitude. "He struggled to build the only mikveh in town; he takes food out of his own mouth to feed the needy. Maybe the Breslovers are right that there is no giving up ... even on such a sinner. He has saved our families and given so much. Isn't it clear that he truly rectified his ways?"

Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV, 561; V, 253