

# Some Family Connections with Wahl Katzenellenbogen

Edward Gelles

## Introduction

The family traditions that I had heard in childhood finally prompted me to embark on a serious study of my ancestral background when I reached the age of three score and ten. My starting point was the intriguing story of our ancestor Saul Wahl, scion of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Katzenellenbogen rabbis of Padua and Venice, who rose to prominence in Poland at the time of the interregnum of 1587 which preceded the election of Sigismund Vasa of Sweden to the Polish throne.

A systematic study of the history and genealogy of my immediate forebears gradually expanded to take in dozens of related families. My first book *An Ancient Lineage - European Roots of a Jewish Family : Gelles, Griffel, Wahl, Chayes, Safier, Loew, Taube* was published in 2006 (1).

I proceeded to refine the traditional methodology of my genealogical research, bringing genetic genealogy and ancillary studies such as onomastics into play, and setting the results against the background of our millennial migrations across Europe. My book published in 2016 – *The Jewish Journey : A Passage through European History* describes this continued quest (2).

I have recorded subsequent studies on my web page *Edward Gelles at Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts*, where a full list of my publications can be found (3).

## **Saul Wahl and the Katzenellenbogen**

The grandfather of Saul Wahl was Meir Katzenellenbogen (1483-1565), the Chief Rabbi of Padua, whose ancestral connections included the Treves, Shapiro, and Luria families. My appended chart begins with his son, Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen, Chief Rabbi of Venice and his wife Abigail Jaffe. The descendants of their son Saul married with other distinguished families including Horowitz, Kloisner, Shor, Teomim, Halpern, Helman, and Cohen (or Katz).

The principal work on the connections of hundreds of inter-related descendant lines over many centuries is the *Unbroken Chain* by Neil Rosenstein (4), while a starting point for consideration of Saul Wahl's life is the tradition-bound *Yesh Manhilin* by his 18<sup>th</sup> century descendant, Rabbi Phineas Katzenellenbogen (5).

I began my ongoing studies some years after the publication of Rosenstein's work which barely touches on my immediate ancestors. As for the legends of *Yesh Manhilin*, and some other hagiographical works of that genre, they are now being subjected to long overdue critique (6).

## **Connections of Gelles and Taube families**

The present brief essay limits itself to my and my cousin Thaddeus Taube's descent from Saul Wahl. Both our families had a background of migrations across Europe over many centuries. Our paternal forebears lived in Galicia from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. They were once based in Brody and Belz respectively before continuing their journeys. We have a common Galician great-grandfather Shulim Wahl of Tarnobrzeg. His daughters included my maternal grandmother Chawa and Tad's grandmother Rachel. Their family had long established traditions of descent from Saul Wahl (7).

On my father's side I have a millennial rabbinical background. Inter-marriages with many of the leading Jewish families, brought our line close to the Wahl - Katzenellenbogen. Thus, about five hundred years ago many of these families flourished in Prague. I am directly descended from or related through ancient marriages with all the 16<sup>th</sup> century Chief Rabbis of that city. Many members of these families later moved to Poland and beyond. My ancestors Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe of Prague, Grodno, and Posen and Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Prague and Cracow were followed by migrations to Poland, Lithuania, and then southward - to Galicia, Hungary, and Austria, or west - to Posen, Silesia, and Germany. My immediate Gelles line were in Galicia and gravitated towards Vienna while distantly related Gelles and some Jaffe were in the province of Posen and later moved to Berlin and further into Germany (8).

Abigail Jaffe, the wife of Chief Rabbi Samuel Judah of Venice, was a relative of Mordecai Jaffe who spent ten years in Venice. The appended chart continues to Hinde, the first wife of Saul Wahl's eldest son Meir, who was a daughter of Pinchas Halevi Horowitz. Meir and Hinde's son, Moses Katzenellenbogen of Chelm married a Kloisner whose father was a leader of the Jewish community in Posen (9). Their son Saul Katzenellenbogen of Brody, Chelm and Pinczow, had a first wife believed to be a Teomim (10) and married secondly Yente, a daughter of Jacob Shor, who was a son of Saul Wahl's daughter Hanele (11). My paternal family connections and those of the Wahl-katzenellenbogen continued with Halpern of Fuerth and Shmuel Helman, the Chief Rabbi of Mannheim and Metz, whose family were based in the Silesian city of Glogau. Shmuel Helman was a common ancestor of the later Katzenellenbogen and of my Gelles line.

The chart also shows descent from Saul Katzenellenbogen of Pinczow and his first wife via Rabbi Saadia Isiah Katzenellenbogen and Eidel Katz through several rabbis of Brest to family branches which

adopted Padua or Padwa as their surnames. Bracha Padwa and Israel Meir Hakohen of Brody and Busk had a daughter Breine Padwa who married Samuel Taube of Busk (12).

The Taube Padwa line starts with the son of this marriage, Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa, and continues to the distinguished Rabbi Hanoch Dov Padwa, follower of the Rokeach Chasidic dynasty of Belz, who became Chief Rabbi of the ultra-orthodox (Haredi) communities in London (13).

My cousin Thaddeus Taube, who shares with me a line of descent from Saul Wahl to our Wahl grandmothers, is also connected to the Katzenellenbogen branch of Padwa via his relative Samuel Taube of Busk.

## NOTES

- (1) Edward Gelles, *An Ancient Lineage* (Vallentine Mitchell, 2006)
- (2) Edward Gelles, *The Jewish Journey* (I.B. Tauris, 2016)
- (3) *Edward Gelles at Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts* web site
- (4) Neil Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain* (C.I.S.Publishers, 1990)
- (5) Phineas Katzenellenbogen, *Yesh Manhilin* (18<sup>th</sup> century MS in Bodleian Library; published in Jerusalem, 1986)
- (6) Julia Haarmann, *Hüter der Tradition* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013)
- (7) *An Ancient Lineage*, Chapters 4, 5, 13, and 18 and *The Jewish Journey*, Chapters 7 and 8
- (8) Edward Gelles, Balliol College web site : under the heading “ Some Family Charts ” No. 6 (Katzenellenbogen and Helman), No 9 (Jaffe) and No. 10 (Horowitz) and under the heading “Reflections on my ancestral background” numerous charts including “ Millennial Descent from Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona (Horowitz) and “Migrations of rabbinic families in central and eastern Europe over the past few centuries” (Gelles connections)

- (9) *An Ancient Lineage*, Kloisner chart (Table 38 on page 287)  
Benyamin Beinisch Mendels (died 1626) was a son of Zeccharia Mendel Kloisner of Posen who married a sister of Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague
- (10) Julia Haarmann, *Hüter der Tradition*, pp 30-31 (footnote 15 on Teomim connection )
- (11) Edward Gelles, Balliol College web site : under “Some Family Charts” No. 19 “Some Lines of descent from Saul Wahl “
- (12) ) *An Ancient Lineage*, Chapter 22 (The Taube Family)  
see notes on pp 148-149
- (13) Neil Rosenstein, *The Unbroken Chain*, Volume I, pp. 31 - 36  
“Padua and Padwa (Kohen) Families “

The Taube Padwa line descended from Samuel Taube and Breine Padwa to Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa, and then to Hanoch Dov Padwa (ca. 1908 – 2000), who was born at Busk in Galicia, brought up in Vienna, and ultimately became the distinguished Chief Rabbi of the ultra- orthodox (Haredi) Jews in London.  
(Personal communication from his grandson Akiva Padwa)

**Some lines of descent from the 16<sup>th</sup> century Katzenellenbogen, Chief Rabbis of Padua and Venice, and Saul Wahl**

K. stands for Katzenellenbogen and ABD for Head of the Rabbinical Court (Chief Rabbi)

**Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen 1521-1597 of Padua and ABD of Venice m. Abigail Jaffe**

**Saul Wahl K. 1545 – 1617 from Padua to Brest (Litovsk) and prominent in Polish affairs of State m. Deborah Drucker**

**Meir Wahl K. died 1631 ABD of Brest m (1) Hinde, dr of Pinchas Halevi Horowitz 1535 – 1617 (President of Four Lands Council)**

**Moses K. died ca 1643 ABD of Chelm m Sarah, dr of Benyamin aka Beinish Reb Mendels (Kloisner), *Parnas* of Posen**

**Saul Katzenellenbogen 1617 -1691 ABD of Brody, Chelm and Pinczow**

**m (2) Yente, dr of Jacob Shor (grandson of Saul Wahl)**

**m (1) dr of Chaim Jona Teomim ?**

Moses K. 1670 – 1733 ABD of Schwabach

m. dr of Eliezer Heilprin of Fuerth

Saadia Isiah K. died 1726 ABD of Holleschau

m Eidel, dr of Naftali Katz

Eliezer K, 1700-1771 ABD of Hagenau and Bamberg

m Yached, dr of Shmuel Helman died 1764 ABD of Mannheim and Metz

Haim K. m Rachel Sarah Schwabacher

(sister of Eliezer K.)

Naftali Hirsch K 1750 – 1823 Grand Rabbi of Upper Rhine etc

m Rachel, dr of Feivel of Glogau

their grandson Lazare Isidore 1813 -1888 became Chief Rabbi of France

Meir K. died 1777 ABD of Brest m. Yente

Aaron K, died 1807 of Brest m. Sheine Halevi

Haim (K.) Padua of Brest died 1837 m Mirke Padua

Descendants of Naftali Hirsch Katzenellenbogen and of my paternal

great-grandfather Rabbi David Isaac Gelles are cousins, having

Shmuel Helman of Metz as a common ancestor (see following page)

Bracha Padwa 1799 – 1848 m Israel Meir Hakohen died 1827

(from Brody to Busk)

**Breine Padwa m Samuel Taube of Busk**

(from the Taube of Belz)

Eliezer Wolf Taube Padwa 1875 – 1970

Hanoch Dov Padwa 1912 –2000

m Channah Gitel, dr of Naftali Gottesman

Shmuel Helman, Chief Rabbi of Mannheim and Metz

whose wife's family lived in Glogau, Silesia  
a daughter of his eldest son, Rabbi Moshe of Gogau,  
married Rabbi Moses Gelles of Glina and Brody

Their descendant line :-

Rabbi David Isaac Gelles buried in Brody 1868

Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles of Solotwina 1852 - 1934

Dr David I Gelles 1883 - 1964 of Vienna

Dr Edward Gelles born 1927 in Vienna

### Wahl to Gelles and Taube

Leiser Wahl of Tarnobrzeg born 1815

Shulim Wahl b. 1838 m Sarah Safier b. 1842

Chawa Wahl b.1877 ----- Rachel Wahl b. 1879  
m. David M Griffel b.1875 m Abraham Taube 1873 -1906

Regina Griffel 1900-1954  
m Dr David Gelles 1883-1964

Zyga Taube 1905 - 1985  
m Lola Popper 1909 - 1987

Dr Edward Gelles 1927 -

Thaddeus N Taube 1931 -

### Taube paternal line

My maternal grandmother Chawa Wahl and her sister Rachel Wahl,  
the grandmother of Thaddeus Taube, claimed descent from Saul Wahl  
as did the related Wohl family of Krakow

Autosomal DNA matches of Edward Gelles with probands  
of Bamberger and Schwabacher connection lend support to  
the link with the Katzenellenbogen line going back to  
Moses of Schwabach, son of Saul Katzenellenbogen of Pinczow  
and Yente Shor (see above)

Y-DNA test of Thaddeus Taube shows his haplogroup to be the  
Kohanic J-M 267. Y-DNA matches with numerous probands  
confirm a Cohen matronymic link in his paternal line.

Yossel Taube of Belz

Feivel Taube of Belz

Samuel Taube of Busk  
Taube Padwa

Simon Taube of Krystynopol

Josef Isaac Taube  
*moved to Lemberg (Lviv)*

Abraham Taube of Lemberg  
*descendants moved to Krakow*