

GELLES – LEVUSH LINE

Edward Gelles
(b. 1927)

|

Dr. David Itzig Gelles (1883-1964)
advocate in Vienna
m Regina Griffel (a)

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Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles (1852-1934)
Chief Rabbi of Solotwina nr Stanislau
m Esther Weinstein (b)

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Rabbi David Isaac Gellis (ca 1790-1868)
of Glina and Brody
m Sarah (Horowitz) (c)

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Rabbi Moses Gelles
m daughter of Rabbi Moshe of Glogau
the eldest son of Shmuel Helman
Chief Rabbi of Metz (d.1764) (d)

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Mordecai Gelles of Brody
father or uncle of the above
and father of Rabbi Samuel Gelles (e)

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Rabbi Moses Menachem Mendel Levush (f)
aka Moses Gelles, scholar of the Brody Klaus
(ca. 1700 -1760)
m daughter of Rabbi S(hmuel) Gelles (g)

Levush

most probably descendant of Chief Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague
(1530 -1612) known as the Levush after the title of his magnum opus.

- (a) Regina Griffel (1900-1954), daughter of David Mendel Griffel (1875-1941) and of Chawa Wahl (1877-1941), whose family were acknowledged descendants of Saul Wahl (1545-1617), scion of the Katzenellenbogen rabbis of Padua and Venice. Saul Wahl played a leading role in Polish affairs of state and according to legend became *Rex pro Tempore* during the interregnum that preceded the election of Sigismund III as Polish King in 1587.

Regina's grandfather Eliezer Griffel, head of the Nadworna community, married Sarah Matel Chayes, of the ancient Chayes family that included Isaac ben Abraham Chayes [1538-1617), Chief Rabbi of Prague, whose half sister was the first wife of the famous Rabbi Judah Loew (ca 1525-1609).

- (b) Esther Weinstein (1861-1907), daughter of Rabbi Hirsch Leib Weinstein of Solotwina and his wife Gittel. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Gittel was a daughter of Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz and his wife Miriam whose forebears were of an old Margolioth rabbinic line.

Rabbi Hirsch Leib's father was Rabbi Israel Jacob Weinstein, who was a contemporary of Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz in Solotwina.

- (c) David Isaac Gellis appears to have married again later in life. He was in his sixties when my grandfather was born in 1852. It is plausible to connect Nahum Uri's mother Sarah to Rabbi Efraim Fischel Horowitz, a half-brother of Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz, whose father Rabbi Jacob Jokel Horowitz of Bolechow [1772 - 1832] was of the ancient line going back via Rabbi Isaac Horowitz of Hamburg (1715-1767) to the one time head of the Jewish communities in Poland, Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz (1535-1618).

The implications of these Horowitz connections would be that Nahum Uri Gelles and his wife Esther Weinstein were 2nd (half) cousins.

- (d) Rabbi Shmuel Helman (Hillman) of Metz, who was of pan-European significance, allied his daughters to a rabbi of the priestly Katz family, to Katzenellenbogen and Rapaport rabbis and to a son of Chief Rabbi David Mirels Fraenkel of Berlin (1707-1762). Helman was also related by blood and marriage to the eminent Chief Rabbi of Prague. Ezekiel Landau (1713-1793).

- (e) Mordecai Gelles of Brody, a son of Moses Gelles of the Brody Klaus, was the father of Rabbi Samuel Gelles (d.1811). The latter married Sarah Rachel Sheindel, the only daughter of the great Chasidic Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz (1726-1791).

Issue of this Gelles – Shapiro marriage were known by the name of Polonsky from the area of Polonnoye (in present day Ukraine).

Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz was a direct descendant of the famous Rabbi of Cracow Nathan Nata Shapiro (1585-1633), whose line connects with the medieval Treves rabbis of France and goes back to the 11th century biblical scholar and commentator Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, known by the acronym of Rashi. The latter was widely believed to be of royal Davidic descent. My line's ancestral rabbinic families including the Treves, Luria, Shapiro, Loew, Katzenellenbogen, and Chajes, claimed connections to Rashi in their family trees

- (f) The marriage of Menachem Mendel Levush aka Moses Gelles of Brody with a daughter of Rabbi S. Gelles produced issue that formed alliances with Ramraz, Margoshes, HaKohen, Fraenkel, and other rabbinic families as well as the afore-mentioned connections with the families of Rabbis Shmuel Helman of Metz and Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz.

The use of both names Levush and Gelles continued for at least two generations after the above-mentioned Gelles– Levush marriage.

Earlier Levush or Yaffe and Gelles had met and married in Grodno and other towns in Lithuania and their lines go back to 16th century Prague, where a scion of the ancient Katz (HaKohen) married a daughter of Judah Loew and Mirl Chayes-Altschuler, leading to marriages of their progeny with Horowitz, Chayes, Gelles, Helman and others.

- (g) The father-in-law of Menachem Mendel Levush recorded as Rabbi S. Gelles, was probably Rabbi Shmuel Gelles of Siemiatycze, who was a great-grandson of Chief Rabbi Uri Feivush of Vilna. In old age, Uri Feivush became head of the Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem with the title of *Nasi* (circa 1650), a title that had been borne in the preceding generation by Rabbi Isaiah Halevi Ish Horovitz of Prague, Frankfurt, and Safed (d.1627).