

## The Langer Case

R' Shlomo Goren, the Langers – An Introduction

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Chava Ginsburg was born in Lukov, a small town in Poland, in the early 1920s. While yet a young girl of fourteen or fifteen, she met a non-Jewish lad by the name of Borokovsky, ran away, and lived with him in a neighboring village. Subsequently, the young man was said to have converted to Judaism in Warsaw and was known in Lukov by the name of Avraham Borokovsky. In 1933, the Borokovskys emigrated to Israel where they shared an apartment with Mrs. Borokovsky's parents. The Borokovsky's subsequently separated without obtaining a religious divorce. Later Chava Borokovsky met a Jewish soldier serving in the British forces named Otto Langer and married him in April 1944. The ceremony was performed by the late Rabbi Ya'akov Levitsky, who at the time served as rabbi of Givat Rambam. According to her own testimony, given before a Bet Din in 1955, Mrs. Borokovsky failed to disclose her previous marriage and informed Rabbi Levitsky that she was unmarried and that her name was Chava Ginsburg. Two children, Chanoch and Miriam, were born to Otto and Chava Langer.

In August 1951, Avraham Borokovsky and Chava Borokovsky-Langer appeared before a *Bet Din* in Tel Aviv for the purpose of executing a religious divorce, apparently because Avraham Borokovsky desired to remarry. In the course of those proceedings, the liason between Chava and Otto Langer became known to the *Bet Din*. Even subsequent to obtaining a divorce from her lawful husband, Jewish law forbids a woman to consort with a man with whom she has previously had adulterous relations. Thus, in view of their previous adulterous relationship, the *Bet Din* issued a decree forbidding Chava and Otto Langer to live as man and wife.

Otto Langer died in 1952. Some three years later Mrs. Langer applied to the *Bet Din* in Tel Aviv for permission to remarry. In the course of an investigation prior to the issuance of a marriage license, the *Bet Din* became aware of the birth of Chanoch and Miriam Langer. On November 11, 1955 the regional *Bet Din* in Tel Aviv issued a decree declaring the children to be *mamzerim*.

There the matter rested until May, 1966, when Chanoch Langer became affianced and applied for permission to marry. The *Bet Din* before whom the matter was presented refused to issue a necessary license because of the earlier decree of 1955. In an appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeals, the Langers contended that Avraham Borokovsky's conversion was invalid, hence no marriage existed between him and their mother and consequently their own birth was legitimate... On June 4, 1969 the *Bet Din* of Petach Tikvah reaffirmed the original ruling. This decision was subsequently reviewed and confirmed by the Supreme Rabbinical Court. A decree to that effect, signed by Rabbis Yosef Eliashuv, Sha'ul Israeli and Ovadiah Yosef, was issued on January 20, 1970.