

## From Europe to Jerusalem in my ancestral background

Isaiah Halevi Horovitz of Frankfurt & Prague, Uri Feivush of Vilna, and Gelles of Grodno

### Edward Gelles

This essay is mainly concerned with my Gelles rabbinical ancestry and links with Jaffe, Shapiro, Helman, and Horowitz, as shown on the appended charts.

My paternal ancestors include Chief Rabbis Mordecai **Jaffe** of Prague, Grodno, and Posen (1530-1612), Nathan Nata **Shapiro** of Cracow (1585-1633) and his grandfather Nathan Nata Shapiro of Grodno (d 1577), Isaac Halevi **Horowitz** of Brody, Glogau, and Hamburg (d 1767), who was a direct descendant of Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Prague and Cracow (1535- 1618) and his Horowitz lineage, Shmuel **Helman** of Mannheim and Metz (d 1764), and connections with **Halpern**, **Katzenellenbogen**, and many others.

Ancestors that are mainly on my mother's side include **Saul Wahl** (1545-1617) , scion of the **Katzenellenbogen** Chief Rabbis of Padua and Venice) and the Chayyut rabbinical family from Portugal, their descendant Chief Rabbi Isaac ben Abraham **Chayes** of Prague (d. 1616) and the long and distinguished line of Chajes in central and eastern Europe. Isaac ben Abraham Chayes was a brother-in law of the famous Rabbi **Judah Loew** of Prague, known as the *Maharal* (ca. 1520 -1609 ).

Many of these ancient families had recorded inter-marriages, for example the Loew and Chayes or the Horowitz and Wahl – Katzenellenbogen.

The first chart shows some of my ancestral connections over the past few hundred years. I am a 10<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Uri Feivush\*, who was Chief Rabbi of Vilna. In old age, in the 1650's, he made his way to Jerusalem where he was called Uri Feivush Ashkenazi and given the title of **Nasi**, as Head of the Ashkenazi Jewish community.

This title and position was also held in the previous generation by the most prestigious of the ancient Horowitz rabbis, Isaiah Halevi Ish Horovitz. He was Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt and Prague before coming to Jerusalem and subsequently moving to Safed. He was buried in near-by Tiberias around 1630. He is remembered by the name of **Holy Shelah** that is based on the initial letters of the Hebrew title of his most influential work.

The second appended chart shows the *Shelah* as a 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin of my ancestor Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz.

*\* Jewish first names of Uri, Feivush or Feivel, and Shraga, having similar meanings and often used alone or in combination*

In the footsteps of my afore - mentioned 16<sup>th</sup> century ancestor Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe, the migration of some Jaffe and Gelles families can be followed to Grodno and elsewhere in Lithuania. Around the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century some branches of my wider family migrated from Grodno in different directions. One branch went south to Brody in Galicia and subsequently spread widely, some going on to Hungary and Austria and ultimately to Vienna. Other Gelles and Jaffe went westward to the province of Posen and Silesia and continued to Berlin and further into Germany. Another Gelles (Gellis) family left Grodno for Jerusalem at about this time and they have now been established in the Holy Land for 10 generations.

**References to web-site < Edward Gelles at Balliol College >**

- File A4 Migrations of rabbinic families in central and eastern Europe over the past few centuries
- File A5 From Europe to Jerusalem in my ancestral background
- File A6 Grodno in Lithuania and the migration of some Gelles and Jaffe families
- File A10 Millennial descent from Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona

**Migration of rabbinic families in central and eastern Europe over the past few centuries.**

Connections between Galicia (Brody), Lithuania (Vilna, Grodno) , Posen ( Graetz, Lissa, Krotoschin), Silesia (Glogau), Austria (Eisenstadt)

|                                                                                       |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                |                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Isaac Horowitz</b><br>Chief Rabbi of<br>Brody, Glogau, and<br>Hamburg, d. 1767     | <b>Nathan Nata Shapiro</b><br><b>Chief Rabbi of Cracow</b><br>1585-1633                                             | <b>Mordecai Jaffe (aka Levush)</b><br><b>Chief Rabbi of</b><br><b>Prague, Grodno &amp; Posen</b><br>d. 1612 | <b>Samson Wertheimer</b><br>Court Jew of Habsburg Vienna,<br>Rabbi of <b>Eisenstadt</b> ,<br><b>Chief Rabbi of Hungary &amp; Moravia</b><br>died 1724 | <b>Uri Feivush</b><br><b>Chief Rabbi of Vilna</b><br><b>&amp; Nasi in Jerusalem</b><br>d. 1657 |                                                                     |
| <i>line connected with<br/>Rabbi D.I. Gelles<br/>of Brody and his<br/>descendants</i> |                                                                                                                     | Jaffe of Graetz<br>(near Posen)                                                                             | <i>Wertheimer descendants connected<br/>with Oppenheim, Mendelssohn,<br/>Itzig, Eskeles, Gelles, Loewenstein</i>                                      | Meir<br>of<br>Horodycze                                                                        |                                                                     |
|                                                                                       | Lifsha Shapiro<br>m. Israel Halpern<br>of Krotoschin                                                                |                                                                                                             | Isaac of<br>Siemiatycze                                                                                                                               | Gershon Vilner<br>of Shklov                                                                    | Uri Feivush<br>of Vilna                                             |
| Uri Feivuch<br>of <b>Glogau</b>                                                       | ?                                                                                                                   | Daniel Jaffe Itzig<br>in Berlin<br>d. 1799                                                                  | Shmuel Gelles<br>Rabbi of Siemiatycze                                                                                                                 | daughter married<br>Nathan Nata of Grodno<br>Chief Rabbi of <b>Brody</b><br><b>d. 1764</b>     |                                                                     |
| (1) daughter ?<br>(2) Sarah d. 1774<br>married →                                      | Shmuel Helman (Hillman)<br>Chief Rabbi of Kremsier<br>Mannheim & <b>Metz</b><br>d.1764                              | s Mendel<br>Moshe Mendel<br>Levush →                                                                        | daughter married<br>Moshe M. Levush<br>aka Moses Gelles of Brody<br>d. ca 1760                                                                        |                                                                                                |                                                                     |
| Rabbi Uri Feivush<br>of Lissa<br>and other towns<br>d. 1771                           | <br>Rabbi Moshe<br>of Glogau                                                                                        |                                                                                                             | <br>Mordecai Gelles of Brody<br>father or uncle<br>of                                                                                                 | David Tebele<br>Rabbi of <b>Lissa</b><br><b>d. 1792</b><br><b>(Gelles cousin)</b>              |                                                                     |
|                                                                                       | daughter<br>married<br>Moses Gelles                                                                                 | ----- →                                                                                                     | Moses Gelles<br>of Glina and Brody                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                |                                                                     |
|                                                                                       | another daughter, Chana,<br>married son of Asher Lemel,<br>Chief Rabbi of Glogau and<br><b>Eisenstadt</b> , d. 1789 | descendant of<br>Rabbi Isaac Horowitz<br>  →                                                                | Rabbi David Isaac Gelles<br>Brody, d. 1868<br>married Sarah Horowitz                                                                                  |                                                                                                | <i>a distant Gelles line<br/>in Posen<br/>coming from Lithuania</i> |
|                                                                                       | Ahron Ber Gelles<br>19 <sup>th</sup> century community<br>leader in <b>Eisenstadt</b>                               |                                                                                                             | Nahum Uri Gelles<br>Chief Rabbi of Sopotwina<br>1852-1934                                                                                             |                                                                                                | Rabbi Siegfried Gelles<br>b. <b>Krotoschin</b> 1884                 |
|                                                                                       |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                             | David Itzig Gelles<br>of Vienna<br>1883-1964                                                                                                          |                                                                                                | Rabbi Benjamin Gelles<br>b. <b>Lissa</b> , 1916                     |
|                                                                                       |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                             | <br><b>Edward Gelles</b>                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                |                                                                     |

## Horowitz Roots and Branches

### Generations of Shem Tov Halevi in Barcelona and Gerona



**Isaiah ben Moshe Halevi Horowitz** of Provence (ca 1440-1515) bought Arenda of Horovice near Prague where he was also known as *Zalman Horovsky*

Shabatai Sheftel Horowitz (d. 1555 in Prague) m Yocheved Katz-----Ahron Meshullam Zalman Horowitz (1470-1545) aka *Zalman Munka*

Avraham Horowitz

Israel Horowitz (1500-1572) of Prague

**Isaiah Halevi Ish Horowitz** (ca.1565-1630) ----- 2<sup>nd</sup> cousins ----- **Pinchas Halevi Ish Horowitz** (Prague 1535- Cracow 1618)  
the **Holy Shelah** *President of Council of the Four Lands*

Chief Rabbi of Frankfurt and Prague

m sister of Chief Rabbi **Moses Isserles** of Cracow

**Nasi in Jerusalem 1622** then in Safed and Tiberias

*their daughter Hinde m Meir, son of Saul Wahl*

Nechama m R. Feivel, son of David Zachariah (Mendelen)  
possibly the Rabbi Uri Feivush of Vilna who was  
**Nasi of Ashkenazi community in Jerusalem, in 1650's**

Edward Gelles is a 10<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Rabbi Uri Feivush of Vilna  
*see the preceding chart and following notes*

Edward Gelles is a 7<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of  
Rabbi Isaac Horowitz of Brody, Glogau, and Hamburg  
and a 13<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of  
Pinchas Halevi Horowitz of Prague and Cracow

*see my web page < Edward Gelles at Balliol College >  
chart A 10*

“ Millennial descent from Shem Tov Halevi of Gerona “

**Edward Gelles, *An Ancient Lineage* (2006) – Extract on page 246**  
**Family connections of Rabbi Uri Feivush of Vilna and Jerusalem**

Hillel Noach Steinschneider, *Ir Vilna* (Vilna: 1900), pp.3–4, summarizes published data on Rabbi Uri Feivush Ashkenazi of Vilna and Jerusalem.

- [i] R' David Tebele of Lissa: 'I heard from my grandfather the famous Rabbi Gershon Vilner of Shklov, grandson of the Gaon Rabbi Feivush of Vilna, that he later left for the Holy Land where he was appointed Nasi, while he [Gershon] studied at the Yeshivah of the Gaon Yisrael Saba, the author of *Or Yisrael*'.
- [ii] the author of *Kerem Shlomo* [see following reference], who was a descendant of Uri Feivush, lists Rabbis Uri Feivush of Vilna, Isaac of Siemiatycze and David of Yanov and several sisters who were the children of the Gaon Rabbi M, the ABD of Horodicz.
- [iii] the author of *Zir Yitzchak*, Vilna 1876, writes that Rabbi Uri Feivush was Nasi in Jerusalem in 1650–53 and was twice mentioned in the Pinkas of the Sefardim of Jerusalem, where he signs as Feivush Ashkenazi, known as Uri Shraga, a disciple of the Maharam of Lublin'.
- [iv] an old rabbinical pedigree has the son-in-law of Reb Moshe Yurberger, son of Reb Leib Sheitels of Vilna, ABD Horodna (Grodno), son-in-law of Reb Dovid Chasid, son of Rabbi Feivush, son of Rabbi David of Vilna. It gives the pedigree of Rabbi David Tebele ABD Lissa, son of Rabbi Nathan Nata ABD Brody (son-in-law of the above-mentioned Rabbi Gershon of Vilna), son of Reb Leib Sheitels, son of Rabbi Nathan Nata ABD Belz, son of the Gaon Rabbi Zecharya Mendel author of *Be'er Heitev*, son of Rabbi Leib [Fischls] ABD of Cracow, son of Rabbi Zecharya Mendel ABD Lvov. This appears to be a very useful source. Steinschneider thinks there are serious errors in *Kerem Shlomo* and also in the pedigree of R' Rafael Nathan Nata Rabinowitz, given in his edition of the Responsa of Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg. Steinschneider also quotes *Shefa Tal* (Hanau: 1612). The introduction is by the 'young, scholarly, and pious Rabbi Feivel, son of the Gaon and Chasid Rabbi David Zacharya, known as Reb Mendelen, son-in-law of the great wonder of our generation, the holy flame, ABD and Rosh Yeshiva of Frankfurt, Rabbi Isaiah Segal Horovitz [the *Shelati*]' . Steinschneider suggest that this may possibly be the same Rabbi Feivel and that he inherited the title of *Nasi* in Jerusalem from his illustrious father-in-law (cf. Pinchas Pesses of Dubno, *Atereth Haleviyim* [Warsaw: 1902], p.63).
- [v] p.47 – footnote 4 identifies a son of Uri Feivush of Vilna as R' Meir of Horodycze.
- [vi] According to *Koreh Hadoroth* (Berlin: 1845) Rabbi Feivush Ashkenazi was considered a great halachic authority. He is also mentioned in *Shu'ar Efrayim* (Sulzbach: 1688), pp.63, 67, 68; *Torath Chessed* (Salonika: 1633), pp.32, 33; and *Perach Mate Ahron* (Amsterdam: 1703), Vol.1, p.44.

See also the article on the Rabbis of Vilna in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* and Berel Kagan's book on the History of Keidani, which mentions R' Avigdor as a grandson of R' Uri Feivush of Vilna and also the scholar and philanthropist R' Moshe ben R' Uri Rapaport, who died in Keidani around 1830.