

PARIS AND THE KETUBAH

When Helen and I left Israel in 1948 to continue my studies in agriculture, we traveled by ship to Marseilles and continued back home on the S.S. United States. While in Paris we ran into difficulties in travel accommodations which leads into this interesting story.

We had been married in the courtyard of Cousin Katz's home, and naturally give the Ketubah then standard with the religious community in Palestine. On the French ship from Haifa no questions were asked as to our relationship, thus no problem arose as to cabin quarters and we just moved in. However, when we went to book our cabin with the United States Line office in Paris, Helen's passport was in her maiden name, Goldberg, so we couldn't get a cabin together.

I promptly pulled our Ketubah as evidence of our proper status, but this was of no help confounding the clerk with a page of Hebrew script. In order to travel together we would need legal certification that the Ketubah did bind us as man and wife. How were we to do this as strangers in Paris? Naturally we turned to Jews for help. We told them that we needed someone in Paris, not only versed in Hebrew translation to English, but also empowered legally to notarize that translation. Finally they came up with just the person we needed.

There was a Jew in Paris by the name Lipsky, who had lived through the Nazi occupation and whose profession had been that of the official interpreter for the Tribunal de la Seine, one of the courts in Paris. An official at the Joint Distribution Committee provided written directions, and after a number of transfers on the Metro, we finally arrived at the apartment building where Mr. Lipsky lived. He heard us out in English, of course, and set about with the translation of the Ketubah and when completed made it kosher with the French legal seal of his office.

Back at the United States Line office, the clerk was satisfied with the notarized translation and finally assigned us a two-bunk cabin. With the problem resolved, we were able to enjoy the few days before boarding ship at Le Havre. We had very little money, so decided that all day we would eat their marvelous bread and dates that were in season from Algeria, and this frugality would allow us one good meal daily. So for the following evenings we sampled French, Russian, Chinese cuisine and the final evening meal was the kosher restaurant in the reviving Jewish quarter.

This incident entered our memory store, and from September of 1948, when I did one semester at Franklin & Marshall College, in Lancaster Pa., before I could begin my studies at Iowa State in February, I was then immersed in studies taking up to 18 hours each quarter. I took the BS in Dairy Husbandry, completed by Masters in Dairy Nutrition at Penn State and decided to complete the Ph.D. back in Iowa State since they had the superior program in my field. It is now 1954, deep in my research, living in the barracks for veterans back of the campus, and of course friends with the few Jewish students and two couples studying agriculture for their return to Israel.

One evening at that time, Helen had baked her famous cinnamon rolls and we had invited the Nachmanys, the Angels, the couples bound for Israel, and another Jewish friend, originally from Germany who was doing his Ph.D. work on the economics of raising irrigated alfalfa on the high plains of Nebraska. Mark Angel was married to a French chalutzah who was doing graduate work in animal breeding. Michelle at that time was the only woman in that department, and she was an oddity on field trips measuring genetic traits of cattle with all the male staff around her. So, in her profession and passion for Israel she was, we might say, a pioneer twice over.

Our conversations revolved about our studies, our goals related to Israel, our survival budgets, our children and of course our travel experiences. So this evening we recalled the Ketubah in Paris and especially with Michelle, who was from that city, expounded on all the details of this experience. When I completed the story I asked Michelle; " You lived in Paris, and though it is a metropolis, did you ever hear of a Mr. Lipsky, who worked with the Tribunal de la Seine and who translated and notarized our Ketubah?" A growing smile covered her face and she replied; "Of course Shlomo, I know Mr. Lipsky very well. He is my father!"