

## Moisha Krivitsky, Ex-Rabbi, Dagestan



The Rabbi of Makhachkala synagogue embraced Islam. Every person has a different way of coming to the Truth. For Moisha Krivitsky this way led through a faculty of law, a synagogue and a prison. The lawyer-to-be becomes a Rabbi, then he converts into Islam and finds himself in prison.

Today Musa<sup>[1]</sup> (this is the name he has adopted when he became a Muslim) lives in a small mosque in Al-Burikent, a mountain area of Makhachkala, and works as a watchman in the Central Juma mosque.

*Interviewer:* Musa, before we began talking, you asked what we were going to talk about. I said: About you.

*Musa:* What's so interesting about me? If you wondered. Then I live in the mosque..

*Interviewer:* How did you come to live in the mosque?

*Musa:* Well, I just dropped in... and stayed.

*Interviewer:* Did you find the way easily?

*Musa:* With great difficulty. It was hard then, and it isn't much easier now. When you go deeply into Islam its inner meaning, you understand that this religion is very simple, but the way that leads to it may be extremely difficult. Often, people don't understand how a person could be converted into Islam from the other side, as it were.

But there are no other sides here. Islam is everything there is, both what we imagine and what we don't imagine.

*Interviewer:* Musa, as a matter of fact, we were given this fact as a certain sensation: a Rabbi has turned Muslim.

*Musa:* Well, it has been no sensation for quite a long while already - it's more than a year that I did this. It was strange for me at first, too. But it wasn't an off-the-cuff decision. When I came into Islam, I had read books about it, I had been interested.

*Interviewer:* Did you finish any high school before coming to the synagogue?

*Musa:* Yes, I finished a clerical high school. After graduation, I came to Makhachkala, and became the local Rabbi.

*Interviewer:* And where did you come from?

*Musa:* Oh, from far away. But I have already become a true Daghestani, I have got a lot of friends here - both among Muslims and people who are far from Islam.

*Interviewer:* Let's return to your work in the synagogue.

*Musa:* It was quite a paradoxical situation: there was a mosque near my synagogue, the town mosque. Sometimes my friends who were its parishioners would come to me - just to chat. I sometimes would come to the mosque myself, to see how the services were carried out. I was very interested. So we lived like good neighbors. And once, during Ramadan, a woman came to me - as I now understand, she belonged to a people that was historically Muslim - and she asked me to comment the Russian translation of the Quran made by Krachkovsky.

*Interviewer:* She brought the Quran to you - a Rabbi?!

*Musa:* Yes, and she asked me to give her the Torah to read in return. So I tried to read the Quran - about ten times.

It was really hard, but gradually I began to understand, and to get a basic notion of Islam. (Here, Musa looked at my friend's son, the six-year old Ahmed, who had fallen asleep in the mosque courtyard. "Should we probably take him inside the mosque?" asked Musa.) And that woman had brought back the Torah.

It turned out to be very difficult for her to read and understand it, because religious literature requires extreme concentration and attention.

*Interviewer:* Musa, and when you were reading the translation, you must have begun to compare it with the Torah?

*Musa:* I had found answers to many questions in the Quran. Not to all of them, of course, because it wasn't the Arabic original, but the translation.

But I had begun to understand things.

*Interviewer:* Does it mean that you couldn't find some answers in Judaism?

*Musa:* I don't know, there's Allah's will in everything.

Apparently, those Jews who became Muslims in the times of the Prophet, couldn't find some answers in Judaism, but found them in Islam.

Perhaps, they were attracted by the personality of the Prophet, his behavior, his way of communicating with people. It's an important topic.

*Interviewer:* And what exactly were the questions that you couldn't find answers to in Judaism?

*Musa:* Before I came into contact with Islam, there were questions which I had never even tried to find answers to. Probably, an important part here had been played by a book written by Ahmad Deedat, a South African scholar, comparing the Quran and the Bible.

There is a key phrase, well-known to those who are familiar with religious issues: e.g. Follow the Prophet who is yet to cometh. And when I studied Islam, I understood that the Prophet Muhammad is the very Prophet to be followed. Both the Bible and the Torah tell us to do it.

I haven't invented anything here.

*Interviewer:* And what does the Torah say about the Prophet?

*Musa:* We won't be able to find this name in the Torah. But we can figure it out using a special key. For example, we can understand what god this or that particular person in history worships. The formula describing the last Prophet [may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him] is that he would worship One God, the Sole Creator of the world. The Prophet Muhammad matches this description exactly.

When I read this, I got very interested. I hadn't known anything about Islam before that. Then I decided to look deeper into the matter and see whether there were any miracles and signs connected with the name of the Prophet.

The Bible tells us that the Lord sends miracles to the prophets to confirm their special mission in people's eyes.

I asked the *alims* (scholars) about this, and they said: Here's a collection of true hadeeths which describe the miracles connected with the Prophet. Then I read that the Prophet had always said that there had been prophets and messengers before him.

We can find their names both in the Torah and in the Bible. When I was only starting to get interested, it sounded somewhat strange for me. And then...

Well, my own actions led to what happened to me. Sometimes I get to thinking: why did I read all this? Perhaps, I should say the *tauba* (a prayer of repenting) right now for having thoughts like that.

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#### **Footnotes:**

[1] Musa is Arabic name of Moses.