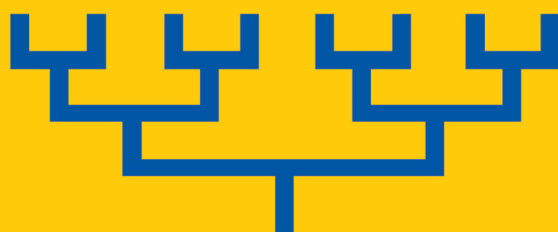


# Meeting my Ancestors

*Genealogy, Genes, and Heritage*



**Edward Gelles**

**Meeting my Ancestors**  
*Genealogy, Genes, and Heritage*

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**Edward Gelles**

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## **Bibliography**

For a select bibliography see my first book:

*An Ancient Lineage* (Valentine Mitchell, London, 2006)

References and notes relevant to the present work will also be found in the following books:

*Family Connections : Gelles – Horowitz – Chajes* (2008)

*Family Connections : Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman* (2009)

*Ephemeral & Eternal : a brief life of Josef Gelles* (2010)  
(Shaker Publishing B.V.)

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**The author and his father Dr David Gelles**





**The author's mother and elder brother Ludwig**

# Preface

*All the World's a Stage .....*  
*and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages*  
*W. Shakespeare, As You Like It*

I was in my early seventies when I felt a nagging curiosity about my family origins. This became an over-powering urge to restore the broken connections with my ancestors. On my 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, I am aware that I am playing “in extra time”. The history is still unfinished. If this is indeed my last Act, at least the epilogue still remains to be written



# Chapter 1

## *The Child is Father of the Man*

*W. Wordsworth*

### **Childhood in Vienna 1927-1938**

Before launching into Apologia for my current work I should introduce the child who is father of the man. My childhood in Vienna (1927-1938) and adolescence in London and Oxford (1938-1948) are the subjects of this first chapter. This chapter may provide hints as to why I ultimately felt impelled to delve into my family history, but does not fully explain the gap of fifty years before I took up the challenge, nor why I devoted over ten years to this work to the detriment of my physical health and bank balance. It is my purpose in writing these Apologia to reveal my goal as the attainment of self-knowledge through re-awakening forgotten ancestral links. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century I was a physical chemist and now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century I am as an alchemist seeking “the philosopher’s stone” to transmute historical material into spiritual treasure.

I was born in Vienna in 1927 as the second son of David Gelles, doctor of law and advocate in that city, and of Regina Griffel. Both my parents came from ultra-orthodox Jewish families in Austrian Galicia. My father’s people were Rabbis, while my mother’s family had extensive business interests. By the time of their marriage in 1921 at the main synagogue in Vienna David and Regina had become largely assimilated. They brought up their children in the secular mainstream of the time and this led to a lasting estrangement from their parents.

My father was a child of the enlightenment which had come late to the far distant corner of the Austrian Empire. In his youth his heroes would have been

Rousseau and Moses Mendelssohn. However, he did not forget the time he spent at the Munkacz yeshivah and in later days he could still lecture on Rashi or Maimonides to Jewish clubs and societies in which he played an active role. The break with his parents and their orthodox background came at a turning point in European history with the surge of nationalist feelings, of which Russian pogroms and the foundation of modern Zionism were two manifestations.

My father became a Zionist while he was a law student at Czernowitz and remained active in the movement until he died. He completed his studies in Vienna where he became *Doctor Juris* and Advocate at the beginning of the first world war. In inter-war Austrian and Jewish politics he adhered to a liberal– Zionist line. While my father’s break with orthodoxy was total and he had a completely modern European outlook some of the deepest family traditions were preserved in him, in some of his siblings, and in me. I refer to the millennial rabbinic pre-occupation with ethics, law, and education. His forefathers, as rabbis, were teachers and judges. So in the secular world he took to the law as his profession and made the education of his children one of his priorities. I included a short account of his life in my book “Family Connections: Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman” published in 2009.

My elder brother and I benefited from a happy and comfortable home background and from our father’s strong interest in education, with Latin and German classics replacing study of the Talmud. I enjoyed the best schooling Vienna had to offer. I was enrolled at the age of five years at the *Lehrer - Bildungsanstalt* (teachers training college) and then I had just one year at the top *Real Gymnasium* before we left Austria. Regular Sunday museum visits laid the foundations for my later interests in the fine and applied arts. I had private tutors for Hebrew and music. I regret that I have forgotten most of the former and showed little talent for the latter.

My main interests were in geography, history, and current affairs. I remember following the Spanish Civil war on the maps of my modern and historical atlases. I was given books on Jewish history and culture, but at the time I took more interest in German literature and poetry. To this day I know most poems of Heine and Schiller by heart.

Our close connections included the families of my paternal uncle Max and aunt Lotte, and on my mother's side, her brothers Zygmunt and Edward and their families, who often came to see us in Vienna. They lived in Poland but were well travelled cosmopolitan business people. As far as the children were concerned, knowledge of and contact with estranged grandparents was kept to a minimum.

My mother took me to Poland once at the invitation of my grandmother Chawa. I never met my maternal grandfather. The old Rabbi Gelles came to our apartment shortly before his death in 1934 to give us his blessing. That was the only occasion I saw him. My grandparents felt that my parents had broken the sacred millennial chain. The latter, on the other hand, were intent on shielding their children from the potent ancestral pull of the old religion. On the rare occasions that my father mentioned family antecedents I heard that the Gelles rabbis hailed from Brody and that there was a connection with the Friedman Grand Rabbis of Czortkow. My mother now and again said to me that we had "blue blood", referring to her mother's descent from Saul Wahl, who according to Jewish legend briefly exercised royal power during a Polish Interregnum. I had read in the German edition of the well-regarded "History of the Jewish People" by Simon Dubnow of "the bizarre whim of the Polish Szlachta who are supposed to have chosen Saul Wahl to wear the Crown for half a day during an Interregnum." I did not take this story seriously during my childhood days, but it became one of my starting points for research many decades later.

Pre-WW2 Vienna had a very large Jewish community with a wide spectrum of allegiance in religious and political matters. My father took an active interest in Jewish community affairs and in national politics, as well as his Zionist clubs. My mother looked after household and children and enjoyed what seemed to me a busy social life. My parents went out quite a lot and gave frequent dinner parties. We had marvellous summer holidays – a month by some lake in Austria or occasionally in Italy and then a month in the mountains. I am happy to think of my parents as having had a really good life in the years between the two world wars. Until the fateful year of 1938 I felt at home in Vienna with both my Austrian and my Jewish heritage. Most of our friends were Jewish, but I was not made personally aware of any anti-semitism in our daily lives. We had a spacious apartment in the City's affluent central district. Conditions may have been rather different in some other parts of the City. We had live-in maids who were invariably Catholic country girls. They got on very well with my mother and they were fond of her children. Our last maid, we called her Malette, was particularly devoted to us. One fateful day in March 1938 she took me for a walk. The crowds were lining the street to welcome columns of Nazi storm-troopers. There were cheers and Nazi salutes. I looked up at Malette and was horrified to see her right hand raised and an ecstatic look in her eyes. About five months later we made our tearful farewells before flying to our new life in England. I remember my father telling me that a member of his profession, who was an ardent Nazi, asked him why he was leaving Austria. He said "why don't you stay we don't mean Jews like you". In other words, he was thinking of poor shabby bearded Galician Jews like some of our cousins might have been. Lucky for us that my father did not take his advice. We left in August and by year's end all Jewish lawyers were struck off the list of advocates and thus denied a livelihood. And that was just the start of the persecution that led ultimately to mass murder.

## **Adolescence in London and Oxford 1938-48**

With the Anschluss of March 1938 and our flight to England in the summer of that year my Act 2 begins. The trauma of being refugees with the urgent need to make linguistic and cultural adjustments fell more heavily on my parents, particularly when it was subsumed in the greater trials of the second world war, economic hardships, separations, and finally the loss of my brother Ludwig in 1943, when the ship on which he was returning from Australia via New York was sunk by a U-Boat.

From much of this my parents tried to shield me – sending me first to an expensive boarding school – where at least I learned English and social history in record time, partly by immersing myself in a complete set of the Illustrated London News. At the end of 1940 we moved to Oxford to get away from the nightly air raids on London. I spent two years at the City of Oxford High School, where I obtained my School Certificate with eight distinctions including 100% in economic history (so the master informed me). We returned to our Bayswater flat in 1942 because my mother had a job in the Polish section of the BBC World Service. I did my sixth form studies at Haberdashers Aske's School in Hampstead, obtaining A levels in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics. In 1944 at the age of 16 years I went up to Balliol College and was awarded an open (Brackenbury) scholarship to read Chemistry. During the lengthy vacations I educated myself at the Porchester Road Public Library. My reading at that time was mainly modern English literature, European history, and contemporary affairs. Science was not my central interest during my undergraduate years. In those days I had the highest regard for A.D. Lindsay, later Lord Lindsay of Birker, the Master of Balliol, and for Cyril Hinshelwood, later Lord Hinshelwood, the Dr. Lee's Professor of Chemistry, and I believe they thought well of me. I was probably too young and shy to derive the fullest benefit from my time at Oxford.



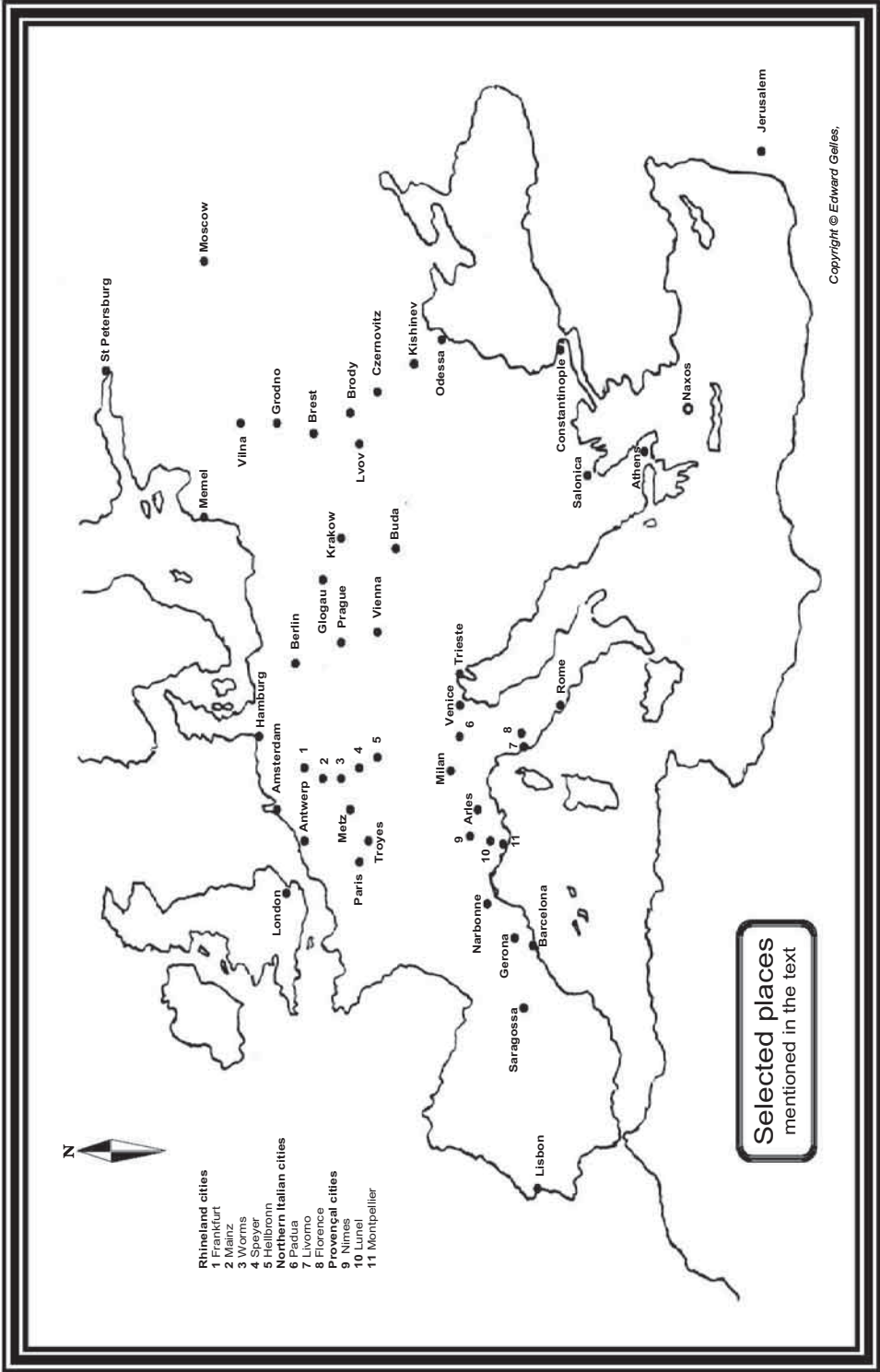
I made a painless transition from “alien refugee” to “British Subject” at the beginning of war, although we were not formally “naturalised” until 1944. My father’s British heroes were Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, partly because like the former he was a liberal and a solicitor and because the latter, revered as our great war leader, also had strong sympathies for the Zionist cause. We were also mindful of Britain’s moral leadership over many generations, its traditions of religious freedom and fair play, and much else.

As I began to emerge from adolescence and the clouds of war began to lift the cost to my family of the past decade came home to me. My grandparents David and Chawa Griffel, my aunt Rosa Gelles, and many cousins vanished without trace in the holocaust. Cousins who survived were dispersed all over the world and contacts were lost. The full effect of these events on my psyche took decades to make itself felt.

For a long time I had other matters in the forefront of my mind, my doctorate in physical chemistry and years in scientific research and teaching, my interest in antiques and fine art as a writer, part-time dealer, and collector, and the pursuit of other cultural interests. An account of this part of my life lies beyond the scope of this volume, which continues with my penultimate act opening in 1998. I had not forgotten those who perished in my younger days and the time came when thinking of them impelled me to seek a deeper connection with the history of my forebears.



The Seal of Kalonymos ben Todros of Narbonne, circa 1306, showing lion rampant within shield with inscription in Hebrew. The inscription on the reverse is in Langue d'Oc (By permission of the Archives Municipales de Narbonne and courtesy of M. Paul-Henri Viala). Both sides of the seal are illustrated in Figure 45 of my book *An Ancient Lineage* (Valentine Mitchell, London 2006)



**Rhineland cities**

- 1 Frankfurt
- 2 Mainz
- 3 Worms
- 4 Speyer
- 5 Aachen
- 6 Bonn

**North Italian cities**

- 7 Livorno
- 8 Florence

**Provençal cities**

- 9 Nîmes
- 10 Lunel
- 11 Montpellier

Selected places mentioned in the text

## Chapter 2

### **Ancestors and Lessons of the Past**

When I finally turned my mind to the task it took me just a few months to comprehend the life and times of my ancestor Saul Wahl (1545-1617). Far from being a bizarre whim of the Polish Szlachta that elevated Saul Wahl to high position in the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth - in Simon Dubnow's phrase - it became apparent to me that Polish magnates took him for what he was, a noble Jew who was their equal in the culture of their time, the son and grandson of famous rabbis of Padua and Venice, and quite probably educated at Padua University at a time when Polish noblemen flocked there to absorb Italian culture after attending the Jagellionian University in Cracow. The University of Padua allowed access to Jews and was the alma mater of many Jewish doctors as well as Poles. Indeed, the great Polish statesmen Jan Zamoyski, who was a contemporary of Wahl, became Chancellor of Padua University. Saul ben Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen known to history as Saul Wahl, would have spoken Italian and Latin, and known Hebrew and German, before setting out for Poland as a young man to study with his kinsman Rabbi Salomon Luria. In his time, profound knowledge of the Bible, as well as ancient and probably Davidic lineage, would have greatly impressed the Polish magnates. Saul became the protégé of Prince Radziwill, the most powerful nobleman in Lithuania. In due course he also became a leader of and spokesman for the economically important Jewish Community, and an extremely wealthy entrepreneur, aided by the concessions he obtained from his princely and royal patrons. And the rest is history or to be more precise Jewish history overlaid by legends.

This was the subject of my first published article (2000) and is also covered in my book “An Ancient Lineage” published in 2006, where references to the extensive literature will be found.

My article starts with the provocative question “How could the Italian grandson of a German Jew become King of Poland?”. The Union of Poland and Lithuania in 1569 was soon followed by the demise of the Jagiellonian dynasty and the institution of an elective monarchy with real power in the hands of a small number of immensely rich magnates. A professing Jew could not have taken the oath and worn the crown, but a role as *Rex Pro Tempore* leading to the delayed election of the Swedish Prince who ascended the throne as Zygmunt III is plausible in the light of documents recording the marked favour shown to Saul by the newly elected King and of Jewish literature on the subject.

Saul Wahl is established as an important historical character. He not only had a well documented ancestry but also an extensive progeny of unparalleled distinction into modern times, including scores of rabbis, philosophers and scholars such as Moses Mendelssohn, Karl Marx, Martin Buber, and Isaiah Berlin, the musicians Felix Mendelssohn- Bartholdy and Yehudi Menuhin, and many others. The descent from Saul Wahl of my maternal grandmother’s family rests on old family tradition and was given wide credence by their contemporaries. A book on the “History of the Samuel family” published about a hundred years ago refers to the proven Wahl pedigree of our cousins, the Wohls of Cracow. (Contrary to some legends I take the name “Wahl” given to Saul by his Polish friends in its medieval German sense “the Italian”. In Polish “Wohl” means “ox” and could refer to the sign of an ox on a shield. The Hebrew for “Ox” is “shor”. The old Wahl and Shor families were related and my Wahl and Wohl families are of one stem).

It took me a long time to trace my Wahl family and the children of my grandmother's siblings. The story takes up about a quarter of my "An Ancient Lineage". One of my mother's first cousins, a son of Blume Wahl, was Dr. Abraham Low (1891-1954), a distinguished psychiatrist in Chicago and a pioneer in community mental health care. Other first cousins of my mother, who were children of Rachel Wahl, included the Los Angeles businessman Ziga Taube (1905-1985), whose son Tad Taube is now numbered among the leading Jewish philanthropists in America.

My maternal great-grandmothers were Sarah Safier, the wife of Shulim Wahl, and Sarah Matel Chajes, the wife of Eliezer Griffel.

The ancient Chayes family can be traced from the Iberian peninsula to Provence, to 16<sup>th</sup> century Prague, on to Lithuania and Poland, and then to Italy, Germany, and Austria. It is now dispersed in Europe, America, and Israel. It produced many great rabbis including Isaac ben Abraham Chayes, Chief Rabbi of Prague and brother-in-law of the great Rabbi Judah Loew. From a daughter of the latter by his first wife Mirl Chayes-Altschuler, through her marriage to a scion of an ancient sacerdotal (Kohanic) line, descent can be traced to a number of related families. I appear to have Chayes as well as Katzenellenbogen on both my father's and my mother's side of the family tree.

In my first book and in the following "Family Connections: Gelles – Horowitz –Chajes" published in 2008 I showed how the old Chajes line was strengthened by marriages with descendants of the Katzenellenbogen and I explored an Italian branch of the family, who became merchant bankers in Tuscany. Guido Chajes was given the title of Count by King Carlos I of Portugal in 1904 for his services as Portuguese Vice-consul in Livorno and King Manuel II confirmed the title to Guido's son, Giorgio de Chajes in 1909.

A Chajes cousin, Hirsch Perez Chajes (1876-1927) was an important Chief Rabbi of Vienna. More distant members of the family were Oskar Chajes of Brody (1873-1928), a chess grand master who beat the world champion Jose Capablanca in 1916, Julius Chajes (1910-1985), the Israeli-American composer, and Abraham Chajes (1922-2000), a distinguished Professor of law at Harvard University.

My maternal great-grandfather Eliezer Griffel traced his family back to David Halevi Segal (1586-1667), the Chief Rabbi of Lvov, who was a son-in-law of Joel Sirkes, a Chief Rabbi of Cracow. Eliezer was the patriarch of a very large clan. He had ten children and his second son Isaac Chaim also had ten children, the most distinguished of these being my mother's first cousin Jacob Griffel (1900-1962). He is remembered for saving the lives of hundreds of Jews in Nazi occupied Europe through his tireless efforts on a rescue committee based in Istanbul.

It has taken me several years to take my paternal Gelles line back to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. My grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles was buried in Vienna so I had access to his tombstone which gave his father's name and stated that the family came from Brody, where his father's tombstone has survived. Several of the standard reference works on the Galician rabbinate to which I was introduced gave details of his father, Rabbi David Isaac Gellis, and of the connection with the influential Rabbi Shmuel Helman of Mannheim and Metz. An important manuscript with partial records of the Brody Beth Din from 1808 to 1817 contained much information on several generations of the Gelles rabbinic family. Taken together with the evidence from a number of other family tombstones and the results of lengthy searches of the Brody birth, marriage, death, and property records in the Lvov archives it became possible to construct a partial family tree showing seven generations back in a direct line to a mid 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the prestigious Brody Klaus called (Moses)

Menachem Mendel Levush who married a daughter of a Rabbi S. Gelles and was then known as Moses Gelles. A study of community life in Brody of that period showed that the name of Levush was very probably indicative of descent from the famous Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague (1530-1612), who was known as the Levush after the title of his magnum opus. Mordecai Yaffe was in turn Chief Rabbi of Grodno, Prague, and Posen. He was one of the prime movers in the establishment of the semi-autonomous Council of the Four Lands that governed Polish Jewry until 1764. The Yaffe family was prominent in medieval Bologna, became distinguished in 16<sup>th</sup> century Prague, and were of importance in Poland, Lithuania, and further afield. The mothers of Saul Wahl and of Chief Rabbi Joel Sirkes of Cracow, to name but two, were of the Yaffe family.

Italian family connections include the Katzenellenbogen of Padua and Venice, the Chalfan who came from Provence, and the great and ancient Kalonymos family, who also flourished in Narbonne and the Rhineland in the middle ages.

The Kalonymos Jewish princes of Narbonne had a lineage believed to go back to a marriage of a Davidic descendant of Babylonian Exilarchs with a Carolingian princess.

The marriages between Jews and Frankish nobles from the days of Charlemagne's grandfather is a fascinating chapter of medieval history, heavily overlaid with legends and romanticised by famous epics composed over a period of several centuries. There is little doubt that in this and ensuing periods a Jewish strain entered European noble houses. The whole subject of intermarriages is beyond the scope of this short summary as it is older than the great religions themselves and changed its character and extent over thousands of years. It continues to be of historical significance long after the time when claims of Davidic descent could play a role in effecting dynastic changes.



In later times, the number of conversions and intermarriages waxed and waned between successive crises, and so it continued until the era of 20<sup>th</sup> century genocide, when “racial” hatred superseded religious intolerance to become – together with perennial economic tensions - the driving force behind millennial persecution. Since the evil days of the Nazi holocaust that part of the world that is heir to Judeo-Christian civilisation appears to be heading towards a multi-ethnic religiously tolerant future. The easing of ancient antagonisms has increased the pace of Jewish assimilation.

The barest outline of the history of Jewish migrations over the past three or four millennia starts in the Middle East. The journeys of the lost ten tribes of Israel are the subject of many legends. Since the time of the Babylonian captivity there was a large community in exile in Mesopotamia and beyond. There were settlements around the entire Mediterranean littoral, in Anatolia and the Caucasus and in North Africa. The community in Egypt rose to considerable importance.

We have been in Europe for a long time. It has been said that the Jews were the first true Europeans. There were ancient Jewish settlements in Italy, Iberia, and the Rhineland. After the fall of the second temple in Roman times large numbers came to Italy and thence found their way across the Alps. In the period of the crusades there began an intermittent migration from western Europe in a generally eastward direction. The expulsions from Spain and Portugal at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century brought many Jews to Holland and also to the Ottoman Empire. In this period German and Bohemian Jews continued to move to Lithuania and Poland, joining earlier migrants there and later heading south to Hungary and to the Black Sea. They met others who had proceeded from Anatolia and then up the river valleys to present day Roumania and Poland.

Many Ashkenazi rabbinic families in my ancestral background traced their descent from the 11<sup>th</sup> century bible commentator and scholar Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, known as Rashi. Some of these ancestors, such as the forebears of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, were from the Rhineland while others can be traced from Portugal, the Spanish March, and Provence. The latter included the Chayes and Chalfan, and a sprig of the Shem Tov Halevi who became the Horowitz in Bohemia. They had a Sephardic background long before they migrated to central and eastern Europe. Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe's family was in Bologna in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but the name is also found in Spanish records of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Branches of these families came to Prague in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries and subsequently went to points further to the east. They remained inbred for hundreds of years, marrying within this narrow circle and living in largely segregated communities. We now know the dangers of excessive inbreeding, but on the other hand some lineages were clearly successful in breeding for intellectual ability. Genetic reinforcement through selected marriages and maximal environmental encouragement produced lines of 10 or even 20 generations of rabbis, some of outstanding quality and achievement, as in the case of the Shapiro, Chayes, Horowitz, and others.

In the early days of our European odyssey there may well have been some intermarriage with Italians, Goths, and Franks. In later times there were tales of liaisons with a Polish king or two, nor can we exclude the possibility of outrage by Cossacks in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

There has been some controversy about genetic input from the Khazars, whose domain stretched north of the Black Sea. In the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries some of their upper class converted to Judaism. As for the branches of my family with ancient Italian, Iberian and Provencal roots, it seems very doubtful if these Khazars could have been genealogically significant.

The familial circle of rabbinic families endeavoured to preserve their endogamous identity, but there was a continuous cultural and economic interaction with their environment to which my ancestors contributed within a millennial time frame. I think that I have been largely fashioned by the Judeo-Christian culture of western and central Europe.

Having uncovered at least some of my ancestral roots that were a closed book to me until ten years ago, I have come to realise that I am heir to a rich genetic and cultural inheritance preserved by a group of families who may in some instances go back to biblical times but who were certainly the bedrock of European Jewry for more than a thousand years. My personal experience and the history of my family have also led me to believe that with this inheritance come “ancestral memories” that have somehow passed down over the centuries and, slumbering in our unconscious minds, are able to exert a powerful influence at certain times in our lives. These “ancestral memories” encompass our deepest spiritual feelings which can find expression outside a formalised religious life. On Jewish epitaphs one often reads “may the merit of our ancestors protect us”. The thought that the deeds of the living are of benefit to the souls of the departed is also found in the Talmud. It seems as if an invisible chain links the generations as long as the souls of the living remain receptive to the “message”.

While I have found many references to the great merit of some of my ancestors I have not succumbed to a kind of “ancestor worship” but rather I have been confirmed in my belief in the familial particularity of inheritance including the genetic code that is now amenable to study as an increasingly important part of genealogical enquiry.

In the opening paragraphs of this essay I posed some difficult questions - why I embarked on this study at a particular time and persevered for so long and

whether my efforts have been worthwhile. I hope that my published and unpublished work will provide answers to these questions in due course.

***Was du ererbt von deinen Vätern hast, erwirb es um es zu besitzen***

*J.W.Goethe, Faust*



## Chapter 3

### Gelles - Levush and Yaffe

My immediate paternal line goes back to the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Brody and the marriage of a scholar Moses Menachem Mendel Levush to a daughter of a Rabbi S. Gelles. This scholar, who was a member of the prestigious Brody Klaus, was subsequently known as Moses Gelles, while his progeny used both names of Gelles and Levush for two to three generations.

It was customary in those times to distinguish descendants of famous scholars by using the titles of their books as an epithet. It is very probable that the name Levush refers to the *Levushim* of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague. Some Gelles and Yaffe connections appear to go back from Brody in Galicia, to Grodno in Lithuania, and further back to Prague.



## Gelles-Levush

**Edward Gelles**

[b. 1927]

|

Dr. David Gelles [1883-1964]

advocate in Vienna

m Regina Griffel (a)

|

Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles [1852-1934]

Chief Rabbi of Solotwina nr Stanislaw

m Esther Weinstein (b)

|

Rabbi David Isaac Gellis [ca 1790-1870]

of Glina and Brody

m Sarah (Horowitz ?) (c)

|

Rabbi Moses Gelles

m grand-daughter of Shmuel Helman

Chief Rabbi of Metz [d.1764] (d)

?

Rabbi Mordecai Gelles of Brody

father or uncle of the above

and father of Rabbi Samuel Gelles (e)

|

(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

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 claimed descent from 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] a 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 rabbinical 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 community 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 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].

A Gelles connection went through Helman's eldest son, Rabbi Moshe of Glogau.

(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 11<sup>th</sup> 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 Davidic royal descent. 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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, may perhaps have been 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].



## Chapter 4

### Gelles and Polonsky - Shapiro

Two grandsons of Moses Gelles, a scholar of the Brody Klaus, were forebears of separate cousinly lines in Galicia and in the Ukraine. The Gelles line from Brody continued with the eponymous grandson Moses Gelles, who married a daughter of Rabbi Moshe of Glogau, the eldest son of Rabbi Shmuel Helman of Metz.

Another grandson, Samuel ben Mordecai Gelles, married the only daughter of Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz and became the progenitor of a line of rabbis in the Kiev Gubernya (within the Russian Empire) where he was recorded as Shmuel Mordkovich Polonsky, after the town of Polonnoye (Polonne).

The “new town” of Polonnoye is connected by legend with the last resting place of the Brody scholar Moses Gelles, whose epitaph reportedly read “Moses the servant of God”.

In my previous book “Family Connections: Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman” (pp 40 - 41) I reproduced Letters of Rabbinical Appointment of Rabbi Samuel (1793) and of his grandson Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas (1831). They do not contain any reference to the name of Polonsky that is found in the Russian town censuses. This name seems to have come into regular family use at a later date.

**Rabbi Shimshon Ahron Polonsky (1876-1948)**

***Chidushei Horav miTeplik*, pp 46-51 (Jerusalem 1984)**

Rabbi Shimshon Ahron Polonsky gives his pedigree as follows:

1 The gaon R. Moshe Gelles, a scholar of the Brody Klaus

2 The gaon R. Mordecai Gelles of Brody

3 The gaon R. Shmuel, Rabbi of Kolniblot in Podolia and regional Rabbi of the towns of Zvenigorodka, Tolna, Shpola, and Kalerka....

The pedigree continues with successors in the rabbinate, his son R. Ahron, his son R. Eliyahu Pinchas, his son R. Menachem Nahum of Czernowitz [but also described as Rabbi of the above named communities], his son R. Avraham Yitzchak Polonsky [the name of Polonsky is here used for the first time].

I, the undersigned Shimshon Ahron Polonsky....

This is followed by a hand written MS :

I the undersigned Rabbi Shimshon Ahron, son of the gaon R. Avraham Yitzchak, son of the gaon R. Menachem Nachum, son of the gaon R. Eliyahu, son of the gaon R. Ahron, son of the gaon R. Shmuel, son of the gaon R. Mordechai Gelles, son of the gaon R. Moshe Gelles, a scholar of the Brody Klaus.

**Matityahu Yechezkiel Guttman,**

***Rabbi Pinchas miKoretz*, pp 46-47 (Tel Aviv 1950)**

He [Rabbi Pinchas] also had a daughter, the wife of the holy Rabbi Shmuel, son of the holy Rabbi Mordechai, Rabbi of Kolnibolet in Russia.... He [Shmuel] was the father of the holy Rabbi Ahron, father of the holy Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas ...

**Levi Grossman,**

***Shem U' She'erith*, p 92 (Tel Aviv 1943)**

Rachel Sheindel, daughter of Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz married Rabbi Shmuel, son of Rabbi Mordechai, son of Rabbi Moshe Gelles, one of the scholars of the Brody Klaus, whose epitaph refers to him as "Moses the Servant of God"

**Gelles and Polonsky**  
**lines from grandsons of Moses Gelles**

Moses Gelles or Levush  
scholar of the Brody Klaus

|

R. Mordecai Gelles of Brody

---

**R. Shmuel Helman of Metz**

died 1764

---

|

**grand-daughter**  
**m R. Moses Gelles**

|

R. David Isaac Gellis  
of Glina and Brody  
ca. 1790 -1870

|

R. Nahum Uri Gelles  
of Solotwina  
1852-1934

|

Dr. David Gelles  
of Vienna  
1883-1964

|

Dr. Edward Gelles  
of London  
1927-

---

**R. Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz**

1726-1791

---

|

**daughter m**

-----

**R. Shmuel Gelles (Polonsky)**  
died 1811

|

R. Ahron (Polonsky)  
1787- 1830

|

R. Eliyahu Pinchas (Polonsky)  
1803-1855

|

R. Menachem Nahum (Polonsky)

|

R. Abraham Isaac Polonsky  
1851-1900

|

R. Shimshon Ahron Polonsky  
Rabbi of Teplik  
1876-1948

Gelles family links to the Shapiro rabbinical line stretch back for several centuries. They are described in my books “An Ancient Lineage” and “Family Connections : Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman”.

The patriarch of my Gelles line was the 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the Brody Klaus, Moses Menachem Mendel Levush, who was known as Moses Gelles after his marriage to a daughter of Rabbi S(amuel) Gelles. I am descended from an eponymous grandson, whose Gelles or Gellis line was based in Brody and other Galician towns that remained part of the Austrian Empire from 1772 until 1918.

Another grandson of the scholar Moses Gelles was Rabbi Samuel, son of Mordecai Gelles of Brody. He married Sarah Rachel Sheindel, the only daughter of the great Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz. Rabbi Samuel settled in an area that was in his day a part of the Russian Empire, where he was known as Shmuel Mordkovich Polonsky, after the town of Polonnoye. He was the first of a line of five Polonsky Rabbis of Kolnibolet (Ekaterinopol) and the nearby towns of Zvenigorodka, Tolna, Shpola, and Kalerka, situated some way south of Kiev.

Genealogical evidence that my ancestor Moses Gelles was indeed the grandson of the scholar Moses Gelles of Brody came from known dates and locations, but a definite identification of his father proved elusive, although he was tentatively named as Mordecai Gelles or one of his siblings. This Mordecai Gelles of Brody was documented as the son of the Brody scholar and as the father of Samuel of Polonnoye.

Quite recently Y-chromosome DNA tests of a documented descendant of the latter have shown a very close match with mine, thus providing confirmation

that Moses Gelles, the scholar of the Brody Klaus was a common ancestor within the time frame indicated by the DNA results. In my book “Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman” I referred to a collection of stories about the saintly founder of the Chasidic movement, the Baal Shem Tov (pp 33–38, reference 21), In the English translation entitled “In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov” there is a tale that the Besht, as he was also called, was travelling from Polonnoye to the “new town” and that on passing a Jewish cemetery he perceived a pillar of fire marking the grave of a tzaddik (a wholly righteous man) whose epitaph read “Moses the servant of God”. The translators suggested that this new town was to be identified with Novograd Volynsky (formerly Zviagel known to the Jews as Zvihl). This town was some distance to the north of Polonnoye. My Hebrew translator has now drawn my attention to a passage in the book of Sayings and Teaching of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz called “Imrei Pinchas” ( ed Pinchas Ehrenberg and Yechezkiel Shraga Fraenkel, published Tel Aviv 1974, p. 221). It states that Rabbi Pinchas was travelling to Polonnoye (not far from Shepetivka, see my sketch map on p. 34 of GSF) and that he went from “the new town” to “the old town” to visit the Rabbi of Polonnoye. This suggests that “Moses the Servant of God”, tentatively identified as the scholar Moses Gelles of the Brody Klaus, died while in Polonnoye and was buried there. It would tie in with the family of his grandson Rabbi Samuel Gelles having a connection with Polonnoye and therefore becoming known by the name of Polonsky.

A reviewer of my previous book suggested that I had become captivated by the chasidic tales of my forebears. I should like to assure him and any of my readers who might jump to a similar conclusion that I have indeed endeavoured to empathise with the traditions of my ancestors and that I write about Chasidic history with all the respect someone largely severed from those traditions can bring to them.





## Chapter 5

### Genes and Genealogy

The application of DNA studies in support of genealogical enquiry is rapidly gaining in importance as new matching tests are devised and the size and diversity of accessible data banks continue to grow. The author's Y-DNA and autosomal DNA tests have provided results that significantly support details of the Gelles line from Brody, as indicated by previous genealogical research, and are also giving pointers to connections with Gelles and related families in other parts of central and eastern Europe.

The tests carried out by FamilyTree DNA of Houston, Texas have produced Y-DNA 37 marker and 67 marker matches of direct male descent over periods of several hundred years.

Mitochondrial DNA tests that focus on descent along a strictly female line from -mother to daughter - have provided hundreds of matches that may go back over considerably longer periods of time and are presently of more interest to anthropological than to genealogical study.

The same company's relatively new "Family Finder" test compares shared blocks of DNA across the 22 autosomal chromosomes. When matching DNA segments are found that appear to be identical by descent the closeness of the relationship is calculated from the number and size of shared segments. Matches thrown up by this test are useful in pointing to shared ancestry irrespective of sex over a relatively small number of generations. This test promises to be of increasing value to genealogy as data bases expand and the algorithms underlying the calculations are refined.



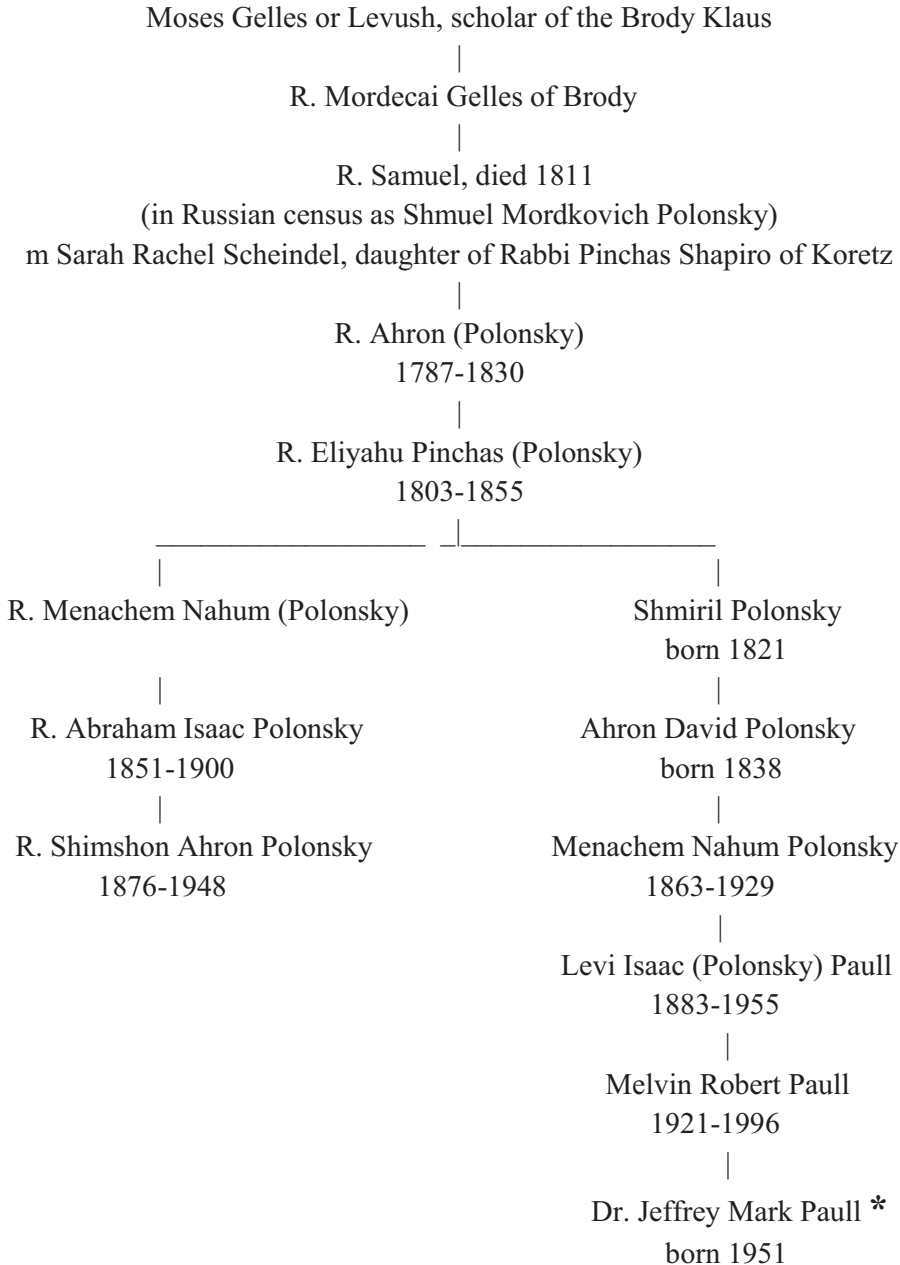
## **Y-chromosome DNA matches and Common Ancestry**

My genealogical studies of the Gelles rabbis hailing from Brody in Austrian Galicia included the family connection to the great 18<sup>th</sup> century Chasidic Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz, whose daughter married Rabbi Samuel, son of Rabbi Mordecai Gelles of Brody. The rabbinical line descended from this Gelles – Shapiro union was outlined in my books published in 2006 and 2009.

In the ten years that I have been engaged in these studies I have had a number of extra-ordinarily serendipitous findings. I might add to these the news I received in an e-mail in November 2009 from Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull of California, who introduced himself to me as my cousin and described how his reading of my first book “An Ancient Lineage” helped him to identify his family line as being of Gelles–Shapiro descent. His own researches had established that he was a direct descendant of Shmiril Polonsky, one of the sons of Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas of Ekaterinopol, who was a great-great grandson of Moses Gelles of the Brody Klaus and a great-grandson of Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz.

His family has been in America for several generations and has flourished and multiplied. Immediate forebears changed the Polonsky name to Paull but a number of closely related families retain the Polonsky name. Jeffrey invited me to compare my Y-chromosome markers with his. Accordingly I chose FamilyTree DNA of Houston, Texas to carry out my own tests so as to provide a direct comparison with his data. These Y-DNA tests have shown that we are of the same rare R2 haplogroup and have exact 12 marker and 25 marker matches as well as a 36 / 37 match for the 37 marker tests.

## Polonsky and Paull



I am indebted to Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull for details of his descent from Shmiril, a son of Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas, prior to the publication of his book on the history of the Polonsky-Paull family.

## **Levi Grossman**

***Shem U' She'erith* (Tel Aviv 1945)**

### **p, 91**

R. Shmuel of Kolniblot was the father of (1) R. Ahron ABD of Kolniblot and (some say) also of (2) the wife of R. Israel Nachman Halpern ABD of Zvenigorodka, (3) the wife of Abraham of Sudilkov (son of R. Wolf Balter).

### **p. 92**

Rabbi Shmuel, son of R. Mordechai, son of R. Moshe Gelles—scholar of the Brody Klaus whose tombstone refers to him as “Moshe the servant of God” [R. Shmuel] was the husband of Rachel Sheindel, daughter of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz. His [R. Shmuel’s] son R. Ahron of Kolniblot, son-in-law of R. Daniel David, son of R. Shemarya of Verchifka who passed away in 1786, was husband of his daughter Henia.

His [Ahron’s] son R. Eliyahu Pinchas married Sima, daughter of R. Aryeh Leib Bender. R. Eliyahu Pinchas had four sons R. Nachum, R. Shmerel, R. David Samuel, R. Ahron Meir, and a daughter Chana Chava, wife of R. Israel Nachman Halpern of the Brzezany (Heilprin rabbinical) dynasty. R. Nachum had a son, R. Avraham Yitzchak of Kolniblot who passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> Tevs 5760 at the age of 49, and he has a distinguished son.

### **p.93**

R. Shimshon Ahron Polonsky, the Rabbi of Teplik, who is now [at the time of writing] in Jerusalem. He is married to Miryam daughter of [his brother-in-law] R. Moshe Rabinowitz of the Krasne dynasty, currently in the U.S.A [for information on the Rabinowitz-Polonsky branch see *Toldoth Anshei Shem*, New York 1950, pp 122-123].

R. David Shmuel married Rachel, daughter of R. Eliezer Lieber of Kodony – a descendant of the great R. Lieber of Berdichev and of ... R. Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev. He [R. David Shmuel] is the father of R. Mordechai Polonsky (father-in-law of R. Dov Averbuch, father of R. Tzvi Menachem Averbuch of Tel Aviv) and of R. Levi Yitzchak ABD Nigresht (son-in-law of R. Aryeh Leib of Bender) [whose daughter Sheindel was the mother of R. Matityahu Guttman].

## Y-DNA-37 marker test for Dr. Edward Gelles

carried out by FamilyTree DNA (10<sup>th</sup> August 2010)

### PANEL 1 (1-12)

Locus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DYS#	393	390	19*	391	385a	385b	426	388	439	389-1	392	389-2
Alleles	14	23	14	10	13	20	12	12	11	14	10	29

### PANEL 2 (13-25)

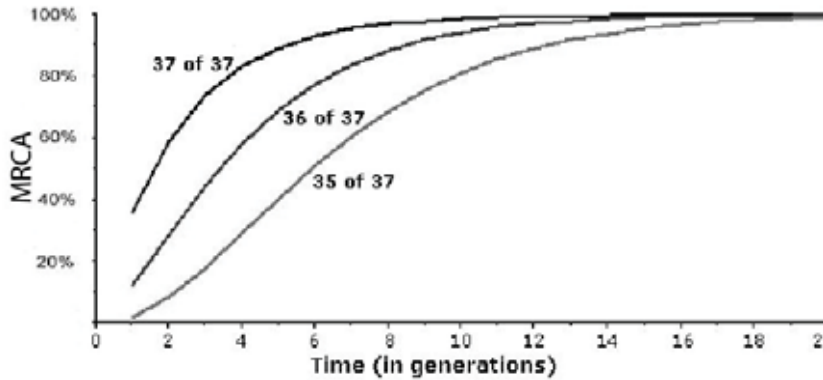
Locus	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
DYS#	458	459a	459b	455	454	447	437	448	449	464a**	464b**	464c**	464d**
Alleles	16	9	9	11	11	25	14	19	33	12	12	15	16

### PANEL 3 (26-37)

Locus	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
DYS#	460	GATA H4	YCA II a	YCA II b	456	607	576	570	CDY a	CDY b	442	438
Alleles	10	10	20	20	15	15	18	22	34	34	12	11

**Y-DNA 37 marker test for Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull  
is identical except for Alleles reading 17 instead of 18 at Locus 32.**

**Approximate Time Frame for Most Recent Common Ancestor  
Genetic Distance 1 in Y-DNA 37 marker tests (36 of 37)**  
[FamilyTree DNA, Houston Texas, USA]



The time frame for a most recent common ancestor in the case of Y-chromosome 37 marker matches is based on certain assumptions so that the probabilities for the number of generations leading to that common ancestor as shown in the appended table are to be taken as only indicative.



## Tip Report from Family Tree DNA

Y-chromosome DNA tests for Drs. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Edward Gelles showed both to be of the R2 haplogroup which is relatively rare amongst European Jews.

### Comparison Chart

Comparing 37 markers, the probability that **Jeffrey Mark Paull** and **Edward Gelles** shared a common ancestor within the number of stated generations :

Generations	Percentage
4	57.59%
8	88.15%
12	97.14%
16	99.36%
20	99.86%
24	99.97%

The above report by FamilyTree DNA demonstrates that the said Drs. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Edward Gelles have a common ancestor within a recent time frame and this is perfectly compatible with the prior genealogical findings that the common ancestor was Moses Gelles, the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century scholar of the Brody Klaus, Drs. Edward Gelles and Jeffrey Mark Paull being the direct 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> generation descendants of the said scholar Moses Gelles.

The Y-DNA evidence also removes any remaining doubts as to whether the younger Moses Gelles was a grandson of the scholar of the Brody Klaus through one of the latter's sons. At least for the time being, it leaves open the question whether the younger Moses Gelles was a brother or a cousin of Samuel ben Mordecai Gelles aka Polonsky ( see the two preceding charts on p.29 and p.36 ).

## Y-DNA 67 Marker Test for Dr. Edward Gelles

### PANEL 1 (1-12)

Locus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
DYS#	393	390	19*	391	385a	385b	426	388	439	389-1	392	389-2
Alleles	14	23	14	10	13	20	12	12	11	14	10	29

### PANEL 2 (13-25)

Locus	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
DYS#	458	459a	459b	455	454	447	437	448	449	464a**	464b**	464c**	464d**
Alleles	16	9	9	11	11	25	14	19	33	12	12	15	16

### PANEL 3 (26-37)

Locus	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
DYS#	460	GATAH4	YCAIIa	YCAIIb	456	607	576	570	CDYa	CDYb	442	438
Alleles	10	10	20	20	15	15	18	22	34	34	12	11

### PANEL 4 (38 - 47)

Locus	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47
DYS#	531	578	395S1a	395S1b	590	537	641	472	406S1	511
Alleles	11	8	17	17	8	10	10	8	11	10

### PANEL 4 (48 - 60)

Locus	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
DYS#	425	413a	413b	557	594	436	490	534	450	444	481	520	446
Alleles	12	21	22	16	9	12	12	15	8	12	25	22	13

### PANEL 4 (61 - 67)

Locus	61	62	63	64	65	66	67
DYS#	617	568	487	572	640	492	565
Alleles	12	11	13	11	11	13	12

\*Also known as DYS 394 \*\*On 5/19/2003, these values were adjusted down by 1 point because of a change in Lab nomenclature.

**The Y-DNA 67 marker results for Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull are identical except for Alleles reading 17 instead of 18 at Locus 32 and 14 instead of 13 on Locus 60**

Gratifying reassurance regarding the validity of the above conclusions came from upgrading the Y-DNA tests from 37 to 67 markers.

No matches were found with my results at the 67/67 or 66/67 marker levels. Only one match was found at a genetic distance of 2, i.e. at 65/67 and this was with Dr. Jeffrey Paull. A few matches were found at a greater genetic distance – one match at 64, one at 63, seven matches at 62, one at 61, and one at 60 out of 67 markers. Common ancestors with these more distant connections must be further back in time, and estimates made by FTDNA place these MRCAs (most recent common ancestors) back by about 10 generations or more for 65/67 to perhaps 20 generations or more for 60/67. In Jewish genealogy of earlier centuries an often adopted rule of thumb was to take the average length of a generation as 25 years, as do FTDNA, but of course these vary from family to family and have been lengthening in more recent times. Calculations of TMRCAs involve assumptions about mutation rates, endogamy, and other factors and are subject to continuing refinement.

FTDNA are developing data bases of recent ancestral origins in collaboration with the University of Arizona. Distant matches with my Y-DNA 67 marker results indicate some shared Lithuanian roots a few hundred years ago. These are consistent with indications from my genealogical and historical studies that some of my paternal Brody line had come down to Galicia from Lithuania around the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. I saw this as part of a longer term migration from Western Europe involving 16<sup>th</sup> / 17<sup>th</sup> century Prague as one of the cross-roads from West to East. Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe of Prague became Chief Rabbi of Grodno before moving back to Prague and then to Posen. There were Gelles (Gellis) in Prague and later in Grodno side by side with Jaffe and there were recorded marriages between them. From Grodno some might have gone north to Gorzd and Kretinga and to Memel and west to Silesia, while southward movements did not stop in Galicia but went further in the 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to Bukowina, and Hungary, to Eisenstadt and the “Siebengemeinde”, in the Burgenland, and to Baden near Vienna. This migration is discussed in my book *An Ancient Lineage* on pp 317-320. A sketch map, reproduced below, indicates the incidence of the Gelles name in parts of central and eastern Europe.

## Incidence of the Gelles name with some approximate dates

PRUSSIA

- *Kretinga*
- Memel* ▪ *19<sup>th</sup> C*
- *Gorzd*

LITHUANIA

□ *Vilna*

▪ *Grodno 17<sup>th</sup> / 18<sup>th</sup> C*

SILESIA

Posen □

*Glogau* ▪

▪ *Krotoschin 19<sup>th</sup> C*

*Stemiatyce* ▪

*17<sup>th</sup> C*

VOLHYNIA

□ *Prague 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> C*

*Krakow* □

▪ *Novy Sacz 18<sup>th</sup> C*

BOHEMIA

*Vienna* □

*Baden* ▪

*18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> C*

AUSTRIA

*Lyov* □

▪ *Brody 17<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> C*

▪ *Gliwa*

▪ *Berezhany*

▪ *Tarnopol*

▪ *Czortkow*

PODOLIA

*Stanislau* ▪

*Kolomea* ▪

□ *Czernowitz*

BUKOWINA

*Jassi* ▪

□ *Kishinev 19<sup>th</sup> C*

MOLDAVIA

## **“Family Finder” test for autosomal DNA matches**

Needless to say, the value of the information provided by DNA tests is dependent on the amount of genealogical background knowledge, and this in turn may be advanced by combining several different types of DNA test. Thus the information on strictly father to son patrilineal descent gathered from Y-chromosome DNA tests may be supplemented by that obtained from comparisons of shared segments of autosomal DNA. Analysis of shared identical segments within the FamilyTreeDNA “Family Finder” database is directed to revealing common ancestors of either sex within about five generations, but the underlying algorithm for these calculations has not yet adequately allowed for the degree of inbreeding within a small circle of related rabbinical families. Most recent common ancestors may therefore be further away than the tests suggest. The “Family Finder” test records the total sum of autosomal DNA shared between two persons (measured in centiMorgans) and the largest single shared DNA segment. When this single block exceeds 10cM it is considered to indicate a definite shared ancestry in genealogical time. The total number of shared segments is clearly also of interest.

My “Family Finder” test threw up 361 names who are evaluated as 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> cousins, but I believe that with many of them any common ancestry may go back further than that. The mass of data I have obtained from this and other DNA tests may prove of inestimable value at some time in the future when the genealogy has managed to “catch up”. It is beyond the scope of this volume to go into detail, but I may perhaps illustrate how these tests can further genealogical enquiry. Dr. Jeffrey Mark Paull and Dr. Saul Issroff appear in my list of distant cousins. Compared with me, their amount of shared cM, their largest shared block, and number of shared segments is roughly the same in each case, namely about 80 cM, 10 cM, and 21. The Y-DNA tests confirmed that Dr. Paull shared a patrilineal Gelles ancestor with me 250 years ago. I am not aware of any points of contact between our female ancestors within the past few generations. Interestingly, Dr. Issroff shares no chromosome segments with Dr. Paull nor does he figure in my distant Y-DNA matches, I would guess that his match with me may go back to Lithuania quite a long time ago.

The appearance of another distant cousin in the “Family Finder” test prompted me to revisit my earlier writing on the numerous families by the name of Gelles who lived in Eisenstadt in the Burgenland, in the nearby “Seven Communities”, and in Baden near Vienna (see my attached map).

Melitta Lowy Garbuny showed a DNA match characterised by figures for total shared DNA of 92 cM, a longest block of 10 cM, and 24 shared segments. Her daughter Carole Garbuny Vogel informed me that Melitta’s father’s family came from Mattersdorf and were related by marriage to Gelles of that locality. Carole G. Vogel has extensively researched the major families of Mattersdorf and is in the process of constructing genealogies for all of them from the late 1600’s.

The Schischa Halevi family in Mattersdorf had many branches. Two of these branches adopted the name of Loewy. The Gelles of Mattersdorf appear to have come from Eisenstadt.

In *An Ancient Lineage* (2006) p. 234 I wrote “Some Jews expelled from Vienna in 1670 went to Eisenstadt where they enjoyed the protection of the Esterhazys. Following the expulsion of the Turks from Hungary in 1686 Jews were forced to leave Ofen (Budapest) and many joined those who had settled earlier in the *Siebengemeinde*. During the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was an influx of Moravian and Galician Jews into Hungary. Eisenstadt grew at that time into a notable center of Jewish learning”. My Galician great-great-grandfather Rabbi Moses Gelles married a daughter of Rabbi Moshe of Glogau (the eldest son of Rabbi Shmuel Helman of Metz) and another daughter called Chana married Yechiel Michal Segal (ca 1740-1819) who became ABD of Eisenstadt. He was the son of Asher Lemel (1705-1789), the ABD of Glogau and Eisenstadt. Gelles connections with that city are recorded in Bernard Wachstein, *Die Grabschriften des Alten Judenfriedhofes in Eisenstadt* and in his *Urkunden und Akten zur Geschichte der Juden in Eisenstadt*, extracts from which are quoted in my earlier book on pp 236-237.

In Mattersdorf the Schischa Halevi also had a connection by marriage with Loewel but it is not clear whether these Loewel and Schischa were also blood relatives. Isaak Schischa married Fradel Loewel, whose father Alexander Loewel of Mattersdorf was the first Jew allowed to establish a business in Baden near Vienna in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Alexander’s two sons-in-law were the said Isaak Schischa and Jacob Gelles.

These Loewel, Schischa, and Gelles connections in Baden are discussed in Thomas E. Schaerf's book *Juedisches Leben in Baden*, Mandelbaum Verlag, 2005, pp 30-31.

The movement of Gelles between Eisenstadt, Mattersdorf, and Baden requires further elucidation, but the discovery of a distant Gelles cousin from Mattersdorf through DNA testing has added support to my previously suggested links between Gelles in Galicia and Gelles in Eisenstadt and neighbouring Austrian communities.

However, I must emphasise that, generally speaking, I remain very cautious about accepting any suggestions of more or less distant consanguinity between my immediate Gelles family and other families bearing the same name. Suggestions based on "Family Finder" DNA matches must be treated with scepticism unless or until convincing genealogical documentation or historical evidence comes to hand.

Beyond this brief outline of DNA tests in the service of genealogy lies the much wider field of genetics in the study of body and mind – including genetic inheritance of specific diseases and of intellectual ability.

The current debate about Ashkenazi intelligence involves the question of inheritance versus environment. My genealogical studies of a limited number of rabbinic families since the days of Rashi in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, as well as a few supportive DNA tests, can provide relevant data for this debate. My family background exhibits generations of inbreeding, talmudic scholars intellectually trained from earliest childhood, and large families often supported by business enterprise or marriages to wealthy families, who also had rabbinic connections and placed a high value on scholarship. The debate must draw on many fields including psychology, genetics, genealogy, demography, and cultural, social, political, and economic history.



FamilyTreeDNA

## Certificate – Y-DNA

This Certificate confirms that you have had your DNA analyzed by Family Tree DNA. The outcome from each of the thirty-seven Loci examined is reported in the table below.

For your benefit we have listed the Locus designation for all thirty-seven Loci utilized by the geneticists supporting our company. If your alleles for the thirty-seven Loci match another person exactly, then you share the same Haplotype.

Family Tree DNA is a genealogical tool designed to aid individuals wanting to "connect" to other relatives lost in time and where the paper trail no longer exists.

### Edward Gelles

Your Kit # 181141

DYS #	393	390	19/394	391	395a	395b	426	398	439	399-1	392	399-2
	14	23	14	10	13	20	12	12	11	14	10	29
DYS #	458	459b	459c	455	454	447	437	448	449	464a	464b	464d
	16	9	9	11	11	25	14	19	33	12	12	15
DYS#	460	H4	YCA IIa	YCA IIb	456	607	576	570	CDY a	CDY b	442	438
	10	10	20	20	15	15	18	22	34	34	12	11

August 14, 2010

*Matthew E. Kaplan*

Matthew E. Kaplan





FamilyTree**DNA**

## Certificate – **mtDNA**

Family Tree DNA certifies that a mitochondria DNA sample taken from

**Edward Gelles**

differs from the Cambridge Reference Sequence (CRS)\* at the numbered positions indicated,  
by the presence of the bases designated A, C, G or T.

**Haplogroup K**

**Sample # 181141**

The letters designate the base that occurs at each of those positions in place of the entire CRS. These are distinctive of this sample and may be compared to other people to confirm or rule out common descent, providing genetic evidence of genealogical relationships.

**HVR1: 16223T, 16224C, 16234T, 16311C, 16519C**

**HVR2: 73G, 114T, 263G, 315, 1C, 497T**

\*The Cambridge Reference Sequence is the accepted mtDNA standard.

**August 20, 2010**

*Matthew E. Kaplan*

Matthew E. Kaplan

## Chapter 6

### Gelles and the Friedman Grand Rabbis of Ruzhin, Sadagora, and Czortkow

In *An Ancient Lineage* (chapter 35) I touched upon the Gelles family connections with a number of Chasidic Rabbis, in particular with Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz and Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow. A line of Gelles cousins, who ultimately went under the name of Polonsky, were descendants of Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz. Our family had centuries–old contacts with the latter’s venerable Shapiro ancestors, as did the descendants of Rabbi Israel Friedman of Ruzhin, who was the founder of the important Friedman Chasidic dynasty. My grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles was a close adherent of the founder’s eponymous grandson, the Grand Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow known familiarly as the Czortkower Rebbe.

In *Family Connections: Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman* (chapters 2-4) I discussed our Shapiro connections in more detail and followed this with a study of my grandfather’s life in Vienna from the outbreak of the first world war to the early 1920’s. During this period he was active in the inner circle of Rabbi Israel Friedman, who was a religious and political leader of pan-European stature. My grandfather is buried next to him and his wife Ruchama Shewa Friedman, who was a daughter of Abraham Jacob Friedman, the *Admor* of Sadagora

The two preceding chapters were concerned with the cousinly rabbinic lines descended from grandsons of Moses Gelles of Brody, who flourished in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. These two lines were the Galician line through my great-great-grandfather Rabbi Moses Gelles and the Ukrainian line from Rabbi Shmuel ben Mordecai Gelles that became known by the name of Polonsky through association with the town of Polonnoye. Both lines were traditionally believed to descend from the famous 17<sup>th</sup> century Rabbi of Cracow, Nathan Nata Shapiro, as shown in my previous book *Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman* (page 18).

A new chart entitled *Gelles-Friedman Chasidic Connections* may be helpful in a further discussion of some of these connections. It shows Menachem Nahum Twersky of Chernobyl and Aryeh Leib Wertheim of Bendery, who were distinguished Chasidic Rabbis in their own right. Rabbi Twersky was of Katzenellenbogen and Shapiro descent, while his wife Sarah Shapiro's ancestor was Nathan Nata Shapiro of Grodno, grandfather of the Rabbi of Cracow of the same name. Aryeh Leib Wertheim married firstly a Twersky and secondly a daughter of Rabbi Yehuda Meir of Shepetivka, son of Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro.

From the first marriage came Sima Wertheim who married Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas of the Polonsky line. Sima was first cousin of Israel of Ruzhin, the founder of the Friedman dynasty. My great-grandfather Rabbi David Isaac Gellis was a cousin of Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas. Bonds between these lines are thus manifest.

In my previous books I discussed the close relationship between my grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow. But a further consideration of the epitaphs of my grandfather Nahum Uri and of his father David Isaac may add something to the picture of these family connections. The tombstones of my two forebears with their inscriptions are shown on pages 19

and 20 (figures 4 and 5) of *An Ancient Lineage*. Both epitaphs contain stylised phrases associated with Chasidim, namely “both of them spent time in the shadow of tzaddikim” and “he sat in the dust at the feet of tzaddikim”. It is thus highly probable that Rabbi David Isaac’s Chasidic connection would have been with the Friedmans.

In my father’s obituary published in the Jewish newspaper “Heruth” on September 4<sup>th</sup> 1964 reference is made to the Friedman connection. It states that his father “war mit der Rabbiner Familie Friedmann aus Czortkow verwandt” i.e. “was related to the rabbinical Friedman family of Czortkow”. My father was not particularly interested in family genealogy. The only two occasions that I can remember when the subject was broached were to do with my grandfather. My father told me that our forebears had been rabbis in Brody and that we were related to the Friedmans. Grand Rabbi Israel Friedman was known as a “Wunder Rabbi”, a rabbi of exceptional learning, wisdom and mystical power. My father would not have taken these claims of the ultra-orthodox too seriously and I therefore got the impression that he must have thought the lineage as particularly distinguished, as indeed I now know it to be. This paternal remark stayed with me for sixty years or so before I tried to find out more about the matter.

While I have been writing this chapter I have had occasion to talk to an old friend and a new acquaintance about their family backgrounds and in both instances it emerged that some remark about family roots made by a parent in their formative years had a very great and lasting emotional impact because it associated a yearning for knowledge of their past with an attachment to the memory of the beloved relative.



**Footnotes**

Moses Gelles and Shmuel Gelles (Polonsky) are grandsons of Moses Gelles, a scholar of the Brody Klaus Y-DNA matches between their direct male descendants support the previously published genealogical evidence on these two cousinly lines and require the younger Moses to be descended through a son of the Brody scholar. Shmuel, who is recorded as the son of Mordecai Gelles of Brody, and the younger Moses are brothers or first cousins.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Rabbis of Sopotwina near Stanislau**

For centuries it had been customary in parts of Ashkenaz for community posts such as those of the Av Beth Din (head of the Rabbinical Court) to pass to a suitably qualified son or son-in-law. For example, in the town of Stanislawow (Stanislau) in eastern Galicia rabbis of the Horowitz family maintained an unbroken dynastic hold from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the nearby little town of Sopotwina there were a number of rabbis with different names during this period, but there are genealogical threads running through the succession reflecting the tenacity with which the community clung to its traditions unto the bitter end in the holocaust.





*From many different  
the only one that  
Allan Gibson published  
Regina.*

*Viele Grosse und  
Grosse werden  
Tela.*

**Solotwina**  
Ринок — Ringplatz

Solotwina market square circa 1900  
(the photograph has been restored to its original state)

<b>Moshe Heilprin</b>	<b>- d. 1752</b>
<b>Yehuda Ahron Horowitz</b>	<b>-1859</b>
<b>Hirsch Leib Weinstein ABD</b>	<b>-d. 1884</b>
<b>Nahum Uri Gelles ABD</b>	<b>-d. 1934</b>
<b>Yoel Babad ABD</b>	<b>-d. 1942</b>

[ABD = Av Beth Din i.e. head of Rabbinical Court]

Solotwina was a little *shtetl* not far from the larger east Galician town of Stanislau, so-called while under Austrian rule from 1772 until 1918, after which it reverted in the reconstituted Polish republic to the name of Stanislawow. After the second world war it fell to the Ukraine and was renamed Ivano-Frankivsk. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Jewish community of Stanislau exceeded 20,000 souls, while Solotwina's community reached about 2,000 around the turn of the century and drastically declined during and after the first world war. In between Stanislau and Solotwina lay the ancient Jewish *shtetl* of Bohorodzany (Brodshin). A dynasty of Rabbis of the Horowitz family was entrenched in Stanislau and exerted its influence in the surrounding smaller townlets like Brodshin and Solotwina. Many of these *shtetls* had rabbis who were of or related to the Horowitz family.

My grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles (1852-1934) was Chief Rabbi (Av Beth Din) of Solotwina and surrounding villages from 1884 until his death in 1934. His eldest son having predeceased him, his young grandson Rabbi Josef Gelles was considered to have a traditional claim, but after a considerable interval a distant kinsman Rabbi Yoel Babad was elected Av Beth Din – he perished in the holocaust in 1942.

Nahum Uri Gelles married Esther, a daughter of Rabbi Hirsch Leib (Zvi Aryeh) Weinstein and succeeded to the post of Chief Rabbi on his father-in-law's death in 1884.

In my earlier books I presented the circumstantial evidence for identifying Rabbi Hirsch Leib Weinstein's wife Gittel as the daughter of Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz and his wife Miriam Rottenberg Margolies.

Rabbi Horowitz and his family left Solotwina in 1858/59 for the neighbouring province of Bukowina and became Chief Rabbi of Mihaileni. Rabbi Weinstein, whose family had been in Solotwina for some time became Av Beth Din there. Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz was a descendant of a long line of rabbis of the Horowitz name, going back to Rabbi Isaac Horowitz, Chief Rabbi of Brody, Glogau, and Hamburg (died 1767) and Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Prague and Cracow (died 1618), President of the Council of the Four Lands, the semi-autonomous governing body of Polish Jewry. Outlines of his family ancestry and that of his wife Miriam Margolies are to be found in my previous books and in the present volume.

There is a gap in the rabbinical records between Yehuda Ahron Horowitz and a famous earlier rabbi of Solotwina. This was Rabbi Moshe Heilprin of Berdichev who settled in Solotwina in the 1740's and became a venerated leader. Wondrous tales and legends surrounded this holy Rabbi, as recounted by Alexander Hakohen Adlersberg, in *Magen Avos*, published by Benyamin Schmerler, Stanislawow, 1936). We also have records of letters written by Zvi Aryeh Wahl, the Chief Rabbi of Nadworna, to his relatives in which he deals with the ancestry of Moshe Heilprin (see my book "An Ancient Lineage" pp 35-38, quoting Yehiel Michel Fischler, *Chasdei Avoth* (Lemberg, 1880) :

"....this saintly Rabbi was the eighteenth generation in direct line from the Tosafist Rabbenu Elchanan, whose mother was a daughter of Rabbenu Yitzhak, whose mother was a granddaughter of Rashi" [the latter was the great biblical scholar and commentator Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (1040-1105), who is widely held to be of Davidic descent].

The following chart shows a line of descent from Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague, known as the Levush (1530-1612) to Moshe Heilprin and then from Moshe Heilprin and his wife Mindel, whose ancestor was Rabbi Shabbatai Katz (1621-1662) [the name Katz is an acronym of Kohen Zedek meaning righteous priest - the forms Hakohen and Kahane were sometimes used almost interchangeably instead of Katz].

**From Mordecai Yaffe of Prague to Moshe Heilprin  
and Rabbis of Solotwina**

**Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague**, known as Ha Levush (died 1612)

|  
Bella m Yechiel Michel Epstein (a physician, died 1632)

|  
daughter m Rabbi Abraham Heilprin of Kowel

|  
Rabbi Israel Heilprin of Svierz <sup>1</sup>

|  
daughter m Rabbi Isaiah Heilprin of Vitkov and Brody

|  
**Rabbi Moshe Heilprin of Berdichev & Solotwina** (died 1752) m Mindel Katz

|  
Rudel m Rabbi Shmuel Katz

|  
Reb Menachem Mendel Katz of Rosilna near Brodshin

|  
Rabbi Abraham Katz, Rabbi of Brodshin

|  
Reb Gershon Mendel Katz of Brodshin (died 1841)

|  
Gittel Hakohen Adlersberg <sup>2</sup> m Zalman Berish Rottenberg (Margolies)  
(died 1862) of Brodshin

|  
Miriam m **Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz of Solotwina**

|  
Gittel <sup>3</sup> m **Rabbi Hirsch Leib Weinstein of Solotwina** (died 1884)

|  
Esther m **Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles of Solotwina** (died 1934)

<sup>1</sup> Rabbi Israel Heilprin of Svierz was the father of Tuvia Yechiel Michel Heilprin from whom the Brzezany rabbinic line descends.

Tuvia Yechiel Michel Heilprin (d. 1740), ABD of Brzezany

|

Chanania Joseph Heilprin (d.1764), ABD of Brzezany

|

Abraham Zorach Juda Leib Heilprin (d.1808), ABD of Brzezany

|

Tuvia Yechiel Michel Heilprin (died ca 1819), ABD of Brzezany

|

Israel Nachman Heilprin of Brzezany (1790 –1870 ?),  
ABD of Zvenigorodka

|

Mordecai Heilprin of Zvenigorodka

According to Levi Grossman, *Shem U'She-erit*, pp 91-95 “some say” that Israel Nachman Heilprin married a daughter of Rabbi Shmuel ben Mordecai Gelles, the progenitor of the Polonsky rabbinic line. On a following page he states that a Rabbi Israel Nachman Heilprin married Chana Chava, a daughter of Rabbi Shmuel’s grandson Rabbi Eliyahu Pinchas Polonsky. Levi Grossman mentions that his own grandmother was a descendant of Rabbi Shmuel.

Rabbi Meir Wunder in his great Encyclopedia “Meorei Galicia” gives Rabbi Israel Nachman Heilprin of Zvenigorodka and Odessa with estimated dates 1790 – 1870 as the son-in-law of Rabbi Shmuel of Kolnibolet (Vol. 2, pp 566 and 595). Another daughter of Rabbi Shmuel and his wife Sarah Rachel Sheindel married a Rabbi Abraham (Halpern) of Sudilkov (a *shtetl* not far from Polonnoye). There appear to have been several rabbis of this Halpern lineage named Israel Nachman who may be identified through further study of the Zvenigorodka and Odessa records.

<sup>2</sup> Gittel Hakohen Adlersberg was the sister of Rabbi Saul Hakohen Adlersberg, ABD of Brodshin, (died in Stanislau, 1850).

- <sup>3</sup> Gittel, the wife of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh (Hirsch Leib) Weinstein was probably a daughter of Yehuda Ahron Horowitz and his wife Miriam, daughter of the wealthy Zalman Rottenberg (Margolies) and of Gittel Hakohen Adlersberg of Brodshin.

The Kolomea records give Abraham Weinstein as born in 1856 to Rabbi Hirsch Leib and Gittel Weinstein of Sopotwina. Rabbi Horowitz left Sopotwina in about 1858 / 9 and became ABD of Mihaileni. The birth records of my father David Isaac and of his elder sister Bertha Gelles state that their mother Esther Weinstein was born in 1861 in “the Bukowina”. This sequence of events and dates tallies with Gittel Weinstein giving birth to Abraham while her parents were still in Sopotwina and to Esther after they had moved to the neighbouring province. Furthermore, Gittel’s first name is that of her putative grandmother Gittel Hakohen Adlersberg, Miriam Horowitz’ sister Perel was the mother of Chief Rabbi Abraham Menachem Steinberg of Brody, so Esther Weinstein would appear to be Steinberg’s first cousin. Esther’s husband, my grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and Rabbi Steinberg were both followers of Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow and corresponded with each other.

### **Sopotwina Tombstones**

A project devoted to the “History of the Jews in Galicia and Bukowina” in which the Hebrew University and the Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem are participating, has catalogued many of the over 2,000 Jewish tombstones in Sopotwina and are in the process of publishing them with their epitaphs on the project website. Among these are some of the Weinstein rabbinic family including :

E 012 Rabbi Zvi Aryeh (Hirsch Leib) Weinstein, son of Rabbi Israel Jacob died 1884

and some of his children:

L 130 Hodis, daughter of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh, died 1874, praised for her charity and modesty

D 033 Hana, daughter of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh, died 1899

C 031 Sara, daughter of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh, died 1901

D 013 Haim, son of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh, died 1927

“our teacher R. Haim, son of our teacher Rabbi Zvi Aryeh ...”

children of **Rabbi Israel Jacob**, i.e siblings of Chief Rabbi Zvi Aryeh included:  
C 012 Aharon, son of Israel Jacob, Sage of the Torah, -  
D 029 Rosa, daughter of Rabbi Israel Jacob, died 1906, childless

The tombstones and epitaphs of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Weinstein and of his daughter Sara are appended. The latter's epitaph refers to her descent from "the great" which may be a reference to her putative Horowitz and Margolies (Margolies) forebears.

There are also several tombstones of Rabbis and their children who may be related to the Weinstein family:

E 099 "the elderly Rabbi Israel, son of Rabbi Baruch, died 1875, who served in our community for many years"  
D 080 Zvi Hirsch, son of Rabbi Israel, died 1892  
"...Rabbani Zvi Hirsch, son of the righteous Rabbi of blessed memory"

Earlier tombstones and other records of Rabbis who served the community of Sopotwina included:

G 013 "the elderly Rabbi Zvi Hirsch, son of Rabbi Yosef of Kalish, who served as a judge in the community", died 1833  
F 103 "the honour of town has been diminished by the loss of its most worthy citizen, the great Rabbi Pinchas, son of R. Yeshaya...", died 1848

There is a reference in the literature to a Rabbi Zvi Hirsch, Av Beth Din of Sopotwina around 1830 (Sifsei Tzaddikim, Przemysl 1883, reprinted Bnei Brak 2000, edited by Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel of Riminov, died in 1837, who included novellae by his father-in-law, the above-mentioned Rabbi).

### **Genealogical Charts**

Two following charts elaborate on the genealogical links between these Sopotwina rabbis. The Margolies chart aims to connect Rabbis Yehuda Ahron Horowitz, Hirsch Leib Weinstein, and Nahum Uri Gelles. The Heschel – Babad chart shows Rabbis Yehuda Ahron Horowitz and Yoel Babad to be cousins whose common ancestor was Rabbi Jacob Yollis Babad, son of Isaac Krakower, the Chief Rabbi of Brody and head of the Babad family. Isaac Krakower was the son of Yissachar Ber, President of the Council of the Four Lands, who was a son of the great Chief Rabbi of Cracow, Abraham Joshua Heschel, of the Wahl - Katzenellenbogen family.



Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles died and was buried in Vienna in 1934, while his father Rabbi David Isaac Gellis rests with his forefathers in Brody where some family tombstones have survived. I refer to some of these in my first book “An Ancient Lineage”. It must be emphasised that the majority of earlier tombstones give the first name of the deceased and the first name of the father. To establish the identity of the mother one usually has to look elsewhere. My grandmother Esther Weinstein died in 1907 but her grave has not been identified in Solotwina. She may have gone to a larger town for medical treatment and died there. Other Gelles family members vanished without trace in the holocaust, such as my cousins Josef and Giza Gelles whose lives I have attempted to trace in “Ephemeral & Eternal : a brief life of Josef Gelles”.

The last Chief Rabbi of Solotwina was Yoel Babad. A testimonial page from the Yad Vashem Records is appended. It shows that he was deported in 1942 and may have perished in that year.

### **Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles**

In my earlier book “Family Connections: Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman” I described my grandfather’s life in Vienna from 1914 to about 1923. Many Galician Jews and their rabbis fled to the Imperial capital when their home town became part of the battlefield between the Austrian and Russian armies. Some stayed behind and were subjected to great suffering. Others like my grandfather’s eldest son Efraim Fischel Gelles served in the Austrian army, as I discovered during my searches of contemporary newspapers. At war’s end some returned to their home town that had become part of the newly constituted Polish Republic. Many Jews including a number of prominent rabbis stayed in Vienna. My grandfather went back to Solotwina in the mid 1920’s. The great Czortkower Rebbe, Israel Friedman, chose to stay in Vienna until his death in 1933.

Apart from this long sojourn in Vienna my grandfather frequently visited other towns to attend rabbinical conferences. He was also invited by other Galician rabbis to sit as a judge in special cases. During his long tenure as Solotwina’s Chief Rabbi there were occasions when another rabbi was temporarily supported by a faction in the community, as in 1899 when a Rabbi Menachem Mendel David, formerly of Tlumatch and Lisetz, was described as ABD of Solotwina ( see Meir Wunder, Meorei Galicia, Volume 6, p.389 and Rabbi Yehoshua Heshel Wallerstein of Rzesow in responsum No. 5 of his “Sdeh Yehoshua”).



Temporary rabbis were appointed from time to time to carry out duties in my grandfather's absence, and I believe that in some instances my grandfather contributed to their stipend. In the Solotwina files in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem there is correspondence on these matters. Some of these letters have been reproduced on the new web site on "The History of the Jews in Galicia and Bukowina" to which I have already referred. Thus from correspondence in the period up to 1907 (incidentally the period of my grandmother's illness and death) there was talk of appointing Rabbi Alter Ludmer as a temporary substitute rabbi. After grandfather's death in 1934 there was much argument about the succession. The eldest qualified son Efraim Fischel having pre-deceased him, some supported the claim of his grandson Josef Gelles who had studied at the prestigious Lublin Sages Yeshiva. The names of Kliegman and Tanenzapf are mentioned in the correspondence but Rabbi Yoel Babad was finally appointed to succeed my grandfather as Av Beth Din. It is clear that my grandfather enjoyed a reputation going far beyond Galicia. His long stay in Vienna in close association with the Czortkower Rebbe Israel Friedman was particularly fruitful. He was known as Oberrabbiner Gelles of Solotwina and as a prominent member of the orthodox community (see my book "Family Connections : Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman" chapter 4).

His entry in the well known rabbinical reference book *Ohalei Shem* published in 1912 mentions that he had a manuscript of responsa and sermons ready for publication, but I have not been able to find any further reference to this book. However, we do have some of his correspondence with a number of leading halachic authorities of his day (see "An Ancient Lineage" pp 190-191).

From his later days there are articles in *Kovetz Drushim v'Chidushim* (collection of commentaries published in Warsaw by the Federation of Polish Rabbis).

They include a signed homiletic sermon (1927), a halachic note signed with his name and title, Nahum Uri Gelles, ABD of Solotwina (1928), and a responsum (1930), the index to the year book of 1930 referring to Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles, ABD of Solotwina as the author of article No.14.

My grandfather was more than a worthy provincial rabbi in far away Galicia. He emerges from my researches as conspicuous by his frequent absences from Solotwina, but well known and respected as a scholar, teacher, and judge in Austrian and Polish orthodox circles.

The present study has indicated some of the genealogical threads that link many rabbinical families. Of particular interest has been the importance of Rabbi Moshe Heilprin and his wife Mindel Katz in the ancestral background of rabbis in a cluster of east Galician *shtetls*. For example, Horowitz and Margolies of Brodshin and Solotwina and Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Wahl of Nadworna have in common a descent from Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe and Rabbi Shabbatai Katz.

## Tombstone of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh (Hirsch Leib) Weinstein

### Epitaph Translation:

The Crown of the Torah

Every passer-by will weep bitterly  
At the time that the glory [of Zvi] has fallen  
And our hearts [...] as the loss is great  
After the day of his passing was taken to his grave  
The Rabbi and Head of the Rabbinical Court of our Community for 32 years  
G-d knew [the righteousness of] his ways, perfect forever  
The respected rabbi, the great luminary,  
The Hasid Rabbi Zvi Aryeh  
Son of the late Hasid,  
Rabbi Yisrael Yaakov of blessed memory  
His soul ascended to heaven on Monday, 16 of Tevet (5)644 [=14 Jan. 1884]  
May his soul be bound in the bond of [eternal] life

**Tombstone Year:** 1884

**Cemetery:** Sototvin

**Cemetery Placement:** E012

**Material/Technique: tombstone:** Sandstone

**Material/Technique: epitaph:** Protruding letters

**Material/Technique: relief:** Protruding relief

**Directions:** Facing west

**Measurements: tombstone:** Height 170 cm, Width 68 cm, Thickness 27 cm

**Measurements: letters:** -

**Decoration Program:** Torah ark, two lions, and a crown

### Tombstone Inscription

כתר תורה

ציון כל עובר יקונן מרה  
בעת נפל צבי תפארה  
[י]..[ד לבנו כי גדל השבר  
אחר יום גועו הובל לקבר  
רב אב"ד קהלתנו לב שנה  
ידע דרכו ד לעד תמימה  
הוא כבוד הרב המאה"ג [=המאור הגדול]  
החסיד מ' צבי אריה  
בהחסיד המנוח מו"ה  
ישראל יעקב זל"ה  
עלתה נשמתו השמימה  
יום ב טז טבת תרמ"ד  
תנצב"ה



## Tombstone of Sara, daughter of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Weinstein

Lead the mourning elegies for the modest woman

[Who went] to eternity

Daughter of the great [Rabbis]

Madam Sara daughter of Rabbi (Admor) Tzvi Arie of blessed memory

She passed away on the 1<sup>st</sup> of the beginning of Adar (5)661

May her soul be bound in the bond of everlasting life



**Tombstone Year: 1901**

שאו קול קינה  
רב לעולמה  
הלכה צנועה  
בת גדולים  
מ שרה בת הרב  
אדומר [=אדונינו ומורינו?] מ צבי  
אריה זל נ א  
דרה אדר תרסא  
תנצבה

**Cemetery: Solotvin**

**Cemetery Placement: C 031**

Tombstone: Sandstone

Protruding relief

Sunken letters

Facing west

Height 144 cm, Width 61 cm

**Decoration:** Two lions and a candelabrum



### Footnotes

Solotwina was a little town near Stanislaw. Half way between lay Bohorodzany (known to the Jews as Brodshin). In these and other little *shtetls* of the area appointments tended to favour those with Horowitz family connections.

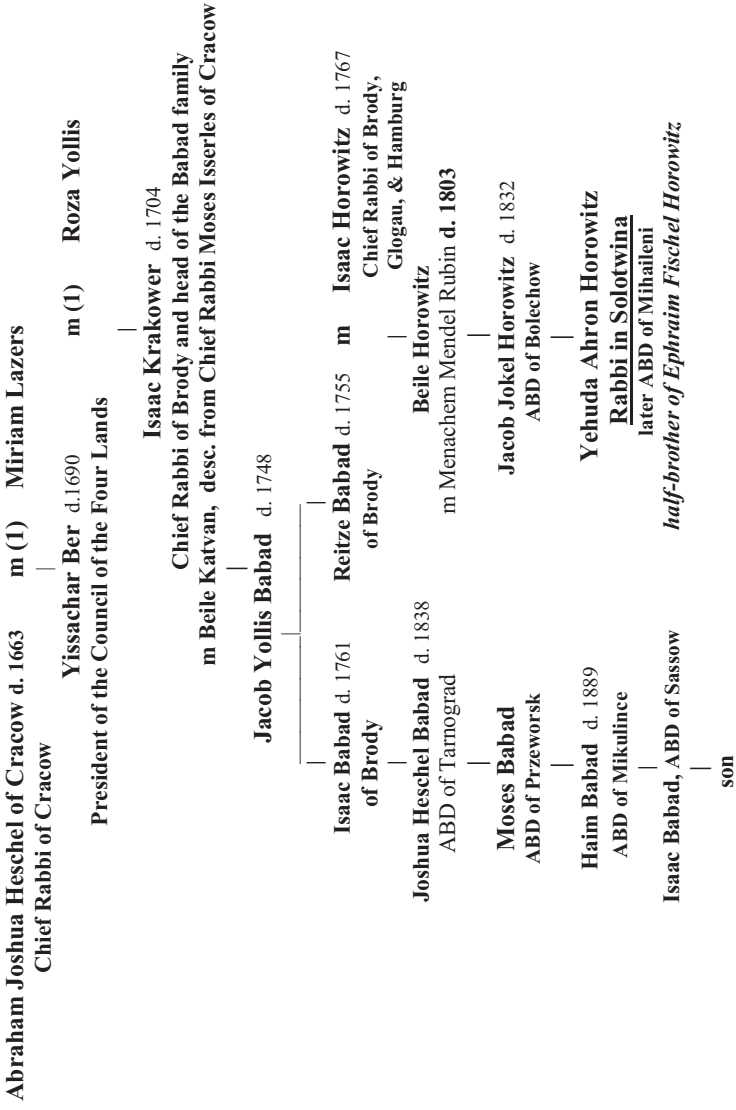
Yehuda Ahron Horowitz was a son of Jacob Jokel Horowitz, ABD of Bolechow, by his third wife Hinde, daughter of Yehuda Ahron Fraenkel of Brody [Zvi Hirsch Horowitz, *Letoldoth Hakehilot BePolin*, p.110]. Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz lived in Solotwina until 1858 /59 when he moved to Saniawitz (Mahaileni) in the neighbouring province of Bukowina [Meir Wunder, *Meorei Galicia*, Vol.2 : 220]. Around that time, Hirsch Leib Weinstein, who may have been his son-on-law, became ABD of Solotwina. The birth records of my father and of his elder sister at Mielnica Podolskaya state that their mother Esther Weinstein was born in 1861 in the Bukowina. The custom was for births to take place, whenever possible, at the home of the grandmother. The date and place of Esther's birth thus ties in with the date of removal of Yehuda Ahron Horowitz to the Bukowina.

The JewishGen JRI –Poland data base records the death of Esther's elder brother Abraham Weinstein at Kolomea in 1904. He was born in 1856 and the record gives his parents as Gittel and Hirsch Leib Weinstein of Solotwina.

The wife of Yehuda Ahron Horowitz was Miriam, daughter of the wealthy Zalman Berish Rottenberg of Brodshin, son of Rabbi Abraham Mordecai Margolies [Meir Wunder, Vol 6 : 479]. The Margolies, some of whom claimed descent from the great 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac), are supposed to have derived their name from a lady of the ancient Shor family called Margole (Pearl). Alexander Yoel Hakohen Adlersberg records that his aunt Gittel married Zalman Berish Rottenberg of Brodshin, who was a relative of Efraim Zalman Margoloth of Brody and also claimed descent from Rabbi Abraham Broda of Prague [*Magen Avos*, pp 8-9]. A part of the Margolies (Margoloth) rabbinical line in eastern Galicia is shown in the Table. Isaac Dov Ber of Jaslowiec (Jaslowitz), son of Zvi Hirsch Margoloth married a grand-daughter or according to another source a daughter of Shprintze Katz and Jacob Ashkenazi – Katzenellenbogen of Posen. Shprintze, a daughter of Naftali Hirsch Katz of Frankfurt, was a descendant of Judah Loew and Mirl Chayes-Altschuler of Prague as shown in Table 17 [Neil Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain*, pp 451, 467; Meir Wunder, *Elef Margoliot*, p. 20]

Perel Rottenberg (Margolies), who died in Vienna in 1916, was a sister of Miriam. She married Meir Steinberg and their son Abraham Menachem Mendel Steinberg was the distinguished Chief Rabbi of Brody from 1908 to 1928 [Meir Wunder, *loc cit*, Vol 5 : 161]. His correspondence with my grandfather is couched in terms of particular friendship. They were both adherents of Israel Friedman of Czortkow [see Gelles, *An Ancient Lineage*, p. 190].

**Katzenellenbogen – Heschel – Babad**



**Yoel Babad, d. 1942, ABD of Sopotwina**







**Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles (1852-1934)**

## Family Chess Notes

My uncle Dr. Max Gellis (1897-1973) was my father's younger brother. He was a doctor of law and practised as an advocate in Vienna (see my book *An Ancient Lineage*, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 2006, pp 190, 192-194). His *magnum opus* was the definitive work on Austrian company law *Kommentar zum GMBH Gesetz*, Linde Verlag, Vienna, first published in 1965 and now in its 7<sup>th</sup> revised edition (2009). After half a century it is still a standard work in its field. Max was a very good amateur chess player. He spent the war years in Australia. In the late 1940's he went to New York to stay with his daughter and later returned to his practice in Vienna. During his years in Australia Max continued to play chess and some of his games are recorded in the literature, notably the game against Yerhoff in the 1947 Australia v. Canada Radio Match won by Gellis with a Queen's pawn opening in 44 moves. A photograph of Gellis playing in this match comes from the Melbourne Herald, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1947. (*An Ancient Lineage*, loc.cit. p.193). A group photograph of Australian players including Dr Max Gellis from the 1946 Australia v France Match is on the web site of the Melbourne Chess Club. The website of chessgames.com has details of four games played by my uncle.

Oscar Chajes (1873-1928) was a cousin of my maternal great-grandmother. He became a Chess Master, ranked at one time as No.10 in the world. He beat the world champion Capablanca in New York in 1916. (*An Ancient Lineage*, p.321). Details of 210 games of Oscar Chajes can be found on chessgames.com, including Oscar Chajes v Jose Raul Capablanca, 1916, which Chajes (white) won in 66 moves with a French opening – McCutcheon / Duras variation. Oscar Chajes was born in Brody in Austrian Galicia. He came from an ancient rabbinical family that is now spread far and wide.

My paternal great-grandfather Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Weinstein of Solotwina in Galicia also came from an old family (*Meeting my Ancestors*, Shaker Publishing, 2011, chapter 7). While the name of Weinstein was fairly widespread, it is a noteworthy curiosity in the context of the chess world and its connections that world champion Garry Kimovich Kasparov, born in Baku in 1963, started life as Harry Chaimovitch Weinstein. His father was Chaim

Moiseyevich Weinstein and his Armenian mother was Klara Shagenovna Kasparyan aka Kasparova.

There have been Jewish communities in Azerbaijan since early times, but Ashkenazi Jews first settled in Baku around 1811 and substantial numbers came in the third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the time of the city's economic upswing. There was considerable Jewish involvement in the development of the oil industry. This influx was not confined to Jews from the Russian Pale. With Kasparov's father Kim Moiseyevich Weinstein, an engineer, and his grandfather Moses Rubinovich Weinstein, a distinguished musician, the family goes back in Baku for some generations.

Neither my Weinstains nor Kasparov's appear to have been traced back far enough but, given the known mobility of our families over the past centuries, it is conceivable that there is an earlier genealogical connection. If there is it must be a very distant one. Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Weinstein died in 1884. His father was Rabbi Israel Jacob Weinstein of Solotwina and that takes us back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (*An Ancient Lineage*, p. 21, pp 196-198 and *Meeting my Ancestors*, loc. cit., Wikipedia articles on *Garry Kasparov* and on *Jews in Azerbaijan*, Daniel Johnson, *White King and Red Queen*, Atlantic Books, London 2007, chessgames.com with details of 2,341 of Kasparov's games).

## **Chapter 8**

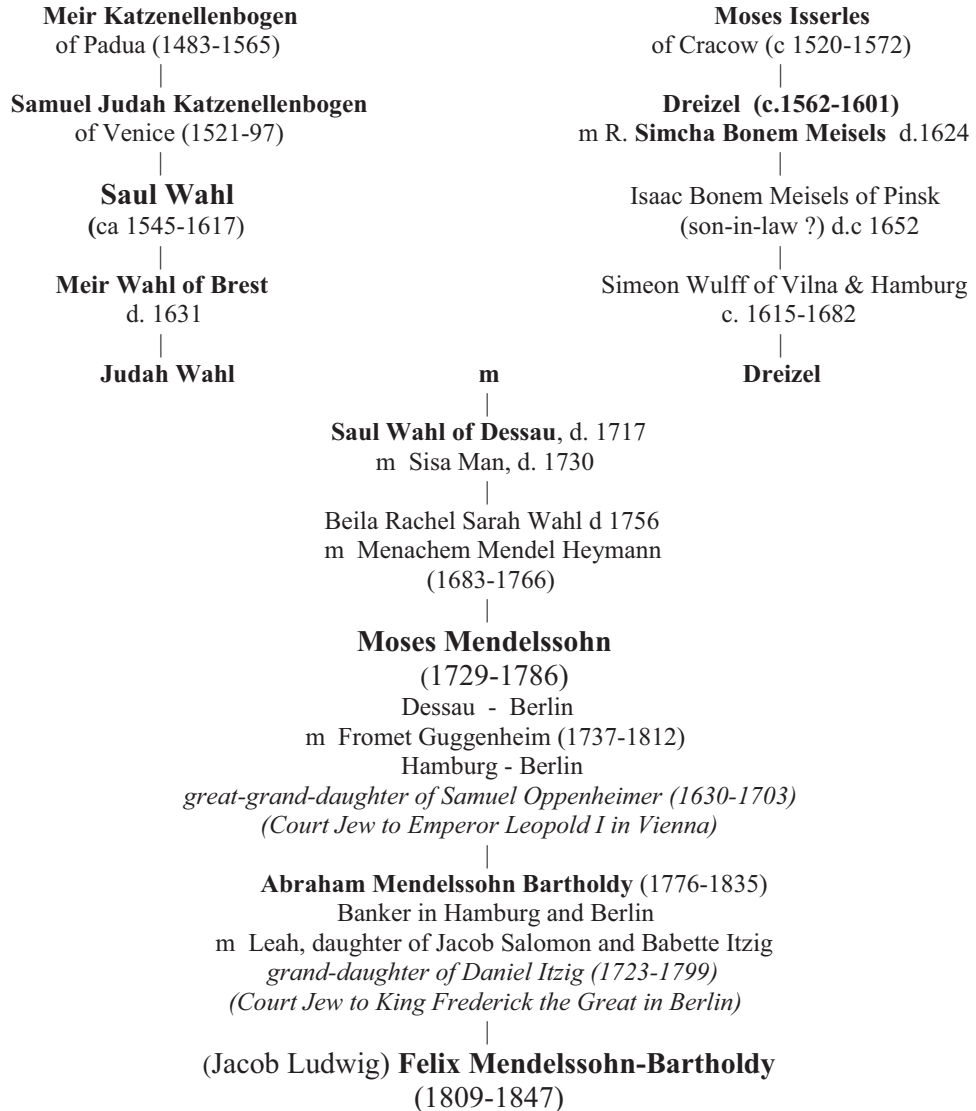
### **Saul Wahl and some of his descendants**

Saul Wahl is among the most important individuals in my pedigree. His ancient ancestry and the distinction of his progeny from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day are surely without equal in Jewish history. The glamour of enduring legends surrounds his life in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. These legends as well as the core of recorded history have been written about for centuries. My book “An Ancient Lineage” summarises the literature on the subject and a short account of his life is given in my article “Saul Wahl, A Jewish Legend” that is appended to the present book. The best known recent genealogical works on Saul’s ancestry and descendants are those of Neill Rosenstein entitled “The Unbroken Chain” and “The Lurie Legacy : The House of Davidic Royal Descent”.

Saul ben Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, later known in Poland as Saul Wahl, was born around 1545 and died in 1617. His parents were Samuel Judah ben Meir Katzenellenbogen, the Rabbi of Padua and Venice, and his wife Abigail Yaffe. The Yaffe (Yofe etc) are a most ancient family who were prominent in Bologna and other north Italian cities long before they shone on the wider European stage. Saul’s grandfather, Meir Katzenellenbogen, married the granddaughter of Rabbi Judah Mintz of Padua. Meir became the Chief Rabbi of Padua and was considered to be a scholar of pan-European importance. Meir’s father was Isaac of Katzenellenbogen, whose wife was a daughter of Jechiel Luria of Alsace, the Rabbi of Brest-Litovsk. Through this marriage the Katzenellenbogen go back via Luria, Spira, and Treivish rabbis to the 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar and bible commentator Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, known as Rashi, who is believed to be a descendant of Shepatiah, son of Avital, a wife of King David.

[Wahl = possibly from medieval German for “the Italian”. Katzenellenbogen = from the eponymous town in Hesse-Nassau. Mintz = from city of Mainz. Spira or Shapiro = from city of Speyer. Treivish = from city of Treves or Trier].

## From Saul Wahl to Moses Mendelssohn



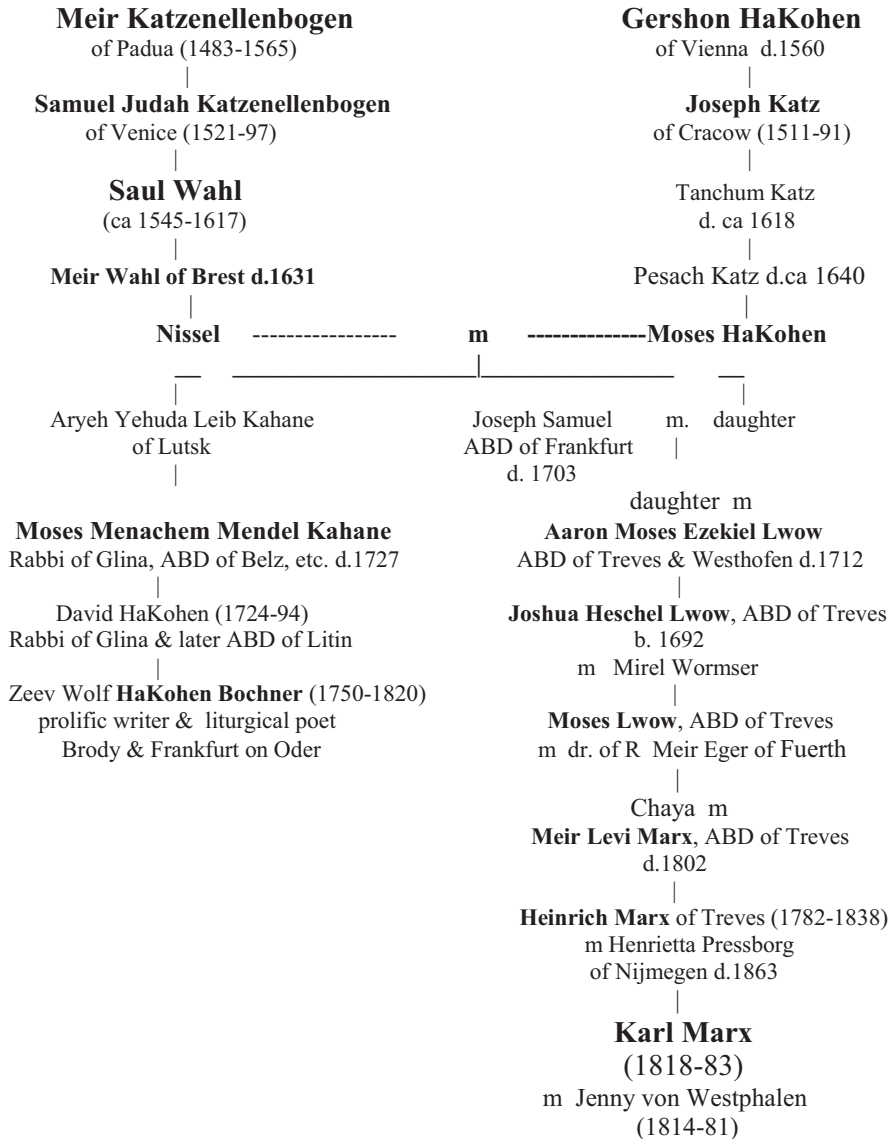
Moses Mendelssohn was a notable German philosopher of the Enlightenment. He was also the leading polemicist in the struggle for Jewish emancipation and as such he was called “the third Moses” by some of his many admirers (following Moses the Lawgiver and the medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides). However, his efforts were opposed by religious traditionalists who correctly foresaw that his attempts to reconcile Biblical teaching with Greek philosophy would accelerate the trend towards assimilation.

In my earlier books I presented a very brief outline of the history of the 18th century Chasidic movement in eastern Europe that in its mysticism was diametrically opposed to Mendelssohn’s rationalistic philosophy. Mendelssohn and some Chasidic leaders had a very similar ancestral background, as shown in “An Ancient Lineage”, Chapter 35 “Enlightenment and Chasidism”, pp 25-263, quoting Martin Buber’s books (v.i.) and Alexander Altman’s “Biographical Study of Moses Mendelssohn”.

The chart shows the Mendelssohn family descent from great Rabbis, the Katzenellenbogen of Padua and Venice and Moses Isserles of Cracow. Saul Wahl was the scion of the Katzenellenbogen who later rose to eminence in Poland. Later generations of the line were strengthened through further inflow from notable families. When the philosopher’s grandson, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, became a famous composer his father Abraham said in jest “I used to be known as the son of the father and now I am known as the father of the son”.

Moses Mendelssohn won an essay on a metaphysical subject set by the Berlin Academy against competitors that included Immanuel Kant (1763). Then followed the publication of “Phaedon: On the Immortality of the Soul” (1767). A translation of parts of the Bible (1783) and “Jerusalem” both had an enormous impact. The first on his German co-religionists and the latter on the wider world, when he argued that the state had no right to interfere with the religion of its citizens,. Three men who were of the greatest importance in his life were King Frederick II “the Great”, his friends the playwright Gotthold Ephraim Lessing who in “Nathan the Wise” modeled his principal character on Mendelssohn, and the theologian Johann Kaspar Lavater.

## From Saul Wahl to Karl Marx





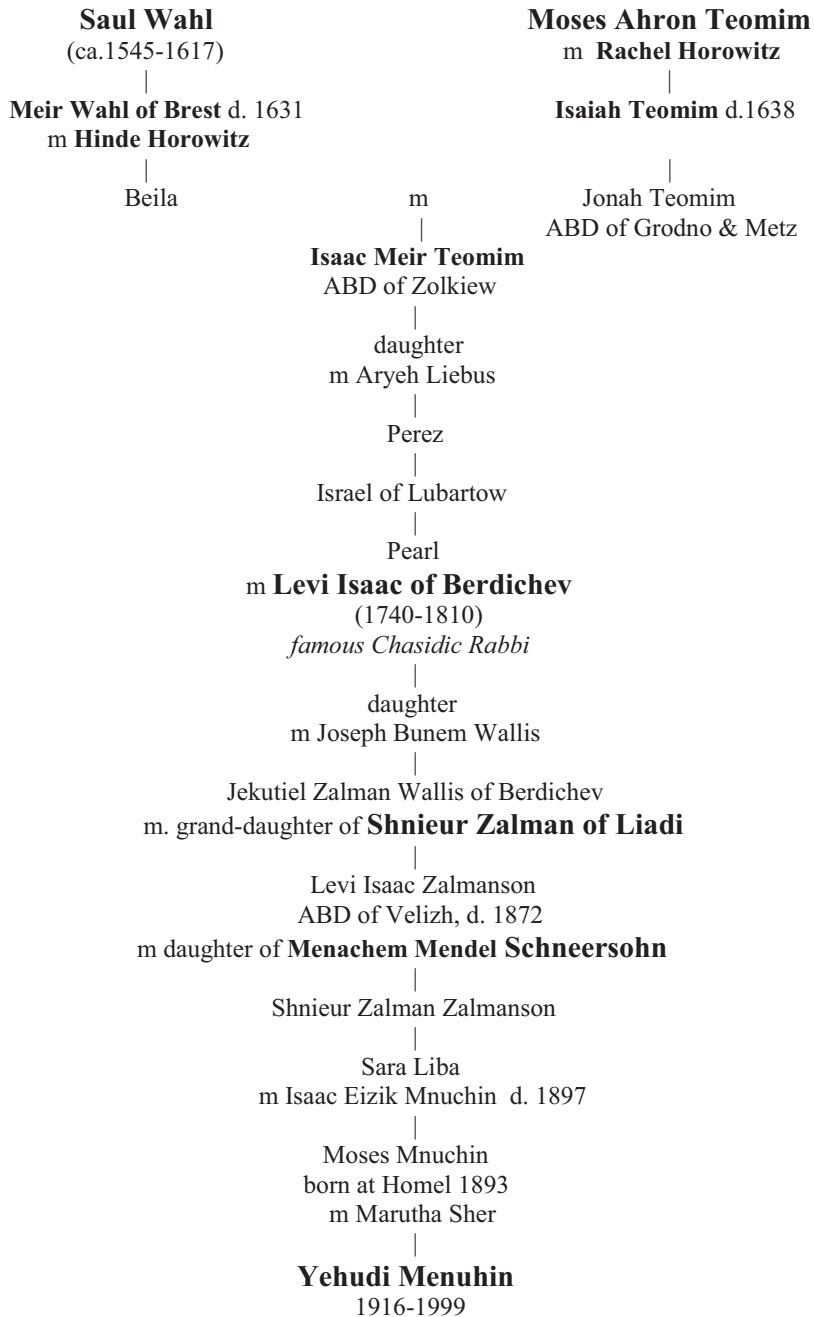
The chart shows how the marriage of Nissel Wahl and Moses HaKohen of Brest united the line of Katzenellenbogen and Saul Wahl with the ancient priestly line of Gershon HaKohen of Vienna. Josef Katz, the son of Gershon HaKohen, was an important scholar and brother-in-law of Rabbi Moses Isserles of Cracow. Josef's wife was Shprinze Altschuler, descendant of the Chayes-Altschulers of Provence and Prague and of the Treivish rabbis of medieval France [Katz is the Hebrew acronym for Kohen Zedek - righteous priest - alternate names being HaKohen and Kahane].

Descent of Karl Marx from Nissel Wahl and Moses HaKohen runs through the female line to Galician rabbis called Lwow (Lemberger), after the capital of eastern Galicia, whence they retraced their millennial journey to become Chief Rabbis of Treves (Trier). Karl's grandfather, Meir Levi, who succeeded his father-in-law as Rabbi of Treves, added the surname Marx.

Another line from Nissel Wahl and Moses HaKohen goes via Aryeh Yehuda Leib Kahane to Moses Menachem Mendel Kahane, who was Rabbi at Glina, Chief Rabbi of Belz etc. His son David HaKohen was Rabbi of Glina in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Incidentally, the major encyclopedia on Galician scholars and sages by Rabbi Meir Wunder of Jerusalem states that my grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles was a descendant of Rabbi Moses Kahane. My great-grandfather Rabbi David Isaac Gellis of Brody studied in Glina. He is mentioned together with other rabbis in the Glina Memorial Book and rabbinical reference works, which appear to form the basis of this intriguing assertion (Meir Wunder, *Meorei Galicia*, Volume 6 : 345, Jerusalem 2005; H. Halpern (ed), *Memorial Book of Glina*, p.17, New York 1950; Shmuel Noach Gottlieb, *Ohalei Shem*, pp 261-262, Pinsk 1912; Nathan Zvi Friedman, *Otzar Harabbanim*, # 5168, # 15904, # 14602, Bnei Brak, Israel 1973).

Rabbi Samuel Levi Marx (an uncle of Karl Marx) and Rabbi Naftali Hirsch Katzenellenbogen (a cousin of Rabbi David Isaac Gelles) were No. 45 and 19 respectively among the 71 delegates (plus alternates) who attended the Emperor Napoleon's Grand Sanhedrin held in Paris in 1807 (see the *GenAmi* web site for a complete list of place numbers).

## From Saul Wahl to Yehudi Menuhin



The father of Rabbi Moses Ahron Teomim was Simeon Teomim Lemel of Prague.

Rachel and Hinde Horowitz were the sister and daughter of Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz (1535-1618), President of the Council of the Four Lands.

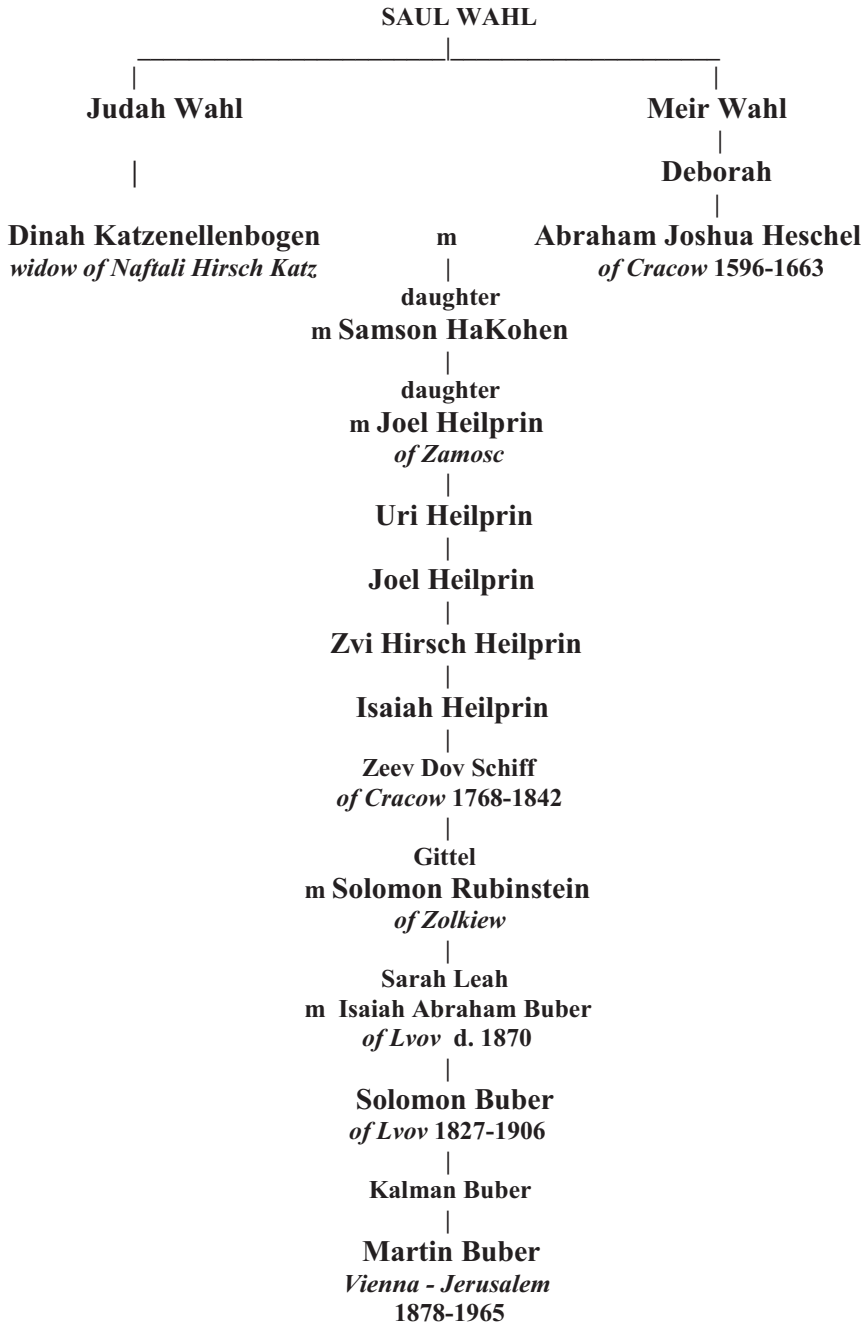
For connections between the descendants of Levi Isaac of Berdichev and Shmuel Gelles (called Polonsky) grandson of Moses Gelles of Brody and son-in-law of Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz see table 34 in the author's book "An Ancient Lineage".

Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1745-1812), *der Alte Rebbe*, was the founder and first Rebbe of Chabad, a branch of Chasidic Judaism.

His grandson Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1789-1866), shown in the chart, was the ancestor of the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1902-1994), spiritual leader of the world wide Chabad-Lubavitch movement.

Yehudi Menuhin and Sir Isaiah Berlin (1909-1997) the Oxford philosopher and historian of ideas, share with the Lubavitcher Rebbe a descent from Shneur Zalman of Liadi

## From Saul Wahl to Martin Buber



Martin Buber absorbed traditional Jewish learning from his grandfather Solomon Buber, who was a distinguished scholar and prolific author in Austrian Galicia. He later studied philosophy and other subjects at Vienna University, but he spent the years up to the outbreak of the first world war in a deep engagement with Chasidism, publishing numerous works such as the “Legend of the Baal Shem Tov” and “Tales of the Chasidim”.

While he was active as a translator, publicist, and academic teacher, as well as a cultural Zionist, it was not until the 1920’s that he began to publish his philosophical ideas including “Ich und Du” (I and Thou). His philosophy of the role of the individual and society has deep roots in his Chasidic background and has made a lasting impact in sociological and theological circles.

Martin Buber left Germany in 1938 and became a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem where he lectured on anthropology and sociology and played an active role in political dialogue as a supporter of a bi-national Jewish-Arab state.

Buber’s genetic and cultural background is similar to mine, from Galician Chasidism to Viennese enlightenment, descent from Saul Wahl, connections with different branches of the Heilprin family, and with the descendants of Samson Hakohen (see my book “An Ancient Lineage”, particularly table 45). Buber’s ancestors also included Yomtov Lipman Heller (1578-1654), the Chief Rabbi of Vienna, Prague, and Cracow.

The great Chasidic leader Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz (a forebear of my Polonsky cousins) is described by Martin Buber in his “Tales of the Chasidim” , pp 218-242 of the German edition :

“In the period between the Baal Shem Tov and his great-grandson Nahman of Bratslav, he [Pinchas Shapiro] has no equal in fresh and direct thinking, in daring and vivid expression. What he says often springs from a profound knowledge of the human soul and it is always spontaneous and great-hearted”

## My family descent from Saul Wahl

A line of descent from the Katzenellenbogen of Padua and Venice and their scion Saul Wahl is linked to a line from Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and his first wife Mirl Chajes-Altschuler. A son-in-law of the latter, who came from an ancient sacerdotal family, married a grand-daughter of Saul Wahl. Their descendants are set out in the first of some family charts (Appendix 2). The great Rabbi Judah Loew, known as the *Maharal*, was a nephew of Jacob Loew, Rabbi of Worms and *Reichsrabbiner*, that is Chief Rabbi of all the German communities. Both Wahl-Katzenellenbogen and Loew go back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes, known as *Rashi*, who is widely believed to be of Davidic descent. The legendary royal functions exercised by Saul Wahl and the mystical glamour surrounding Judah Loew's name as well as the names of distinguished in-laws of the Chajes, HaKohen, Fischel, Horowitz, and Margolioth families, make this line of descent one of exceptional distinction in Jewish genealogy. Links to my Gelles line, presently resting on persuasive circumstantial evidence, remain to be confirmed (as discussed in the preceding chapter).

The second chart in Appendix 2 sets out my maternal Wahl connections. In *An Ancient Lineage* I have described the links between my grandmother's family the Wahls of Tarnobrzeg with the Griffels of Nadworna and of the latter with the Chajes of Kolomea. These families have time-honoured pedigrees. My great-great-grandfather Leiser Wahl was the richest man in his little town where his son Shulim's occupation was entered in the records as "capitalist". Shulim Wahl and his wife Sarah Safier had six children. I have gone into the marriages of three of their daughters in considerable detail. My grandmother Chawa Wahl, married David Mendel Griffel. Blume Wahl became the wife of Eliezer Low, and Rachel Wahl married firstly Abraham Taube and secondly Chaim Simon Ohrenstein. The children and grandchildren of these marriages included Lucia Ohrenstein who became Countess Tripovich, Viola Sachs, who was University Professor of American Literature in Paris, Thaddeus Taube who is a leading Jewish philanthropist in California, Marilyn Low Schmitt, a retired Professor of Art History whose father Dr. Abraham Low was a pioneering psychiatrist in Chicago, as well as my first cousins David and Eric Griffel.



# Appendix 1

**Reprint of article on Saul Wahl**  
published in *Judaism Today* (Winter 1999-2000)





# IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

## SAUL WAHL, A JEWISH LEGEND

EDWARD GELLES

**Dr Edward Gelles,**  
a lecturer  
and art  
dealer,  
numbers  
Saul Wahl  
among his  
ancestors

How could the Italian grandson of a German Jew become king of Poland? According to Jewish tradition, it happened in 1587. Poland at that time had an elective kingship. The throne was vacant. The electors were divided. Saul Wahl, a leading financier, was well connected with the biggest magnates in the land and in a position to play an important role during the interregnum. An extraordinary man was in the right place at the right time.

What was so special about the sixteenth century and the condition of the Jews in Europe and in Poland in particular? Who was Saul and where did he come from?

The discovery of the New World in 1492 heralded a period of rapid expansion across Europe. Spanish bullion fuelled financial liquidity, trade and mobility. Rising populations required more food. This trend favoured the land-owning nobility, and nowhere more so than in Poland, which became the granary of Europe.

At the same time, the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation brought about a revolution in culture, religious diversity and political ideas.

### The state of Poland

Poland flourished under the Jagiellonian kings who were also grand dukes of Lithuania. With Sigismund I (1506-48) the Renaissance came in the person of his queen, Bona Sforza, daughter of the Duke of Milan. Her retinue included Jewish doctors who had studied at the great Italian universities, particularly Padua, which was also the alma mater of many notable Poles. Thus, Poland's greatest scientist of the age, Nicolas Copernicus, and one of her leading statesmen, Jan Zamoyski, were graduates of both Cracow and Padua.

Jews had been fleeing to Poland from persecution in Germany since before the time of Casimir the Great (1333-70), who ratified and extended an earlier charter of toleration. As elsewhere in Europe, the Jews met religious intolerance from the clergy, and marked hostility from

townspeople, who felt themselves economically threatened, in contrast to the king and the magnates who benefited from their activities.

The direct Jagiellonian line came to an end shortly after the formal union of the Kingdom of Poland with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Lublin 1569). The death of Sigismund II August marked the beginning of the era of elective kingship. In the new 'Republic', political power was vested in the nobility. The election depended on the balance between the great magnates of the land and of the neighbouring states such as Austria and Sweden. It was an oligarchy with a titular royal head and with a constitution which bore some resemblance to those of the Serene Republic of Venice and the Holy Roman Empire. The Jews benefited from the new system in so far as newly elected kings needed ready funds which they could supply.

The brief reign of Henri Valois (1573-5) was followed by that of the Transylvanian Prince Stefan Bathory (1576-86), and then the Swedish Prince Sigismund III Vasa, and his two sons successively held the Polish crown through a century of expansion, which saw Poland-Lithuania briefly become the most powerful state in Eastern Europe. At its widest boundaries, it included White Russia and Ukraine, and extended beyond Smolensk and Kiev to the land of the Zaporozhe Cossacks.

In this age Catholic kings maintained the rights of religious minorities and the privileges accorded to the Jews. An extensive system of Jewish autonomy developed with substantial juridical and fiscal powers, such as the assessment of taxes by the rabbinate and local councils.

Their numbers grew rapidly to over 5 per cent of the population, and they extended their activities from the traditional money-lending to all branches of the economy. They became the favoured agents of crown and magnates as rent, tax, toll and tithe collectors, and estate managers, which involved running the mills, distilleries, taverns and other enterprises. Inevitably the resentment of the peasantry was directed against the

Jewish agents rather than the absentee landlords.

For a long time Poland more than held its own against the rising powers of Sweden and Muscovy, the more distant threats of the Tartars and Ottoman Turks, and the ambitions of their Hohenzollern vassals. The deluge came in 1648 with the rebellion of Bogdan Chmielnicky, Ataman of the Dnieper Cossacks, which ultimately led to the transfer of their allegiance to Muscovy and to the loss of Ukraine and much else for Poland. This blow to the Polish state was also a catastrophe for the Jewish communities, which suffered enormous losses in lives and property.

### Across Europe

Conditions were changing elsewhere in Europe. While large numbers of German Jews migrated directly to Poland over a long period, others went to join existing communities in Italy. There the Jews suffered under the religiously inspired intolerance which waxed and waned during the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods. They were confined to ghettos and severely restricted in the occupations and professions that were open to them. The Church had long forbidden Christians to receive interest, but tolerated or even encouraged Jewish money-lenders, who enjoyed a near monopoly in some countries, though at times they met strong competition from the Lombards.

Jews did not have full civil rights, but their lives and property were generally protected by the secular authorities. The universities gave them access in very limited numbers. Padua was for a long time one of the few schools where they could study medicine.

The mass expulsions from the Iberian peninsula at the end of the fifteenth century were the greatest disaster for Sephardic Jewry, which had flourished in Spain and Portugal for centuries. Many fled to Holland, Italy and Turkey. The Ottomans maintained a hospitable and tolerant attitude for a considerable period. Jews prospered in Constantinople but, after the battle of Lepanto in 1571, the Sultan's power and protection declined. Prominent at that time was Joseph Nasi, who had fled from Portugal to Holland, and later not being made welcome in Venice, accepted an invitation to move to Constantinople. He became the powerful favourite of Sultan Selim and was

created Duke of Naxos and Prince of the Cyclades. Salomon Ashkenasi, whose family had come to Italy from Germany, was physician to Sigismund August in Cracow and later to the Grand Vizier in Constantinople. He is reputed to have been influential in the negotiations leading to the election of Henri Valois and later of Stefan Bathory to the Polish throne, and he was sent as ambassador of the Sublime Porte to the Serene Republic of Venice in 1574. His son, Nathan, who also studied medicine at Padua, was Ottoman ambassador to Venice in 1605. These men were favourably placed to conduct discreet diplomatic and financial negotiations by nature of the dispersion and their wide international contacts.

In contrast to the fifteenth-century persecutions in Germany and the Empire, the Reformation ushered in a better time for the Jews there, perhaps because it divided their potential oppressors. The ensuing turbulence, changing alliances, fluctuating fortunes of war, and the expanding need for credit and finance led the Habsburg emperors to adopt a friendlier policy.

Maximilian II allowed the Jews to return to Bohemia, and in 1577 Rudolph II gave them a charter of privileges. One of his agents, Marcus Meisel, was a prototype of the 'court Jew'. He helped to finance the war against the Ottoman Turks.

### The family background

Returning to the importance of Padua in this period, noble Poles travelled in Italy and learned Jews went to Poland. That is the background to the career of Saul Wahl, scion of the Katzenellenbogen family, hailing from the town of that name in the German state of Hesse-Nassau.

The name Katzenellenbogen is believed to derive from the Catti, an ancient Frankish tribe. It may refer to their settlement near the bend (elbow) of the Rhine or to another geographical feature in that area known by the Latin name of Cattimelibocus. Descendants of Hugh Capet became counts of Katzenellenbogen in the twelfth century and gradually permitted small numbers of Jews to settle there. A Jewish community was firmly established early in the fourteenth century. Rabbi Isaac of Katzenellenbogen married the daughter of Rabbi Jehiel Luria of Alsace and later moved to Prague, where his son Meir (1482-1565)



studied before going on to Padua. There he married Hannah, the granddaughter of his teacher Judah Minz. The latter had come to Padua when the Jews were expelled from Mainz in 1461. He established a talmudic academy which achieved worldwide fame, attracting students from north of the Alps and as far as the Levant. Meir took over the leadership from Judah's son, Abraham, in 1541. He is considered the patriarch of the Katzenellenbogen family.

According to the historian Cecil Roth, Rabbi Meir was among the most eminent talmudic authorities of his day and his opinion was consulted from every quarter of Europe in connection with knotty problems of Jewish law. His son, Samuel David Judah (1521-97), succeeded him in Padua and subsequently became chief rabbi of Venice. His reputation extended to non-Jewish scholars such as Paul Weidner, who dedicated his works to him (Vienna 1562). Like his father, he wrote numerous *responsa* and some of his sermons were published in Venice in 1594. His friend Leone da Modena delivered his funeral oration in 1597. He and his wife Abigail had two daughters and a son Saul, born in Padua about 1541-5. The family background was thus distinguished for learning, wealth and social position in one of the most flourishing Jewish communities.

### From Italy to Poland

Saul attended the university of Padua, and around 1560 he set out for Poland to study at the *yeshiva* of MAHARSHA'L (R. Shlomo Luria) in Brest. There he settled after marrying the daughter of a local rabbi. Brest was fast becoming an important centre for Lithuanian Jewry and he might well have ended his days as the respected rabbi of this distant town. But now there occurred one of those chance events which shape the lives of individuals and nations. The path of the Katzenellenbogens crossed that of the Radziwills, the richest and most powerful nobles in Lithuania, who remained prominent in the councils of Poland for several centuries.

Nicholas Radziwill, who died in 1477, was Marshal of the Court of Lithuania and Palatine of Wilno, the most important person in the country after the Grand Duke. His two great-grandsons Nicholas 'Rufus' and Nicholas 'the Black', were given the title of Prince of the Holy Roman Em-

pire by Charles V as part of the latter's machinations to prevent the union of Lithuania with Poland. But this was trumped by Sigismund August, who not only confirmed their princely status but granted them the freeholds of their enormous estates of Olyka and Nieswicz, from which they henceforth took their ducal titles. All this was reaffirmed by both king and parliament in Lublin in 1569. The position of the Radziwills in Poland was further strengthened by the king's marriage to Barbara, Prince Rufus's sister.

Nicholas the Black's son, Prince Nicholas Christoph 'the Orphan' (1549-1616), returned to the Catholic faith and undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem which he recorded in his *Peregrinatio Hierosolymitana*. He also offered to buy up the extant copies of the Protestant 'Radziwill Bible' published by his father, intending to have them destroyed. According to legend, this is the Prince Radziwill who, returning from the Holy Land, found himself short of funds in Italy and appealed to Rabbi Samuel Judah for assistance, which was amply provided. Regaining his domain, he repaid the rabbi's kindness by seeking out his son Saul and taking him under his wing. Not so strange when one considers that they had been contemporaries at Padua! Radziwill and his friends favoured Saul with appointments and eased his advancement to wealth and influence.

There are records that Saul leased breweries at Kandawa (west of Riga) in 1578 and owned ships for this business, and that he acquired similar interests at Wieliczka near Cracow in 1580. In these years King Stefan Bathory leased him the salt pans in the Grand Duchy giving him the sole rights to sell their products and also the salt mine at Wieliczka. Since at one time salt furnished nearly a fifth of the crown revenues, these were major commercial concessions. There are also documents relating to Saul's paying a large sum for the right to farm the Lithuanian taxes for three years and, again, the sum of 150,000 gold florins for the right to collect tolls on bridges and duties on flour and brandy for ten years. In 1589 King Sigismund gave him titles and privileges in a decree granting him 'a place among our royal officials and that he may be assured of our favour we exempt him and his lands for the rest of his life from subordination to the jurisdiction of any court in our lands'. Saul, referred to as 'Servus Regis', the King's Servant, became the king's principal

agent in the opening up of commerce in Lithuania and Courland in particular.

From the 1580s onwards Saul was among the leaders of the Brest community, taking an important part in the Council of the Lands. He interceded in a number of law suits on behalf of Jewish communities, as for example in 1592 when the Jews of Brest appealed to the king against the local municipality. In the same year, he persuaded the king to order the courts in Courland to judge disputes with Jews according to Polish, rather than the less favourable Prussian, law. This ruling was extended and confirmed by later kings. Saul was also given credit for the confirmation that disputes between Jews should be subject only to Jewish courts, thus strengthening the autonomy rights of Lithuanian Jewry.

During this time, he brought up a family and united himself with the most prominent Jewish rabbis through the marriages of his children. His son Meir, who later became Rabbi and Head of the Rabbinical Court at Brest, married Heinde, the daughter of Rabbi Pinchas Horowitz, the brother-in-law of the RAM'A, Rabbi Moses Isserles. He built a synagogue, a house of learning and public baths, and made many other benefactions. When the Brest synagogue was demolished in 1842, a plaque was discovered with the following inscription: '... Saul, son of the Chief Rabbi of Padua, built this synagogue in honour of his pious wife Deborah, daughter of [David] Drucker'.

Other information that has come down to us includes references to the gold chain which Saul wore with other decorations and which he bequeathed to the poor, as well as a trust fund of 20,000 Polish gulden, to a seal displaying a lion (rampant) holding in its paw two tablets with a Latin inscription (representing the ten commandments), and to title deeds for property still recorded as extant in the mid-nineteenth century.

#### **Historical records and oral tradition**

Saul became an intimate of the Radziwills and other magnates and of King Sigismund, who is supposed to have addressed him as Wahl. As for the adoption of that name, it is possible that it is a geographical reference. However, a more likely derivation is from a trade or tavern sign. A closely related family had the name of Shor. This is Hebrew for ox, and the Polish for ox is wo(h)l.

A similar type of name derivation applies to the Rothschilds. A third possibility is that mentioned by early writers such as his direct eighteenth-century descendant Rabbi Phineas ben Moses Katzenellenbogen. He set down the oral tradition passed from Saul's contemporaries to his father. This describes Saul's election as king for a day during the interregnum of 1587 and asserts that the name Wahl (German for election) was given to him at that time:

Rabbi Samuel Judah's son was the great Saul Wahl of blessed memory. All learned in such matters well know that his surname Wahl was given him because he was chosen king of Poland by the unanimous vote of the noble electors of the land. I was told by my father and teacher of blessed memory that the choice fell on him in this wise. Saul Wahl was a favourite with the Polish noblemen and highly esteemed for his shrewdness and ability. The king of Poland had died. Now it was customary for the great nobles of Poland to assemble for the election of a new king on a given day on which it was imperative that a valid decision be reached. When the day came many opinions were found to prevail among the electors, which could not be reconciled. Evening fell and they realised the impossibility of electing a king on the legally appointed day. Loath to transgress their own rules the nobles agreed to make Saul Wahl king for the rest of the day and the following night and thus conform with the letter of the law. And so it was.

In earlier Polish and Lithuanian state documents Saul had been variously referred to as Saul Judicz, i.e. Saul the Jew. These records are scanty. Much was lost or deliberately destroyed in the late seventeenth century and during the eighteenth-century partitions. However, the oral tradition and the weight of anecdotal evidence that Saul carried out royal functions prior to the election of Sigismund III is impressive. For example, Edelmann sent out a circular to the rabbis in 'Ashkenaz' in the mid-nineteenth century and received several hundred letters and manuscripts from all over Central and Eastern Europe. These dealt with aspects of Saul's career in finance and commerce, as a civic leader in Lithuania, with his royal election, and with the laws he is supposed to have rushed through to improve the legal status of the Jews. When Prince Radziwill proposed Saul to the deadlocked electors to be king for a day in order to gain time for a resolution of the impasse, Saul is supposed to have insisted as a condition of accepting the honour that certain laws should be enacted forthwith, that in future the spilling of Jewish blood was to be treated in



the same way by the courts as the murder of a Christian, and that no further blood libel allegations (to which there was no basis) were to be considered.

Other legends grew up around Saul's name. The story that Sigismund had an affair with his daughter Hanele has a degree of plausibility. Saul married her off in a hurry to a septuagenarian rabbi, Ephraim Zalman Shor, and she promptly produced a son, Jacob. The subject has continued to fascinate for centuries.

### Conclusion

In this essay I have attempted to sketch in the state of Poland-Lithuania in the later sixteenth century against the general European background. The salient points were the political balance between the king, the magnates, the lesser nobility, and the other estates of the land, the economic importance of the Jewish community, the great wealth of Saul, his influence at court and with the higher nobility, and particularly the patronage of the Radziwills.

Against this historical background and with the documented facts of his life, it is likely that Saul should have played an important role after the death of Stefan Bathory. Many of the principal players would have been beholden to him.

The long interregnum of 1586-7 saw an intense struggle between the parties of the leading candidates. The crown was the prize to be won by a Catholic prince who could take the required coronation oath after gaining the support of the magnates and the acclaim of the nobility.

Sigismund Vasa was backed by his aunt Queen Anna Jagiellonka (the widow of Stefan Bathory), by the Primate, and by the Zamoyski faction. They were ultimately successful against the Habsburg candidate, the Archduke Maximilian, brother of the Emperor Rudolph II, who was supported by the Empire, Spanish silver, the Zborowskis and others. Sweden and the Papacy were in the front rank of players; Muscovy and the Duke of Ferrara were also involved in the struggle. Lithuania pursued its own line within the Union with a delaying policy.

The Swedish prince was chosen in August 1587 and crowned in December of that year. When it came to a crucial vote on 18 August, the delaying tactics in which Saul was involved re-

dounded to Sigismund's advantage. His services were certainly appreciated, not least by Sigismund, who showed him marked favour soon after his accession to the throne.

Saul Wahl combined talmudic learning and a classical education with outstanding business ability and leadership of the Jewish community with an important role in the councils of state. He died around the year 1617. One of his sons, Rabbi Meir Katzenellenbogen Wahl, was among the founders of the Council of Lithuania in 1623. Saul's children left a numerous progeny and later descendants included many leading personalities in Jewish communities throughout Europe.

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# **Appendix 2**

## **Family Charts**





Miriam Margolies m Yehuda Ahron Horowitz  
?

**Leiser Wahl**  
of Tarnobrzeg  
m Zlate Roisel of Nisko

**Isaac Chaim Chajes**  
of Kolomea  
m Belle

**Sarah m David Isaac Gellis**  
ca 1785-1870  
of Glina and Brody

**Gittel m**  
**Hirsch Leib Weinstein**  
died 1884  
ABD of Sotowina

**Shulim Wahl**  
m Sarah Safier

**Sarah Matel Chajes**  
m **Eliezer Griffel**  
of Nadworna

**Nahum Uri Gelles**  
born at Narajow and ABD of Sotowina

**Esther Weinstein** 1861 - 1907  
born in the Bukowina

**Chawa Wahl**  
1877-1941

**David M Griffel**  
1875-1941

**Regina Griffel**  
1900 - 1954

**David Isaac Gelles**  
of Vienna 1883-1964

- 1 **Efraim Fischel Gelles** 1879-  
2 **Berta (Feige Rivka)** 1881-  
3 **David Isaac Gelles** 1883-  
4 **Hirsch Leib** 1886-  
5 **Rosa** 189?-  
6 **Lotte** 1895-  
7 **Max (Moses) Gellis** 1897-

**Edward Gelles**

1 **Efraim Fischel Gelles**, died at a young age – his wife was from the rabbinical Laufer family of Nadworna  
his son **Joseph Gelles** was considered for the succession to Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles

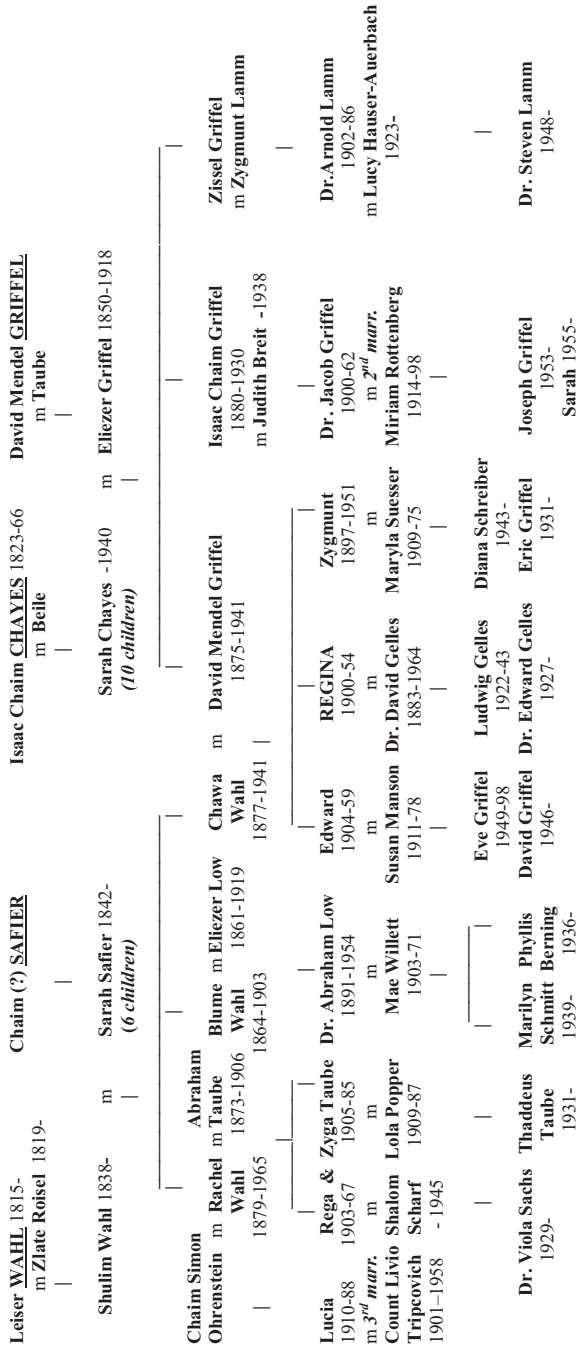
but a kinsman **Yoel Babad** was appointed **ABD of Sotowina** – see *BABAD chart*

3 **Dr. David Isaac Gelles**, died 1964 – in his youth he studied at the **Munkacz** yeshiva - became advocate in Vienna (1916)  
married **Regina Griffel** (1900-1954), daughter of David Mendel Griffel (1875-1941) of Nadworna and Chawa **Wahl** (1877-1941)  
David Mendel was the eldest son of Eliezer Griffel (1850-1918) of Nadworna and Sarah Matel Chajes (died 1940)  
daughter of **Isaac Chaim Chajes** of Kolomea (1823-1866), descendant of **Isaac Chajes of Brody**, died 1807  
Issue: **Ludwig Gelles** (1922-42) and **Edward Gelles**

see Edward Gelles, *An Ancient Lineage* (Valentine Mitchell, London 2006)

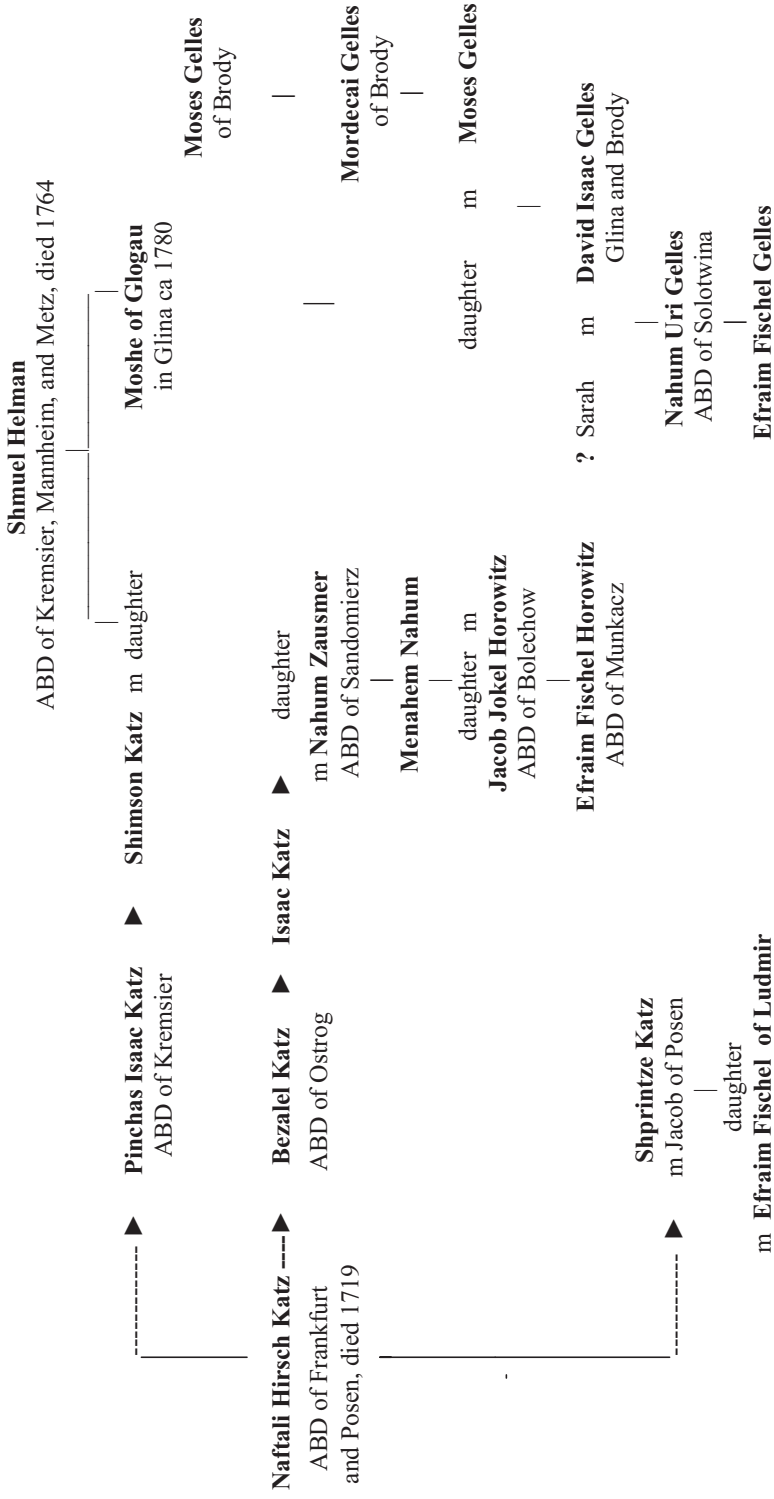
Family Connections : Gelles – Horowitz – Chajes (Shaker Publishing B.V., The Netherlands, 2008)

## My Maternal Wahl Connections





**Naftali Hirsch Katz of Frankfurt and Posen, Shmuel Helman of Metz, and Gelles of Brody**



## Footnotes

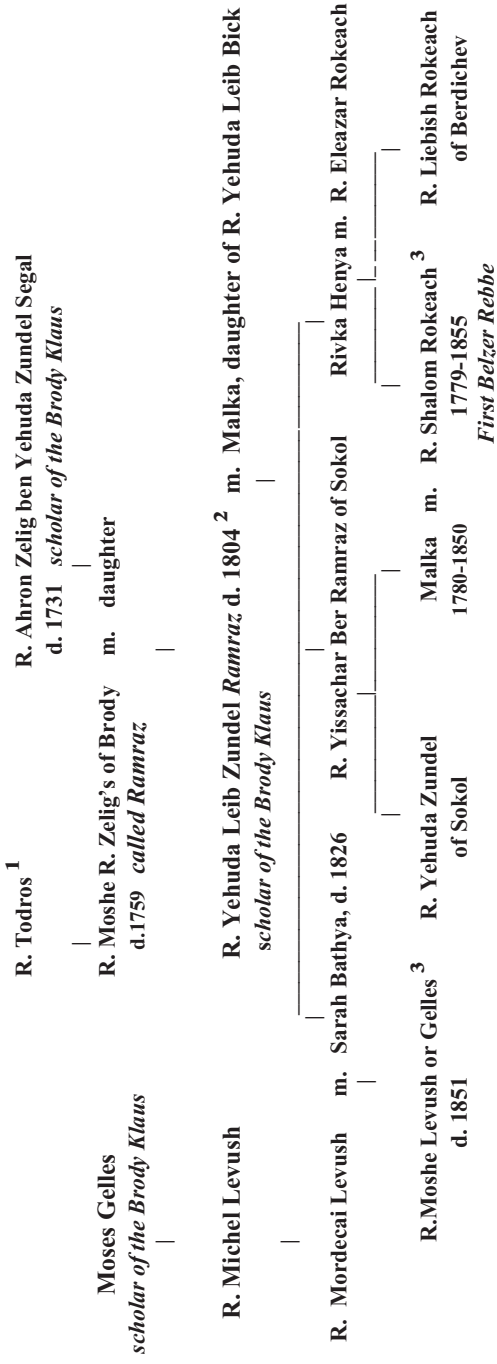
Naftali Hirsch Katz was a member of an ancient and distinguished sacerdotal family (Katz is an acronym of Kohen Zedek = righteous priest). He was a great-grandson of Isaac ben Samson Katz who married a daughter of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague. Naftali Hirsch occupied a number of important posts. He was ABD (Av Beth Din) of Frankfurt am Main and of Posen. His children included Shprintze Katz who married Jacob Ashkenazi-Katzenellenbogen of Posen and whose daughter was the wife of Efraim Fischel of Ludmir, son of Chief Rabbi Aryeh Leib Fischls of Cracow (died 1671) and grandson of Efraim Fischel of Lvov (died 1653), President of the Council of the Four Lands.

Shmuel Helman had a very long and distinguished career that took him from his studies in Prague under Abraham Broda, to the Chief Rabbinate of Kremsier, Mannheim, and Metz and to a position of pan-European influence. His daughters Jached, Beila, and Deborah married respectively Eliezer Katzenellenbogen, ABD of Bamberg and Hagenau, Judah Leib Fraenkel, the son of Chief Rabbi David Mirels Fraenkel of Berlin, and Isaac Rapaport, son of Israel Ashkenazi, ABD of Offenbach and Hanau.

Shmuel Helman's younger son Rabbi Uri Feivush was the father-in-law of Shmuel Landau, a son of the great Chief Rabbi of Prague, Ezekiel Landau (died 1793). Helman's eldest son, Moshe of Glogau was the father-in-law of Yechiel Michel Segal, ABD of Eisenstadt, and of others including Moses Gelles, grandson of the eponymous scholar of the Brody Klaus (E. Gelles, An Ancient Lineage, Vallentine Mitchell, London 2006, chapter 33). Shmuel Helman was already a widower when he studied at Prague in 1709. He was supported by his wealthy father-in-law from Glogau and ultimately married a sister of his late wife (Phineas Katzenellenbogen, Yesh Manhilin, Jerusalem 1984). The marriage of Helman's daughter to Shimson, son of Rabbi Pinchas Isaac ben Naftali Hirsch Katz of Kremsier has now come to light (private communication from Rabbi Dov Weber of New York referring to a Judaica auction catalogue published in 1998) It appears to date from the time of Helman's association with Kremsier in Moravia and this daughter probably came from his first marriage for which documentation has been lacking. A line of descent from Naftali Hirsch's son Bezalel Katz of Ostrog ultimately unites with a Horowitz line descended from Isaiah Katz of Brody, who was a brother of Naftali Hirsch Katz.

## Zundel Ramraz

[Ramraz, an acronym for Rabbi Moshe Reb Zelig's that became a family name]



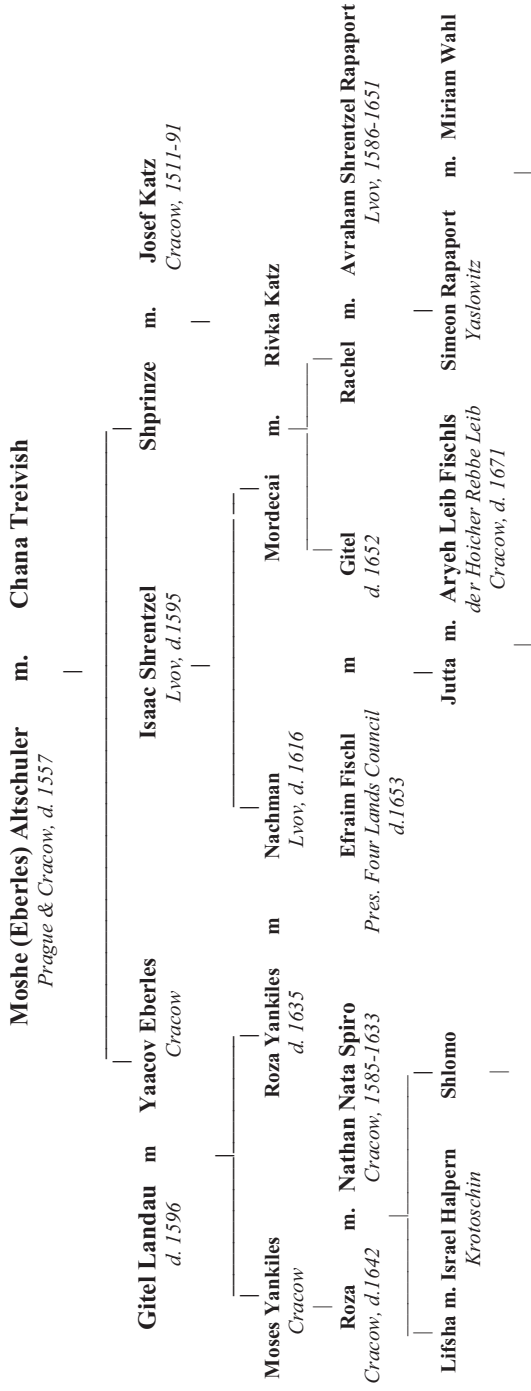
## FOOTNOTES

- 1 R. Todros was a descendant of R. Todros Abulafia, of the family distinguished as scholars and courtiers in 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> century Spain.
- 2 R. Yehuda Zundel of Brody may have been married (secondly) to Frieda, daughter of R. Yitzhak of Sokol, who was a descendant of many famous rabbis. Rabbi Yehuda Zundel, like his grandfather was a scholar of the Brody Klaus, and so were Moses Gelles and Jacob Horowitz. The latter married Sarah, a daughter of R. Todros Zundel Ramraz (nephew of the above Yehuda Leib Zundel). Jacob's son Rabbi Todros Zundel Horowitz (d. 1866) of Brody and Busk, author of *Shoresh Miyakov*, was thus a cousin of one of our Gelles lines.
- 3 Some descendants of Moses Gelles of Brody and of the Rokeach Grand Rabbis of Belz also share a Zundel Ramraz ancestor. Chaya, a grand-daughter of R. Liebish Rokeach of Berdichev, married Israel Brodsky (1823-89).  
  
Sources: E. Gelles, Finding Rabbi Moses Gelles, Avotaynu, vol. xviii, No.1, Spring 2002  
Arim Ve'Imahot Be'yisrael, vol. 6 (Brody), pp 54, 56, 69-70.  
Meir Wunder, Meorei Galicia, vol 4, pp 844-907 and 967-9  
Yitzhak Shlomo Yodlov, Sefer Yichus Belza, pp 25-35 and 311-315  
Neil Rosenstein, The Unbroken Chain, pp. 806 -07 and 1103-04 for Brodsky connections.



## Some Descendants of Moshe Altschuler and Chana Treivish

[Altschuler - a branch of the old Chayes family named after the Prague synagogue they helped to build]



Pinchas of Koretz was a direct descendant of Nathan Nata Spiro and the father-in-law of Shmuel Gelles aka Polonsky, a grandson of Moses Gelles of Brody, whose progeny were also linked by marriage with Moshe of Glogau, son of Shmuel Helman of Metz. The latter was for long believed to be the son of Israel Halpern of Krotoschin but this connection has been questioned by some genealogists

Their issue married into many notable rabbinical families such as that of Abraham Joshua Heschel of Cracow and descendants included Chief Rabbis all over Europe including London

Gele Rapaport married Moses Phineas Charif, Chief Rabbi of Lvov, d. 1702  
Their issue included Jutta, wife of Naftali Herz Ashkenazi, and other connections were with descendants of Aryeh Leib Fischls, Chacham Zvi Ashkenazi, and the Heschel-Babads

## Footnotes

Yaacov Eberl's appears to have been married twice – to Gittel Landau and to a daughter of R. Aryeh Leib Katz Rapa, ABD of Prague (Yodlov, Cahana). Gittel Landau was a daughter of Moshe ben Yekutiel Landau Halevi, whose descendant Chief Rabbi Ezekiel Landau of Prague was believed to be a blood relation as well as in-law of Shmuel Helman of Metz. The traditional belief that the Rabbi of Metz was the son of Israel Halpern of Krotoschin has been challenged, but Shmuel Helman certainly belonged to the Halpern-Katzenellenbogen family nexus.

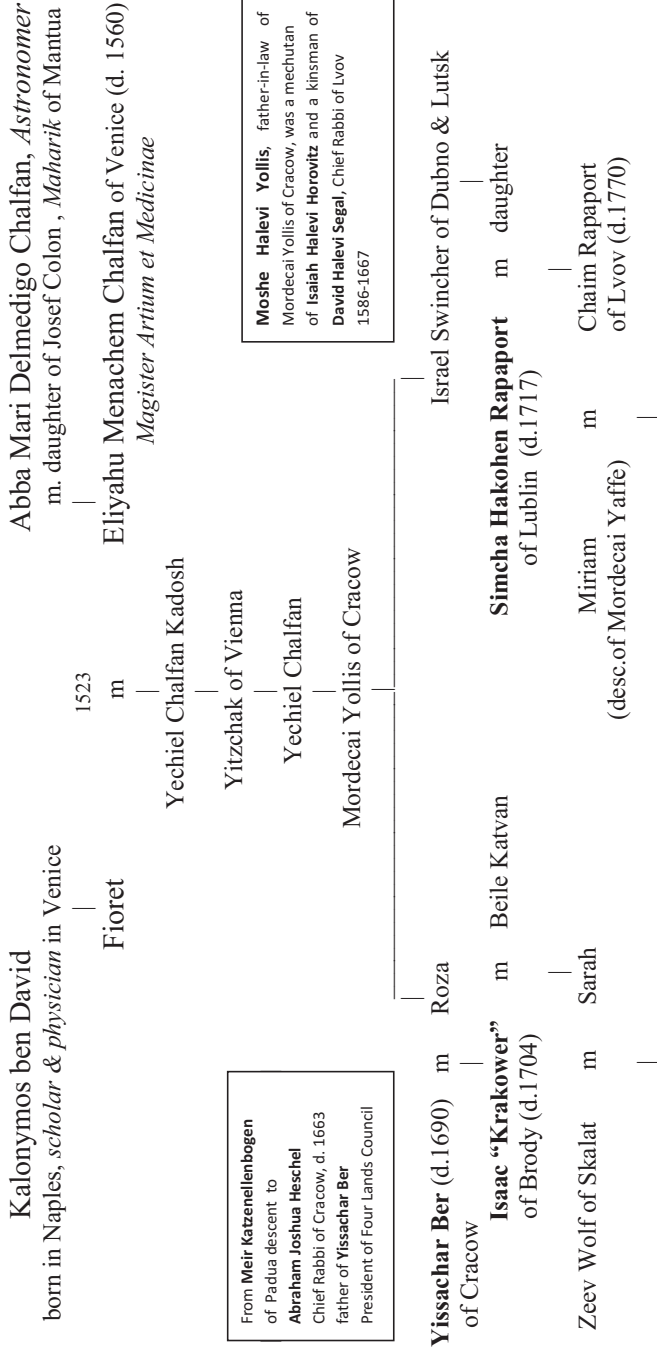
Josef Katz, the son of Mordecai Gershon HaKohen and brother-in-law of Chief Rabbi Moses Isserles, was Head of the Yeshivah of Cracow. Efraim Fischl of Lvov, a descendant of Solomon Luria of Lublin, married Gittel, a daughter of Mordecai ben Isaac or of Mordecai ben Nachman Shrentzel. She was therefore a sister or cousin of Rachel Rapaport. Abraham Shrenzel Rapaport belonged to the family of Arye Leib Katz Rapa of Prague.

Roza Yankiles (Eberl's), who married Nachman Shrentzel, was known as *die goldene Roiz* (Cahana, Josef Kohen-Zedek). Gele Rapaport, the daughter of Simeon Rapaport and Miriam Wahl, was a great-granddaughter of Saul Wahl.

Aryeh Leib and Jutta Fischl were parents of Zecharya Mendel of Belz and of Efraim Fischl of Ludmir. A line from Zacharyah Mendel goes to Chief Rabbi Nathan Nata of Brody, who is connected by marriage to the descendants of Chief Rabbi Uri Feivush of Vilna. Efraim Fischl of Ludmir was the father of Jacob of Ludmir who married Hinde Katzenellenbogen. They are ancestors of the later Chajes line. The descendants of Efraim Fischl of Lvov include the Margoshes of Brody, in-laws of the later Gelles line. Aryeh Leib and Jutta Fischl were parents-in-law of Samuel ben Uri Feivush of Shidlow & Fuerth, whose son-in-law, Uri ben Naftali Hertz Breslauer aka Aaron Hart (1670-1756) became the first Chief Rabbi of the Ashkenazi Jews in England. Another daughter of Aryeh Leib and Jutta Fischl, named Esther, married Saul Loewenstam, the son of Chief Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel of Cracow. Esther and Saul were the grandparents of Zvi Hirsch Berlin (1720-1800) who became Chief Rabbi in London, where he was known as Rabbi Hart Lion. His son Solomon Hirschel or Hershell (1762-1842) was the first Chief Rabbi in London to be also recognized by the provincial and colonial communities (Rosenstein, Cecil Roth)

[various sources including Yudlov, Sefer Yichus Belza, pp 33, 188, 343; Cahana, Anaf Eitz Avoth, p 143, 158, 216, 222; Buber, Anshei Shem, p 379; Kohen-Zedek, Dor Yesharim; Rosenstein, The Unbroken Chain, pp 553 et seq; Cecil Roth, The Great Synagogue of London 1690-1940, chs.5, 9, and 13]

## Descent from Kalonymos ben David and Delmedigo Chalfan



Kalonymos ben David and Josef Colon were descendants of ancient families believed to be of Davidic descent, namely the Kalonymos, who had been Princes of Narbonne for several centuries, and the Trabot, some of whom had come to Italy from France in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Delmedigo were from Crete and the Chalfan came to Italy from Provence.

Sources include A.J. Bruck, *Historia Judaica*, 1946, vol. viii; Yudlof, *Sefer Yichus Belza* (but cf. Englard, *Tzfunot* 4:3, pp 87-88); Steinschneider, *Ir Vilna*; Ephrati, *Toldot Anshei Shem*; Lewin, *Geschichte der Juden in Lissa*; Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain*; and the *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1904 edn; etc.

## Millennial Descent from Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona

The Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona and some other leading families including the Benveniste moved between Provence and Aragon. The Hebrew name Shem Tov and the Greek Kalonymos meant "of good name". They were related to the Kalonymos *Nesiim* of Narbonne.

- 1 Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona (a leading Talmudic scholar in Provence)  
(the Ha-Yitzhari family claimed direct descent from Samuel the Prophet)
- 2 Zerachiah
- 3 Yitzchak (scholar in Provence)
- 4 Zerachiah Halevi Girondi 1125-1186 (author of *Ha-Maor* and other works)
- 5 Joseph Halevi
- 6 Benveniste Halevi
- 7 Joseph Halevi ben Benveniste m Clara bat Asher ben Meshullam ben Jacob of Lunel (reputedly of Davidic descent)
- 8 Pinchas Halevi - lived near Perpignan (elder brother of Aharon Halevi, 1235-1305, who gives his descent from Zerachiah Halevi in *Bedek Habayit*)
- 9 Yitzchak Halevi
- 10 Joseph Halevi
- 11-13 (?)

From the Shem Tov Halevi of medieval Spain and Provence a sprig transplanted to Bohemia in the 15<sup>th</sup> century became the Horowitz family, taking their name from the town of Horovice near Prague where they settled before moving to Prague and beyond

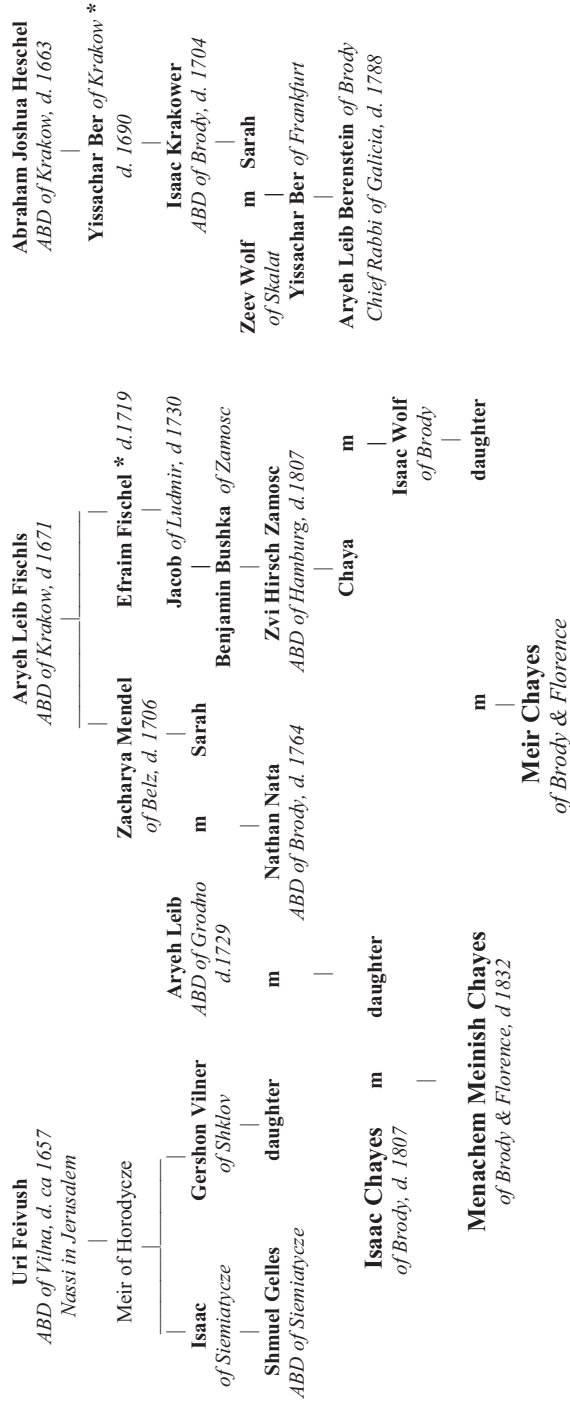
- 14 Moshe Halevi
- 15 Isaiah ben Moshe Halevi Ish Horowitz ca.1440-1515 – in Prague 1480
- 16 Ahron Meshullam Zalman Horowitz 1470-1545 aka *Zalman Munka*
- 17 Israe Horowitz 1500-1572 of Prague
- 18 Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz Prague 1535 – Cracow 1618  
President of the Council of the Four Lands - m sister of Rabbi Moses Isserles
- 19 Jacob Horowitz died in Vienna 1630
- 20 Joshua Horowitz ABD of Przemysl died 1661
- 21 Shmuel Schmelke Horowitz ABD of Tarnow died 1694 m granddaughter of Yehoshua Heschel Charif, Chief Rabbi of Cracow (author of *Meginei Shlomo*)
- 22 Meir Horowitz of Bolechow, Zloszow, and ABD of Tykocin died 1743  
m daughter of Menachem Manish Katz, son of Isaiah Katz of Brody  
(descendants of Judah Loew of Prague)
- 23 Jacob Jokel Horowitz ABD of Glogau and Brody died 1755
- 24 Isaac Horowitz ABD of Brody, Glogau, and Hamburg died 1767
- 25 Beile Horowitz m Menachem Mendel Rubin ABD of Lesniow etc died 1803
- 26 Jacob Jokel Horowitz ABD of Bolechow 1773 - 1832
- 27a Efraim Fischel Horowitz ABD of Munkacz died 1860
- 27b Yehuda Ahron Horowitz of Solotwina and ABD of Mihaileni
- 28a Sarah (?) m David Isaac Gellis ca 1790 – 1870
- 28b Gittel Horowitz (?) m Hirsch Leib Weinstein ABD of Solotwina died 1884
- 29 Nahum Uri Gelles ABD of Solotwina died 1934 m Esther Weinstein died 1907
- 30 David Gelles of Vienna 1883-1964 m Regina Griffel 1900 - 1954
- 31 Edward Gelles 1927-



## Chayes Family Connections I

Uri Feivush was a son of David, Chief Rabbi of Vilna. Aryeh Leib (ben Zacharya Mendel Hanavi) Klausner was descended from the family of Judah Löw of Prague. After his marriage to Jutta, daughter of Efraim Fischel of Lvov (died 1653) he was known as Aryeh Leib Fischls. The Fischel line goes back to 15<sup>th</sup> century Frankfurt. Efraim ben Aryeh Leib Fischel of Ludmir married a granddaughter of Nafitali Hirsch Katz of Frankfurt, a descendant of Judah Löw and Miri Altschular. Abraham Joshua Heschel, scion of the Katzenellenbogen line from Padua and Venice, and Aryeh Leib Fischls were Chief Rabbis of Krakow.

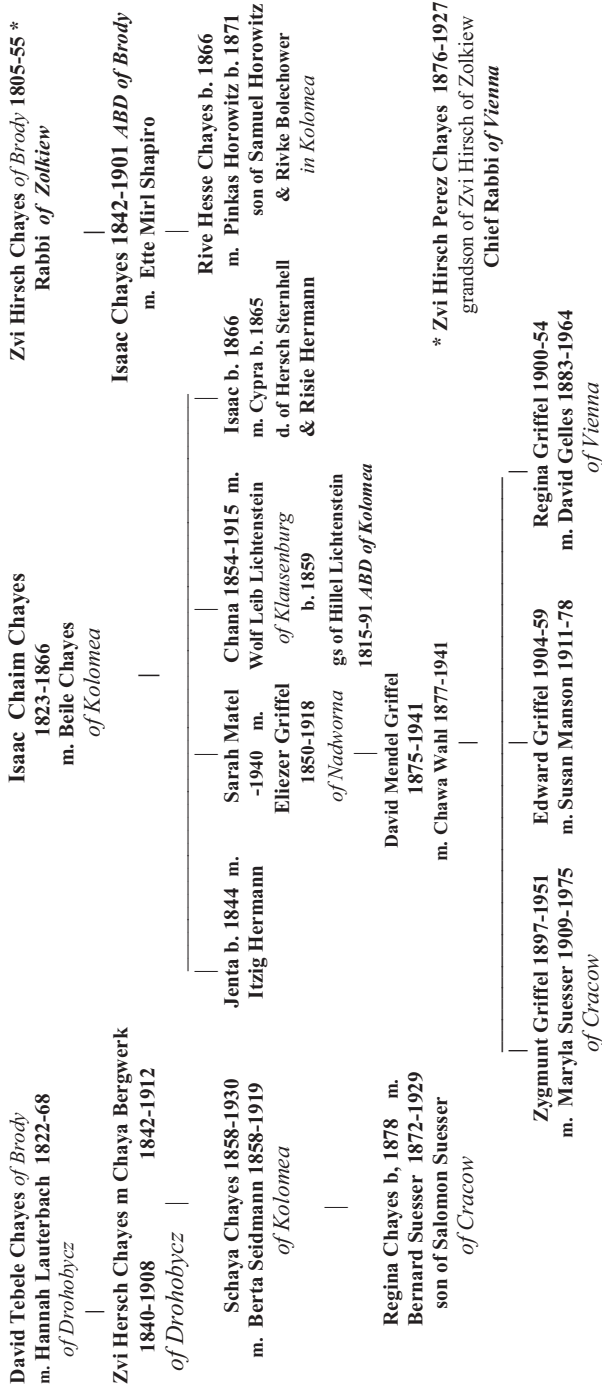
\* Their sons, Yissachar Ber of Krakow and Efraim Fischel of Ludmir, were Presidents of the Council of the Four Lands



## Chayes Family Connections II

*The Chayes family spread from their base in Brody to other Galician towns and they also flourished in Tuscany. Meir Chayes was a merchant banker in Brody and Florence and one of his sons was the famous Rabbi Zvi Hirsch of Zolkiew. David Tebele of Drohobycz may have been the latter's brother. Numerous family members in Kolomea included my great-great-grandfather Isaac Chaim Chayes*

*Two Chayes branches are connected by marriages with the Suesser family of Cracow.*







## **Appendix 3**

### **Books and articles by Edward Gelles**



# **Books and Articles by Edward Gelles**

**2000-2010**

## **BOOKS**

- 1 An Ancient Lineage : European Roots of a Jewish Family  
Gelles - Griffel - Wahl - Chajes - Safier - Loew - Taube**  
Vallentine Mitchell, London, July 2006  
(ISBN 0 85 303 680 2 )
  
- 2 Family Connections : Gelles – Horowitz – Chajes**  
A Genealogical Study  
Shaker Publishing BV, The Netherlands, February 2008  
(ISBN 978 90 423 0338 6 )
  
- 3 Family Connections : Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman**  
Shaker Publishing, B.V, The Netherlands, June 2009  
(ISBN 978 90 423 0370 6)
  
- 4 Ephemeral and Eternal : Josef Gelles – a brief life**  
Shaker Publishing BV, The Netherlands, June 2010  
(ISBN 978 90 423 0392 8)
  
- 5 Meeting My Ancestors**  
Shaker Publishing BV, The Netherlands, 2011  
ISBN (978 90 423 0403 1)
  
- In Preparation*
  
- 6 From Spanish March to Russian Pale**  
Some Jewish Strands in European History

## ARTICLES

### 2000

- 1 Saul Wahl. A Jewish Legend. *Judaism Today*, No.14, Winter 1999-2000
- 2 In Search of My Pedigree. *Shemot*, Vol. 8, No.2, June 2000
- 3 The Wahls of Nadworna. *Shemot*, Vol. 8, No.3, September 2000
- 4 Chief Rabbis in the Genes. *Manna*, No. 69, Autumn 2000
- 5 All Quiet on the Eastern Front. *Avotaynu*, Vol. xvi, No.4, Winter 2000

### 2001

- 6 Searching for Eve: A Methodological Lesson. *Avotaynu*, Vol.xvii, No.2, Summer 2001
- 7 Galician Roots. *The Galitzianer*, Vol. 9, No.1, November 2001

### 2002

- 8 Capitalists and Rabbis. *The Galitzianer*, Vol.9, No. 2, February 2002
- 9 Economic Background to some Family Links. *The Galitzianer*, Vol.9, No.3, May 2002
- 10 Finding Rabbi Moses Gelles. *Avotaynu*, Vol. xviii, No.1, Spring 2002
- 11 Abraham Low's Ship's Manifest. *Shemot*, Vol. 10, No.2, June 2002
- 12 Genealogy for Moral Support, *The Galitzianer*, Vol. 9, No. 4, August 2002,
- 13 The Safiers of Tarnobrzeg. *Shemot*, Vol 10, No.3, September 2002
- 14 My Mother's People, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol. 16, No. 4, October 2002
- 15 A Tale of Two Cities, *The Galitzianer*, Vol.10, No1, November 2002

### 2003

- 16 My Father's People, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.17, No.1, February 2003
- 17 The Wohls of Cracow, *The Galitzianer*, Vol.10, No.2, February 2003
- 18 Davidic Descent, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.17, No.2, June 2003
- 19 A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Pictorial Record of Brody, *The Galitzianer*, Vol.10, No.4, August 2003

### 2004

- 20 David and Chaim Gans of Prague, *Shemot*, Vol 12, No.1, March 2004
- 21 Rabbi Shmuel Hillman of Metz and his Family Connections, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.18, No.2, May 2004
- 22 Chayes Family Connections, *Shemot*, Vol 12, No. 2, June 2004
- 23 Jewish Community Life in Brody, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.18, No.4, November 2004

### 2005

- 24 Genealogical Background of some Hasidic Sages, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.19, No.1, February 2005
- 25 Rabbis of Solotwina near Stanislau, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.19, No. 4, November 2005

### 2006

- 26 Gelles of Brody and some Fraenkel-Horowitz connections, *Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol.20, No.1. February 2006
- 27 Marriages between some Rabbinic Families in Galicia, *The Galitzianer*, Vol.14, No.1, November 2006

### 2007

- 28 They met in Trieste, *Everton's Genealogical Helper*, Sept / Oct 2007

### 2008

- 29 From the Baltic to the Black Sea,  
*Sharsheret Hadorot*, Vol. 22, No.2 , May 2008
- 30 Die Familie Chajes und ihre genealogischen Verbindungen,  
“ Adler “ *Zeitschrift für Genealogie und Heraldik*. Vol 25,  
No. 4, 2008
- 31 End of the Gelles rabbinic line.  
*The Galitzianer*, Vol.16, No.1, November 2008

### 2010

- 32 Postcards and other Ephemera in Genealogical Research  
Josef and Giza Gelles of Boryslaw  
*The Galitzianer*, Vol. 17, No.2, February 2010
- 33 Josef Gelles and the Solotwina Rabbinat  
*The Galitzianer*, Vol.17, No.3, May 2010
- 34 DNA tests in the search for common ancestors  
Genes and Genealogy of the Gelles and Polonsky families  
(with Jeffrey Mark Paull)  
*The Galitzianer*, Vol. 18, No. 4, November 2010

### 2011

- 35 DNA tests and common ancestors  
*The Galitzianer*, Vol.18, No.2, February 2011

**An Ancient Lineage**  
***European Roots of a Jewish Family***  
***Gelles-Griffel-Wahl-Chajes-Safier-Loew-Taube***  
**By Edward Gelles**

**Vallentine Mitchell, London 2006**  
**ISBN 0-85-303-680-2**

*This is an important document not only for the author's extended family but for all seekers of knowledge who will find themselves enriched socially and historically as well as by the deepening of their Jewish roots.* **Rabbi Meir Wunder, Jerusalem**

*It is the magnum opus of a determined, resourceful, and imaginative genealogist based on many hundreds of records in libraries and archives on three continents. Dr. Gelles' efforts have produced a book that is inspiring and even moving at times as the documents reflect the vicissitudes of European Jews over a thousand years and many countries.* **Professor Gershon David Hundert, Head of Jewish Studies, McGill University, Montreal.**

A wide-ranging family study encompassing all of Europe over a period of centuries. It presents much unpublished material accompanied by documents and notes, sketch maps, glossary, a bibliography, and 54 genealogical charts. The book contains nearly 200 place names and over 100 family names, including those of the leading Ashkenazi rabbinic families.

Cloth, 392 pp. The publisher's retail price is US\$ 65 for North America and £ 45 for the United Kingdom and the rest of the world

It may be ordered directly from the author at the address given below at a special price of US\$ 42 (North America) or £ 26 (UK) inclusive of shipping. Please send orders with a cheque payable to Edward Gelles.

**Dr. Edward Gelles, 3 Hyde Park Crescent, London, W2 2PW,**  
**Great Britain**  
**telephone: (0) 207 724 8722**  
**e-mail: edward.gelles@btinternet.com**



**Family Connections**  
***Gelles – Horowitz – Chajes***  
**A Genealogical Study**

**By Edward Gelles**

**Shaker Publishing 2008**  
**ISBN 978-90-423-0338-6**

**(paperback - 74 pages, 21 tables, 1 map, bibliography, etc)**

Following on his earlier published work, Dr. Gelles investigates the genealogical links between a number of rabbinical families that were prominent in central and eastern Europe for several hundred years and relates his findings to the historical background. Gelles, Horowitz, and Chajes are highlighted in the present work that includes connections to Loew, Katz, Yaffe, Shapiro, Halpern, Hillman, Isserles, Meisels, Katzenellenbogen, Babad, Landau, Rapaport, Friedman, Fraenkel, Fischel, Margolies, and other families.

Edward Gelles was born in Vienna and came to England with his parents in 1938. His Gelles forebears were rabbis for many centuries. He was educated at Balliol College Oxford, where he obtained his doctorate in physical chemistry. His interests include European history, antiques, modern art, and family genealogy. His book “An Ancient Lineage : European Roots of a Jewish family” was published by Vallentine Mitchell in 2006.

This new monograph can be ordered directly from the author at the address given below. Please send orders with a cheque payable to Edward Gelles for £18 (UK) / US\$ 35 (North America) / € 22 (Europe) per copy inclusive of shipping.

**Dr. Edward Gelles, 3 Hyde Park Crescent, London W2 2PW,**  
**Great Britain**  
**telephone: (0) 207 724 8722**  
**e-mail : [edward.gelles@btinternet.com](mailto:edward.gelles@btinternet.com)**

**Family Connections**  
*Gelles - Shapiro - Friedman*

**By Edward Gelles**

**Shaker Publishing 2009**  
**ISBN 978 90 423 0370 6**

**(Paperback 128 pages, 14 charts, numerous illustrations, maps etc)**

From medieval Spain and Provence to renaissance Prague and Cracow this study proceeds to 18th century eastern Europe, to the twilight years of the Austrian Empire, and finally to Vienna between two world wars and into the post-war world. Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapiro of Cracow was the ancestor of the great 18<sup>th</sup> century chasidic leader Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz and of the Friedman dynasty of Ruzhin, Sadagora, and Czortkow. The connections between descendants of Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz, the scholar Moses Gelles of Brody, and Israel Friedman of Ruzhin are woven into the history of the Jews in central and eastern Europe. The book contributes some interesting footnotes to the history of the Chasidic movement as well as to that of modern political Zionism.

Edward Gelles was born in Vienna and came to England with his parents in 1938. His father was a lawyer in Vienna, a liberal and a life-long Zionist. His grandfather and great-grandfather were chasidic rabbis. Dr. Gelles was educated at Balliol College Oxford and his interests include European history, art & antiques, and family genealogy. He has contributed many articles to genealogical journals and his published books include "An Ancient Lineage: European Roots of a Jewish Family" (2006) and "Family Connections: Gelles – Horowitz – Chajes" (2008).

To order please send cheque payable to Edward Gelles for £20 (UK), US\$ 35 (North America), or €22 (Europe) per copy inclusive of shipping.

**Dr. Edward Gelles, 3 Hyde Park Crescent, London W2 2PW,**  
**Great Britain**

telephone : (0) 207 724 8722  
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## **Ephemeral and Eternal**

*Josef Gelles*

*a brief life*

by Edward Gelles

Shaker Publishing 2010

ISBN 978-90-423-0392-8

**(paperback - 35 pp / old postcards, tombstone, chart, map, references)**

Josef Gelles was born into a rabbinical family in Austrian Galicia on the eve of the first world war. He was brought up in an orphanage near Vienna, returned to Galicia in the 1920's, studied at the Lublin Sages Yeshivah, and started his married life in Stanislawow (now in the Ukraine and renamed Ivano-Frankivsk). He and his sister Giza vanished in the darkest days of the Nazi onslaught on Poland. His brief life between the two world wars, a part of which is pieced together in this study, presents in microcosm the tragic fate of so many of his generation in eastern Europe. The step by step account of extraordinarily serendipitous discoveries sets this study apart in the field of genealogical enquiry.

Edward Gelles was born in Vienna and came to England with his parents in 1938. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford. He has published numerous articles in genealogical journals and his studies of family history include *An Ancient Lineage : European Roots of a Jewish Family* (Vallentine Mitchell, London, 2006), *Family Connections : Gelles- Horowitz – Chajes and Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman* (Shaker Publishing, Maastricht, 2008 & 2009.)

This new monograph can be ordered directly from the author at the address given below. Please send orders with a cheque payable to Edward Gelles for £15 (UK), US\$ 22 (North America), and € 20 (Europe) per copy inclusive of shipping.

**Dr. Edward Gelles, 3 Hyde Park Crescent, London, W2 2PW,  
Great Britain**

**telephone: (0) 207 724 8722**

**e-mail: [edward.gelles@btinternet.com](mailto:edward.gelles@btinternet.com)**

## **Outline of book presently in preparation**

### **From Spanish March to Russian Pale** *Some Jewish Strands in European History* by Edward Gelles

There can be few parts of Europe where Jews have not been at some time during the past three millennia. They are reputed to have come as traders in the days of King Solomon. There are legends that two and a half millennia ago after the destruction of the first temple some refugees established communities in the Rhineland. Worms is particularly cited in this connection. A Jewish princess is fabled to have reached Ireland at that time and married an Irish King. Half a millennium later the second temple fell. Tens of thousands of Jews were then brought to Italy as prisoners, but the Jewish presence in Italy and indeed in the Iberian peninsula is much older than that.

Jews flourished in Spain and Portugal until 1492 and 1497, when they were expelled or accepted conversion. Many found refuge in the Netherlands, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire. In France the Jews were subjected to repeated expulsions in the middle ages and in many Italian cities they were forced into ghettos. They were totally expelled from southern Italy.

The historical Jewish presence in Iberia is matched in duration if not in splendor by their presence in Germany. From centuries of persecution in the west they were forced to seek new homes in the east. Jews made up over a tenth of the population of Poland and Lithuania in modern times. It is noteworthy that Portuguese Jewry in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries formed an even larger percentage of that country's much smaller population.

Enlightenment and the beginnings of emancipation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to the reversal of the age old trend and a movement back to central and western Europe. Tsarist pogroms in the 19<sup>th</sup> century hastened this process. In the mid

20<sup>th</sup> century the holocaust all but destroyed the Jewish presence in large swathes of eastern Europe, as the Inquisition had attempted to do in the Iberian peninsula long ago.

From one end of the continent to the other within a millennial time frame Jewish religion, ethics, literature and scholarship have left indelible marks on a common European civilization. It is one of the tasks of historical enquiry to understand this contribution.

The present study is structured around a small number of Jewish families and focuses on a handful of historical characters who were distinguished for their achievements and noteworthy for their ancient genealogical connections. It starts in Carolingian times with a branch of the Kalonymos, who were Princes of Narbonne and traced their line back to an 8<sup>th</sup> century Davidic descendant of Babylonian Exilarchs. This Makhir- Kalonymos line is still believed by some scholars to have had blood ties with the Carolingian dynasty.

Marriages linked Kalonymos with families such as the Shem Tov Halevi, Benveniste, and Shealtiel, who flourished in Provence and the Spanish March. Some of these were Jewish community leaders and important royal advisers. The Shem Tov Halevi were in Gerona at an early date. King David's symbol of the lion of the House of Judah is found on the crests and seals of Kalonymos, Bonnet, Shealtiel (and of later descendants such as Saul Wahl). *Kalonymos*, *Bonnet*, and *Shem Tov* are Greek, Catalan, and Hebrew versions of "good name".

The great 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar and biblical commentator Salomon ben Isaac of Troyes (Rashi) was the ancestor of rabbinical families whose names reveal their geographical origin, the Shapiro from Speyer, Treivish from Trier, Luria from Italy, and Katzenellenbogen from the eponymous town in Hesse-Nessau. A 16<sup>th</sup> century scion of the latter family was Saul ben Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, known to Jewish history as Saul Wahl.

The ancient families who were forced to flee from Provence at the end of the middle ages included some Halevi, Chalfan and Chayoth (Chayes) who made their mark as they moved across Europe over the centuries.

Some Halevi journeyed from Barcelona to Provence and then to Horovice near Prague, whence they took the name of Horowitz (Halevi Ish Horovitz) in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. They rose to influence in Prague and later in Poland and elsewhere.

From the Benveniste, who fled to Portugal from Spain in 1492, came the House of Mendes that played a significant role in 16<sup>th</sup> century European geopolitics, taking them from Portugal to Antwerp, to Venice, and ultimately to Constantinople.

The great Rabbis of 16<sup>th</sup> century Prague included Horowitz, Yaffe, Chayes and Judah Loew. The latter's rabbinical forebears came from the Rhineland as did those of Saul Wahl. The great millennial tapestry of rabbinical ancestry weaves together Davidic descendants with lines of the priestly *Kohanim* and their *Levite* assistants.

This study thus touches on a number of facets, including legendary genealogical links with the Carolingians, political and economic contributions of Benveniste and descendants, the Jews of Venice including Katzenellenbogen and Chalfan, Saul Wahl and Court Jews, Judah Loew and the rabbis of Prague, rabbis and the ancient priestly caste, Jewish scholarship in the middle ages and Jewish cultural contribution in the age of enlightenment and in recent times.

-----chapter 1-----

Some descendants of Jewish exilarchs from Baghdad married into the Frankish nobility - The Makhir-Kalonymos line of Jewish princes (Nesiim) of Narbonne – Possible connections with Charles Martel and the Carolingian dynasty - William of Gellone and his capture of Barcelona - Septimania and the Spanish March - Descent of the Kalonymos line to the scholar Rashi of Troyes (1040-1105) - Rashi and Godfrey of Bouillon (1058-1100) - From Rashi via Shapiro, Treivish, and Luria families to Katzenellenbogen and Saul Wahl (see later chapters).

-----chapter 2-----

Between Narbonne in Septimania and towns in the Spanish March, specifically Gerona and Barcelona, there was considerable mobility from the days of Charlemagne - Families connected with the Kalonymos of Narbonne such as the Benveniste rose to prominence in medieval Aragon as Jewish community leaders and royal advisers - Their manifold connections and their wide geographical dispersion in later times make them of particular interest, not least for descendants that include the 16<sup>th</sup> century House of Mendes and its scion Joseph Nasi, Duke of Naxos (see chapter 6), as well as for branches of Halevi who, by association with eponymous German and Bohemian towns, became the still flourishing Epstein and Horowitz families.

-----chapter 3-----

Members of the ancient Trabot family (also sometimes called Zarfati signifying their French origin) moved to Italy in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century - Their scion Josef Colon, known as the *Maharik of Mantua*, was considered the leading Italian rabbinical scholar of his day (died ca 1480) - The Delmedigo of Crete and the Chalfan from Provence flourished in Italy at that time and produced distinguished physicians and scientists - Abba Mari Delmedigo Chalfan of Naples married a daughter of Joseph Colon.

Their son, the noteworthy Venetian scholar, doctor, and man of letters, Eliyahu Menachem Chalfan (died 1560) married Fioret, daughter of Kalonymos ben David of Naples and Venice, who was a descendant of the Kalonymos of Narbonne - The Chalfans subsequently flourished in Prague and Vienna - After the general expulsion of Jews from Vienna in 1670 their story continued in Cracow and beyond.

#### --chapter 4--

Among families descended from Rashi (see chapter 1) the Katzenellenbogen, hailing from the eponymous town in Hesse Nassau, became famous as rabbis in Padua and Venice - Their offspring Saul ben Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, otherwise known as Saul Wahl (ca 1545-1617), went to Poland as a young man and rose to eminence as leader of Lithuanian Jewry, financial entrepreneur, and adviser to Polish Kings and magnates. - The Jagiellonian dynasty ended with the death of King Sigismund August II in 1572 and was followed by a period of elective monarchy in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth - The Italian connection, particularly strong since the marriage of King Sigismund I to Bona Sforza of Milan, had considerable influence on Polish culture. This connection included the University of Padua, *alma mater* of Saul Wahl and of members of the Polish nobility - According to legend, Saul Wahl was *Rex pro tempore* for a day or so during the interregnum of 1587 that ended with the accession of the Swedish King Sigismund III of the house of Vasa,

#### --chapter 5--

In the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Prague stood at the cross-roads of Jewish migration from west to east. In this golden age of the city's Jewish community its great rabbis included Isaac Chayes, Judah Loew, Mordecai Yaffe, Isaiah Halevi Ish Horowitz, and Yom Tov Lipman Heller - An ancient sacerdotal (kohanic) family of Prague linked descendants of Judah Loew and Saul Wahl, the famous scion of the Katzenellenbogens, in a nexus of Margolioth, Fischel, Horowitz, and others



#### ---chapter 6---

The epic journey of Vasco da Gama ushered in a period in which the spice trade with the East greatly enriched Portugal, the House of Mendes (Benveniste), and the city of Antwerp, to which that family transferred when conditions for Jewish *conversos* became difficult in Portugal - A consequence was the decline in the prosperity of Venice and its hold on the eastern Mediterranean where it was challenged by the rising Ottoman power - The Mendes family became for a time a player on the stage of European geopolitics by virtue of its immense wealth and trading connections - When they moved to Constantinople they were able to revert to the open practice of their old religion. The economic and political contribution they made there in the reigns of Suleiman the Magnificent and his successor Selim II was recognized when Josef Nasi was made Duke of Naxos in 1566.

#### --chapter 7--

In the later 18<sup>th</sup> century the ideas of Rousseau, Voltaire and other thinkers spread from France to other parts of Europe - The enlightened monarchs of Prussia and Austria, Frederick the Great and Joseph II, granted a measure of emancipation to their Jewish subjects. In Prussia the philosopher and polemicist Moses Mendelssohn made a major contribution to this gradually evolving process. He was a direct descendant of Saul Wahl.

#### -----chapter 8-----

The ancient mystical tradition in Judaism reasserted itself in eastern Europe at the very time that the rationalism of the enlightenment was making its way from France and Germany - Rabbi Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz was one of the leading lights of 18<sup>th</sup> century Chasidism.

The philosopher Martin Buber later became an influential historian of the movement.

**- chapter 9-**

The progeny of Saul Wahl formed links with other rabbinic families over many generations. This progeny includes many distinguished rabbis, scholars, and statesmen - Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Yehudi Menuhin head a list of musicians - Amongst philosophers, Moses Mendelssohn and Martin Buber have been mentioned in earlier chapters - Karl Marx was a descendant of Saul Wahl who has had the greatest impact on modern history and the details of his ancestry are relevant to the study of genetic and cultural inheritance.

-----**chapter 10**-----

The rabbinical elite evolved in the middle ages through marriages within a limited circle of families and between cousins of one degree or another. In dynasties that extended over many generations the emergence from time to time of particularly distinguished individuals may be related to some of these endogamous practices - The questions posed by the debate of “nature” versus “nurture” in the context of these Jewish families must take account of the cultural changes in their communities and their interactions with the environment in which they found themselves in different parts of Europe. Religiously and economically motivated persecutions, the exclusion from secular education and many professions, and so on, were among the environmental challenges to the survival of communities but could also act as spurs to individual achievement.

# Meeting my Ancestors

## *Genealogy, Genes, and Heritage*

The author came to England with his parents in 1938. In this book he sets out to discover why he started a search for his family roots when he reached the age of three score and ten and what insights he has gained from his findings. He begins with a brief account of his childhood in Vienna and adolescence in London and Oxford, and how his early life set the scene for the work he began more than half a century later. His historical and genealogical studies have now been supplemented by DNA tests that clarify some family connections. This story encompasses links with a number of ancient families including Wahl, Yaffe, Loew, Chajes, Hillman, Halpern, Shapiro, Horowitz, and others. The background is a millennial journey from the Spanish March to the Russian Pale.

Dr. Gelles was educated at Balliol College, Oxford. His published genealogical and historical work includes “An Ancient Lineage: European Roots of a Jewish Family” (2006), “Family Connections: Gelles-Horowitz-Chajes” (2008), “Family Connections: Gelles-Shapiro-Friedman” (2009), and “Ephemeral & Eternal: a brief life of Josef Gelles” (2010).

ISBN 978-90-423-0403-1

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