

Treves connection and Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman (publ 2009)

The closely woven fabric of the Ashkenazi rabbinate that developed and flourished in Europe for more than a thousand years included a nexus formed by the Treivish or Treves family, who were important rabbis of France in the middle ages, with the Shapiro and Luria families. This nexus goes back to the great 11th century scholar and bible commentator Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes. Known by the acronym of Rashi, this scholar is widely believed to have been of Davidic royal descent. The links between Treves, Shapiro and Luria lead on to other great rabbinic families, in particular, the Katzenellenbogen rabbis of 16th century Padua and Venice, whose scion Saul Wahl (died 1617) played a significant role in Poland – Lithuania and in its Jewish community.

The Shapiro (or Spira), who were in Speyer and other towns in the Rhineland from medieval times and later lived in Poland and elsewhere, produced a line of undiminished intellectual vigour over many centuries. A lineage of twenty generations is adorned by Nathan Nata Spira of Grodno (died 1577), his grandson the great Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapiro of Cracow (died 1633), his direct descendant Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz (died 1791), a Chasidic leader of majestic moral stature, and his descendant, Rabbi Yehuda Meir Shapira of Lublin (died 1934), community leader, educator, and member of the Polish Parliament. The latter was an adherent of Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow (died 1933), scion of the great Chasidic dynasty founded by Israel of Ruzhin (died 1850). This family has ancient roots that include the Horowitz, Katzenellenbogen, and Shapiro.