

## Edward Gelles – Some Notes on my Ancestral Background

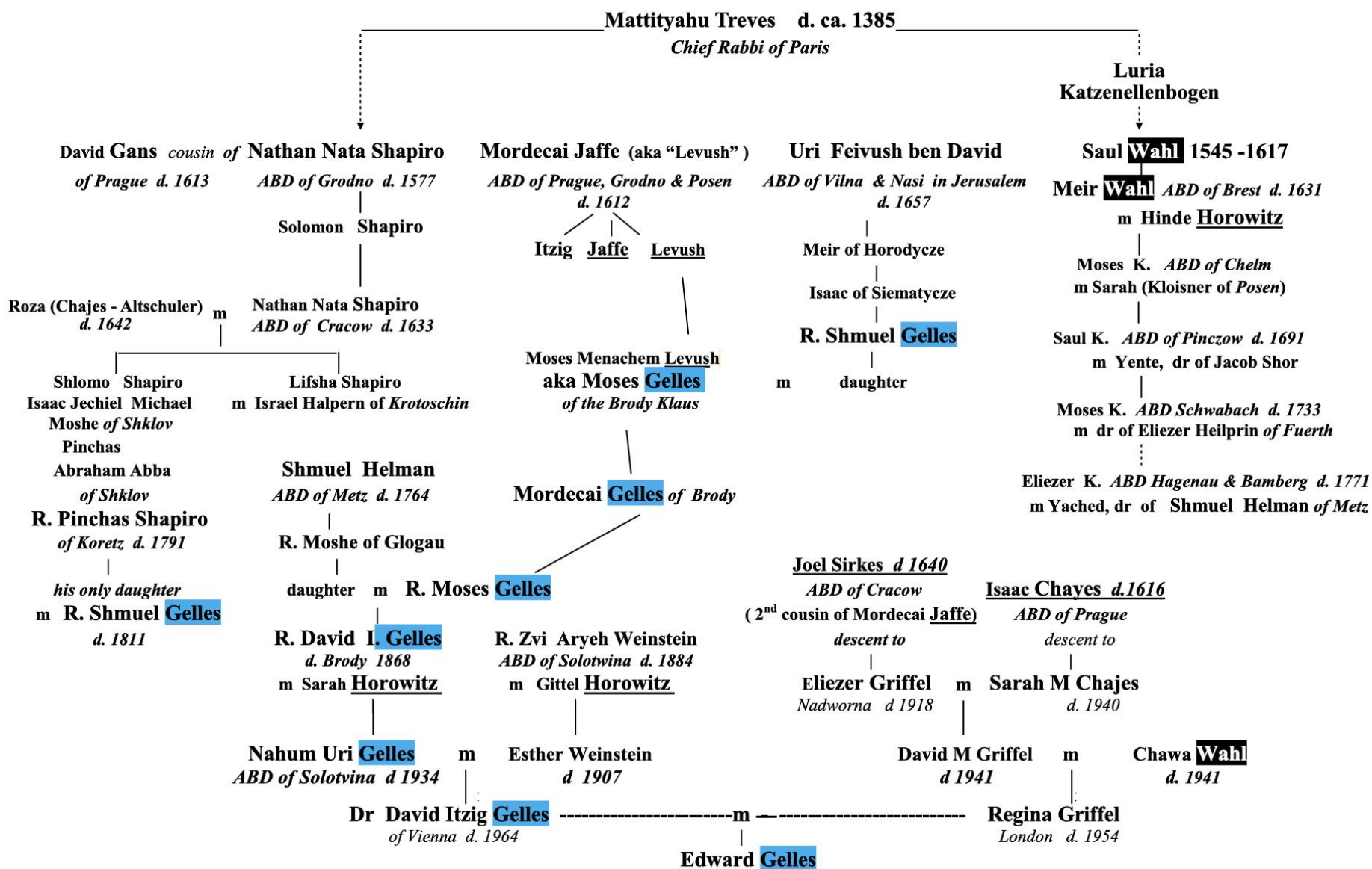
My largely Jewish ancestry is distinguished by inter-marriages between leading rabbinic families over many generations. My immediate paternal Gelles line came from Moses Gelles, a scholar of Brody, who linked Gelles and Jaffe three centuries ago, while my maternal Griffel family of Nadworna had some related rabbinical ancestors at that time

My parents were David Itzig Gelles, doctor of law and advocate in Vienna, and Regina Griffel. My father was a son of Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and Esther Weinstein and my mother was the daughter of David Mendel Griffel and Chawa Wahl. My Gelles line goes back from my grandfather to Horowitz, Helman, Halpern, Jaffe, Shapiro, Treves, and others. My paternal grandparents were related to each other, primarily through their Horowitz mothers.

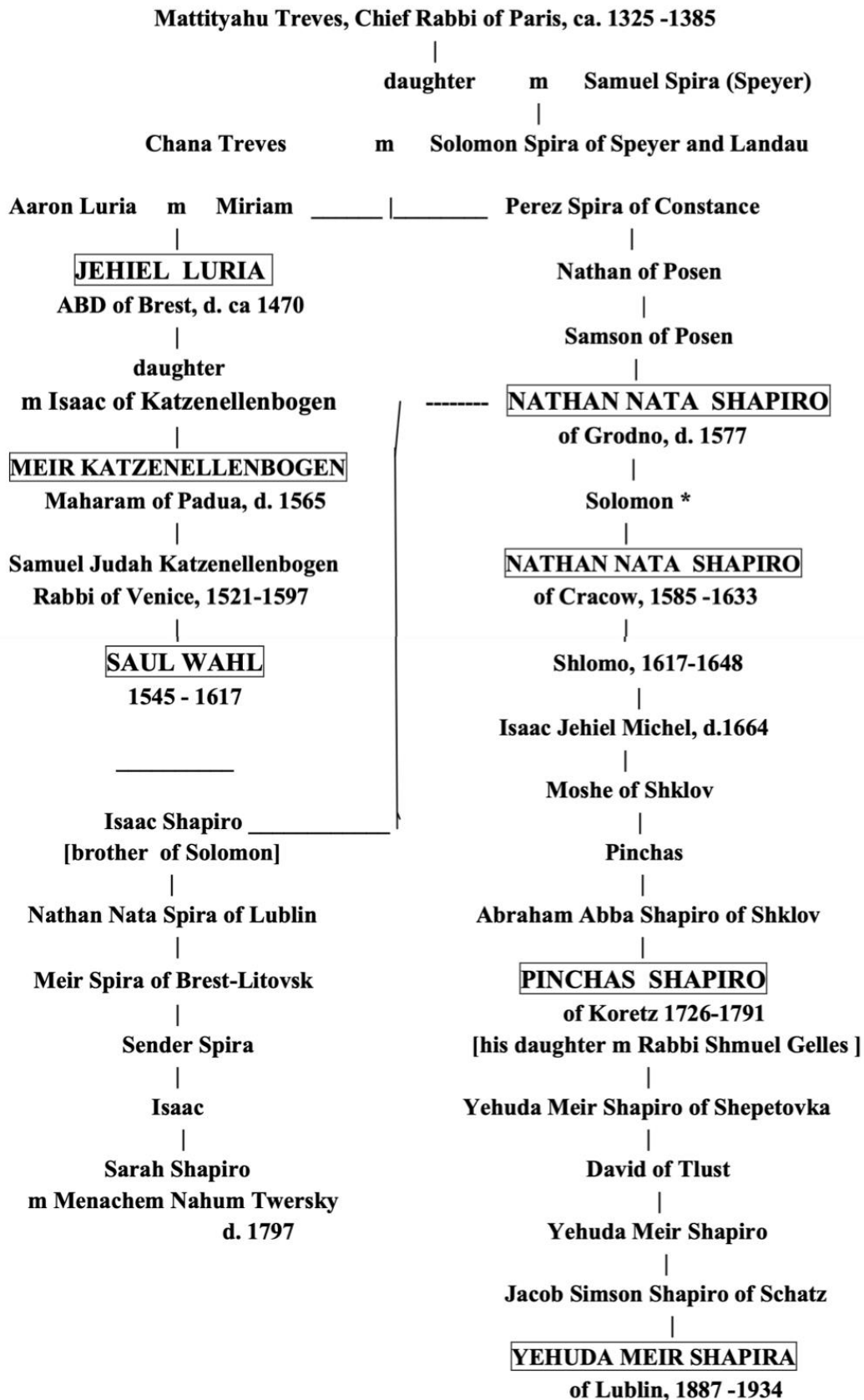
From the Griffel family my ancestors include my Wahl grandmother, and my great-grandmother Sarah M. Chajes. The ancestral line of Chawa Wahl goes back to Saul Wahl, the Katzenellenbogen chief rabbi of Padua and Venice, to Luria, and then to Treves.

The appended first chart presents a partial outline of my ancestry back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century with emphasis on my paternal Gelles –Shapiro and maternal Wahl - Katzenellenbogen lines with links to Treves who were notable rabbis in 14<sup>th</sup> century France.

The appended second chart entitled “ Treves – Shapiro - Luria descent “ indicates how Matityahu Treves of Paris connects with Shapiro and Wahl- Katzenellenbogen lines, which both strengthen my descent from this Treves family and their ancestor Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes (1040 – 1105), the great biblical scholar known as Rashi.



## Treves – Shapiro - Luria Descent



Referring to connections on the above first chart (the main chart), Gelles and Jaffe families came together in 16<sup>th</sup> century Prague and some continued their millennial migration in the footsteps of Moredecai Jaffe, the Chief Rabbi of Prague, Grodno and Posen. He was known as the Levush after the title of his magnum opus and one line of his family carried the Levush name. Another Jaffe branch took the name of Itzig on coming to Berlin at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century where they flourished as influential Court Jews and making notable connections by marriages with some Jewish families in Vienna.

At the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century three Gelles branches set out on their separate ways from Lithuania. One branch travelled to the Holy Land and have now been rabbis there for ten generations.

A second branch moved westward from Grodno to the province of Posen and then from Krotoschin and Lissa to Germany, coming to England before the outbreak of the Second World War. Benjamin Gelles became Rabbi of Finchley and his relative Bernard Gillis was a County Court Judge.

My immediate Gelles branch came down from Lithuania to Brody in Galicia. A Levush descendant of Rabbi Moredecai Jaffe, having married the daughter of a Rabbi Shmuel Gelles and taken his father-in-law's name, became known as Moses Gelles. He was a scholar of the Brody Klaus. I am a 6<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of this progenitor of a Gelles- Levush (Jaffe) line. I came to England from Vienna with my parents in 1938. Contact between the several Gelles branches separated for centuries were scarcely renewed in recent times (1).

The Jaffe descent of my grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles is outlined on the main chart. A line from the Levush to my paternal grandmother Esther Weinstein is added below ( 2 ).

Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles is shown as 4<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Chief Rabbi Shmuel Helman of Metz and 6<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Chief Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapiro of Cracow (3)

Rabbi Nathan Nata Shapiro was called after the title of his book “Megaleh Amukot“ (Revealed Depths). His wife Roza was of Chajes - Altschuler descent, the Chajes name being also shown on the main chart as that of my maternal great-grandmother Sarah M. Chajes.

The Chayyut / Chayes / Chajes family came from Portugal in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and migrated via Provence to Prague, Poland, Lithuania, Galicia (including Brody ) back to Italy, Austria, and widely spread thereafter. Dozens of rabbis including Chief Rabbis of Prague and Vienna, consuls in Livorno who were ennobled by the Kings of Portugal, merchant bankers in Florence, a variety of scholars, a world - class chess player, a modern composer, and a professor of law at Harvard graced the Chajes family.

On reaching Prague from Provence a branch were called Altschuler in memory of their “old synagogue” in Provence the stones of which they brought with them to Prague.

Roza Chajes-Altschuler was the great-granddaughter of Moses Eberles Altschuler (4)

Mirel Chajes Altschuler was the first wife of the famous Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague. I append a chart of my Chajes descent from both sides of my family (5).

My grandfather Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles was a relative and close follower of the Chasidic Grand Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow. Their family connections are indicated on appended charts of descent from Chief Rabbis Nathan Nata Shapiro of Cracow (6) and Meir Horowitz (the Maharam of Tiktin) (7).

The descent of my maternal grandmother Chawa Wahl from Saul Wahl, scion of the Katzenellenbogen Chief Rabbis of Padua and Venice is discussed in my published books (8).

Saul Wahl was a son of Rabbi Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen and Abigail Jaffe. Connection of Saul's line with Jehiel Luria, the Chief Rabbi of Brest and further back from Luria to Matityahu Treves of Paris is shown in the Table of "Treves - Shapiro – Luria descent".

Drawing some of the above-mentioned ancestral strands together we arrive at my connections with the Mendelssohn and related families (9).

In conclusion to these brief notes on my main chart with its outline of my pedigree back to Treves rabbis of medieval France I refer to Dr Neil Rosenstein's book "The Lurie Legacy" which sets out to take the story of the Treves ancestry to biblical times (10).

From Treves back to Rashi and the Kalonymos of Narbonne and not forgetting many great rabbis on the way, I rest my story, perhaps to be continued another day.

## References to the above Notes

Mainly to “Papers of Edward Gelles“ at Balliol College “Archives & Manuscripts“ website :

- (1) EG website - A 44  
Gelles and Jaffe family migrations from 16<sup>th</sup> century Prague
- (2) EG website - A 27  
Descent of Esther Weinstein from Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe
- (3) EG website - A 41  
Ancestral Links of Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and his grandson Edward Gelles
- (4) EG website - B 13  
Some descendants of Moshe Altschuler and Chana Treivish
- (5) EG website - B 5  
Descent of Edward Gelles from Rabbis Judah Loew and Isaac Chajes of Prague
- (6) EG website - B 8  
The Shapiro connection between Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and the Grand Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow
- (7) EG website - “Charts” 3  
Edward Gelles and two distant cousins showing some Horowitz and Friedman connections
- (8) Edward Gelles, “An Ancient Lineage“ (Valentine Mitchell, 2006) and “The Jewish Journey“ (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).
- (9) EG website A 29  
Ancestral Links between Edward Gelles and the Mendelssohns
- (10) Dr Neil Rosenstein, “The Lurie Legacy“ (Avotaynu, 2004).

## Descent of Esther Weinstein from Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe

**Rabbi Mordecai Yaffe of Prague “Ha Levush“ (died 1612)**

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

|  
daughter m Rabbi Abraham Heilprin of Kowel

|  
Rabbi Israel Heilprin of Svierz

|  
daughter m Rabbi Isaiah Heilprin of Vitkov and Brody

|  
Rabbi Moshe Heilprin of Berdichev & Solotwina (d. 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 (d. 1841)

|  
Gittel Hakohen Adlersberg (d.1862)

(sister of Rabbi Saul Hakohen Adlersberg, ABD of Brodshin, died 1850)

m Zalman Berish Rottenberg (Margolies) of Brodshin

|  
Miriam m Rabbi Yehuda Ahron Horowitz of Solotwina

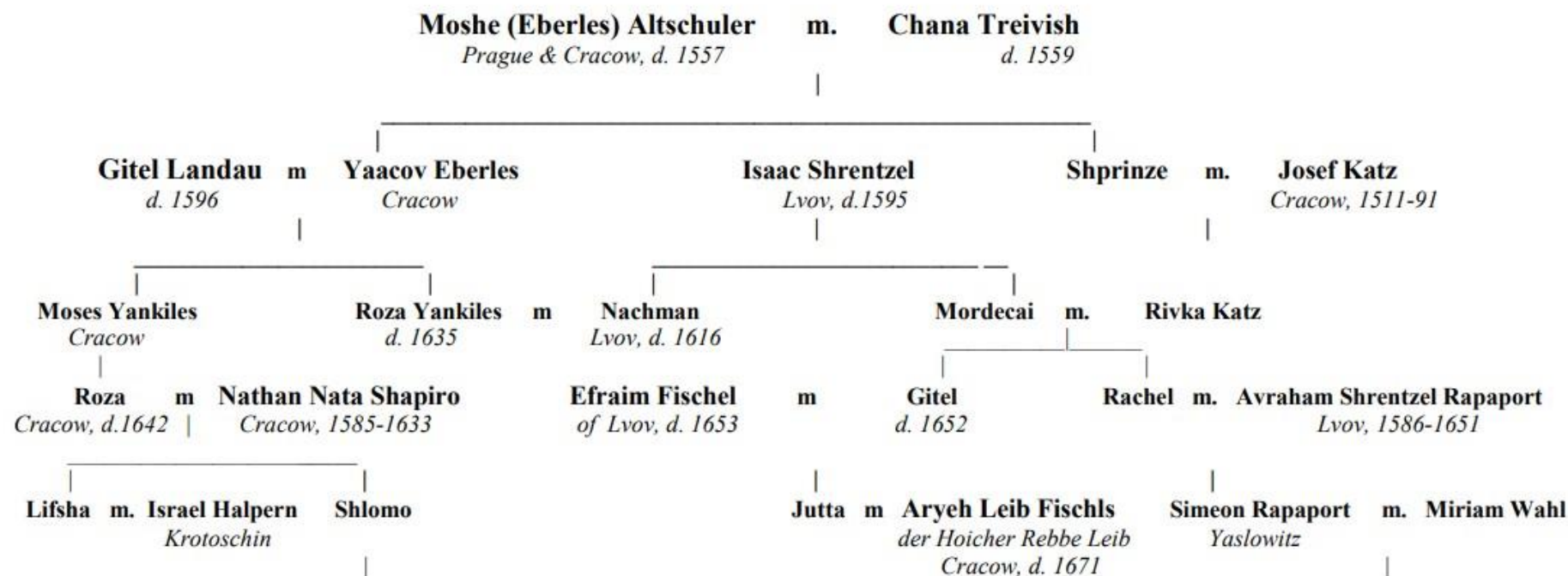
|  
Gittel m Rabbi Hirsch Leib Weinstein of Solotwina (d. 1884)

|  
**Esther Weinstein** (d. 1907) - Paternal Grandmother of Edward Gelles



## Some Descendants of Moshe Altschuler and Chana Treivish

[Altschuler, branch of the Chayes family]



### Pinchas Shapiro of Koretz

was a direct descendant of Nathan Nata Shapiro 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, a son of Shmuel Helman of Metz.

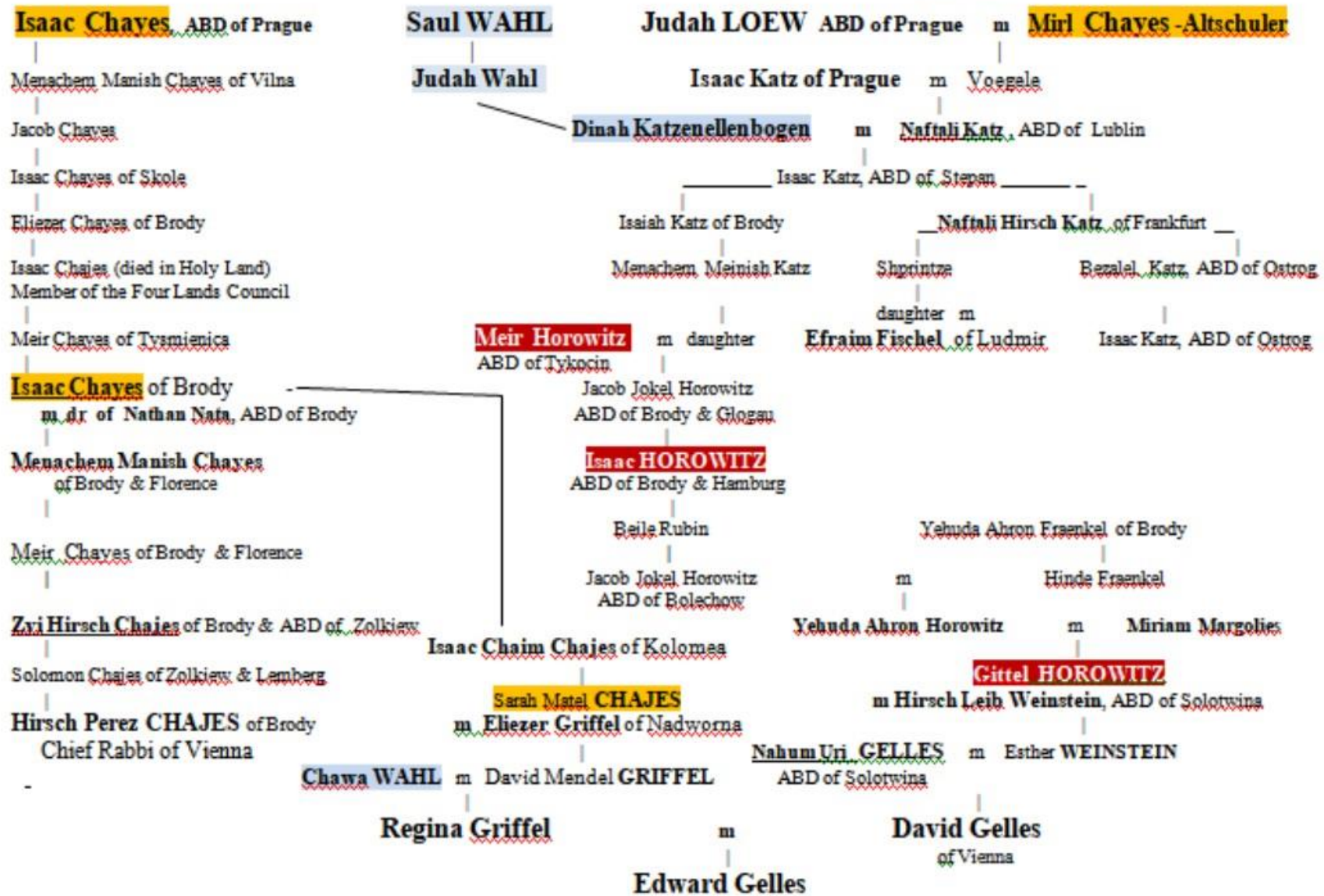
### Efraim Fischel of Lvov

stems from the eponymous Efraim Fischel who came from Germany to Krakow in the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century via Prague - some of the line became influential bankers and others occupied high rabbinical posts. The issue of Jutta and Aryeh Leib Fischls married into leading rabbinic families such as that of Abraham Joshua Heschel of Krakow and descendants included Chief Rabbis all over Europe including London.

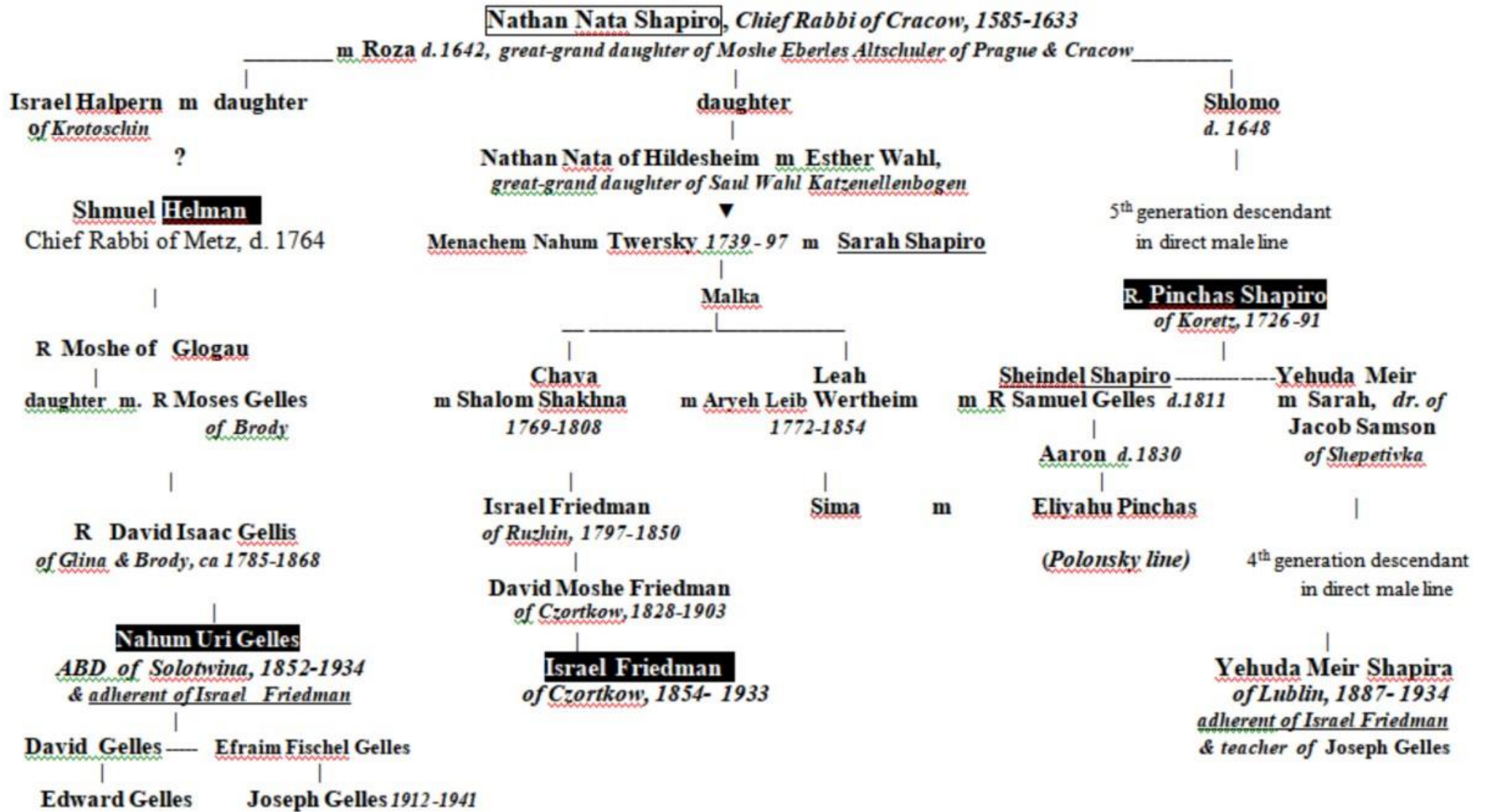
### Gele Rapaport

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

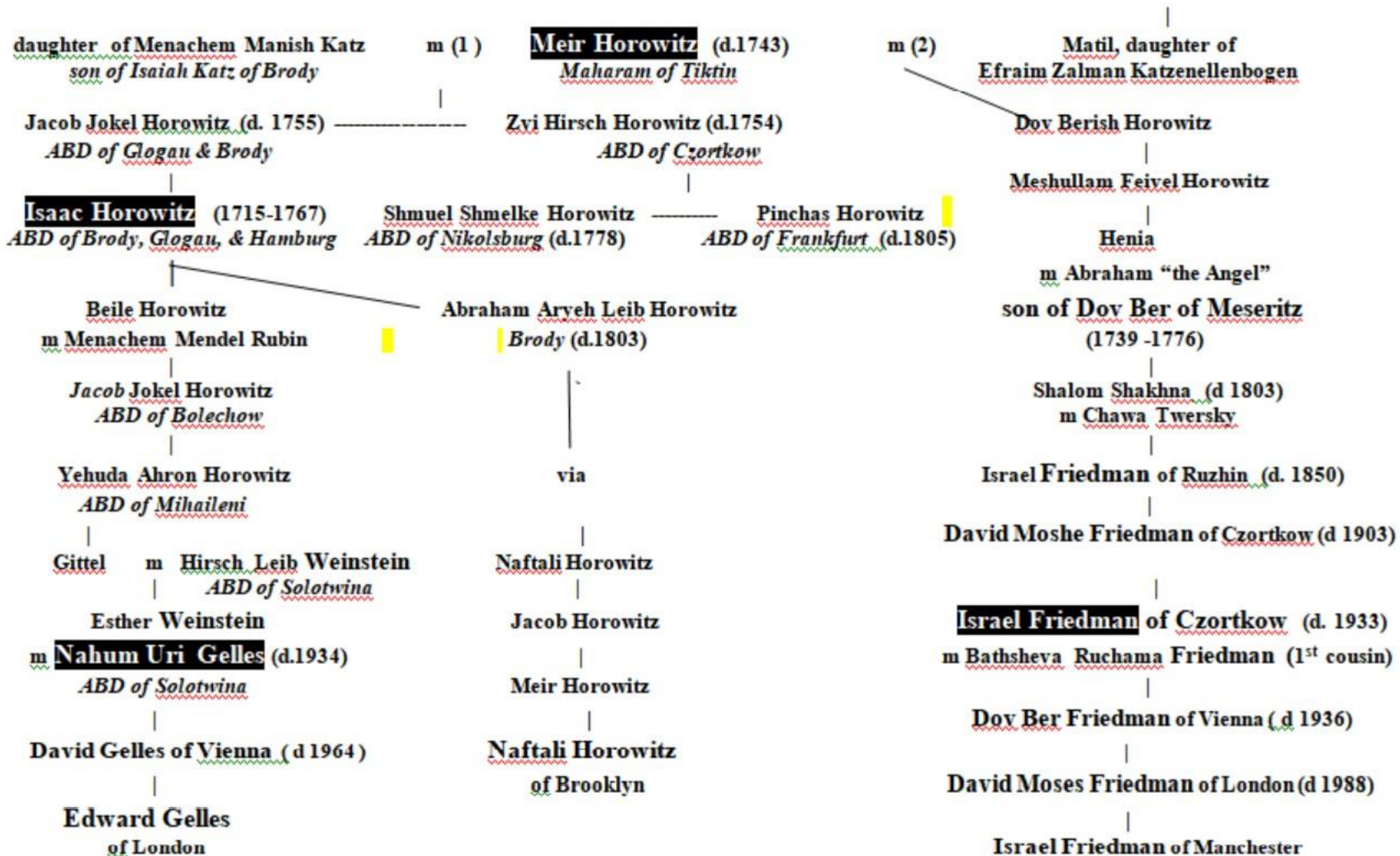
## Descent of Edward Gelles from Rabbis Judah Loew and Isaac Chaves of Prague



The Shapiro Connection of Rabbi Nahum Uri Gelles and the Chasidic Grand Rabbi Israel Friedman of Czortkow



## Edward Gelles and distant cousins showing some Horowitz and Friedman connections



## Ancestral Links of Edward Gelles and the Mendelssohns

