

Wahl - Katzenellenbogen and Cohen Connections

Edward Gelles

Saul Wahl was a son and grandson of the 16th century Chief Rabbis of Padua and Venice whose eponymous family name derived from their town of origin, Katzenellenbogen in Hesse-Nassau. Saul went from Italy to Poland where he was called Wahl (“the Italian”). He had a brilliant career and many of his progeny were linked by marriage to leading Jewish families. My books on Jewish history and genealogy have several chapters on his life and times and include references to my maternal grandmother Chawa Wahl (1,2).

The first of the three appended charts indicates lines of descent from some of Saul Wahl’s off-spring and mentions a few of his many distinguished descendants of later centuries. In due course some of these lines of descent became inter-linked, such as the line from Saul’s eldest son Meir Wahl via Moses of Chelm linking with the line from Saul’s daughter Hanele.

Among my distant “cousins” revealed by following these lines are the Mendelssohns, the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn and more closely his grandson the composer Felix Mendelssohn–Bartholdy. We share a descendency from a line shown on the first chart, going from Judah ben Meir Wahl and his wife, who was descended from Rabbi Moses Isserles of Cracow, with a link to Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe of Prague (3).

My pedigree goes back to Saul Wahl on both sides of my family. My maternal grandfather David Mendel Griffel married Chawa Wahl whose descent from Saul Wahl is indicated on the second chart whereas my paternal descent is given in more detail and runs from Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and his first wife Mirel Chayes linked with Saul Wahl’s descendants through several generations of Katz and Horowitz families. The strength of my maternal great-grandmother’s Chayes connection on both sides of my family is brought out in this chart.

My Gelles rabbinical line is closely linked with the above-mentioned Jaffe and with the old Shapiro rabbis (4). In the context of the Wahl-Katzenellenbogen connection sacerdotal links are of special interest and the charts include some of the relevant HaKohen, Katz, and Kahane.

On the first chart two lines of Cohanic linkage with Katzenellenbogen are shown, namely Dinah Katzenellenbogen with Rabbi Naftali Katz of Lublin and Nissel Wahl with Moses HaKohen of Brest (indicated by red arrow heads).

The third chart sets out the descent from Gershon HaKohen of Vienna who was a contemporary of Meir and Samuel Judah Katzenellembogen of Padua and Venice. Gershon HaKohen's son Joseph Katz of Cracow was a noted scholar and linked by marriage to the Chayes family and to Rabbi Moses Isserles. From Joseph Katz the line continued to Moses HaKohen who brought Cohen and Katzenellenbogen lines together with Nissel Wahl, at a point in their family histories when they were in geographical proximity in Poland – Lithuania.

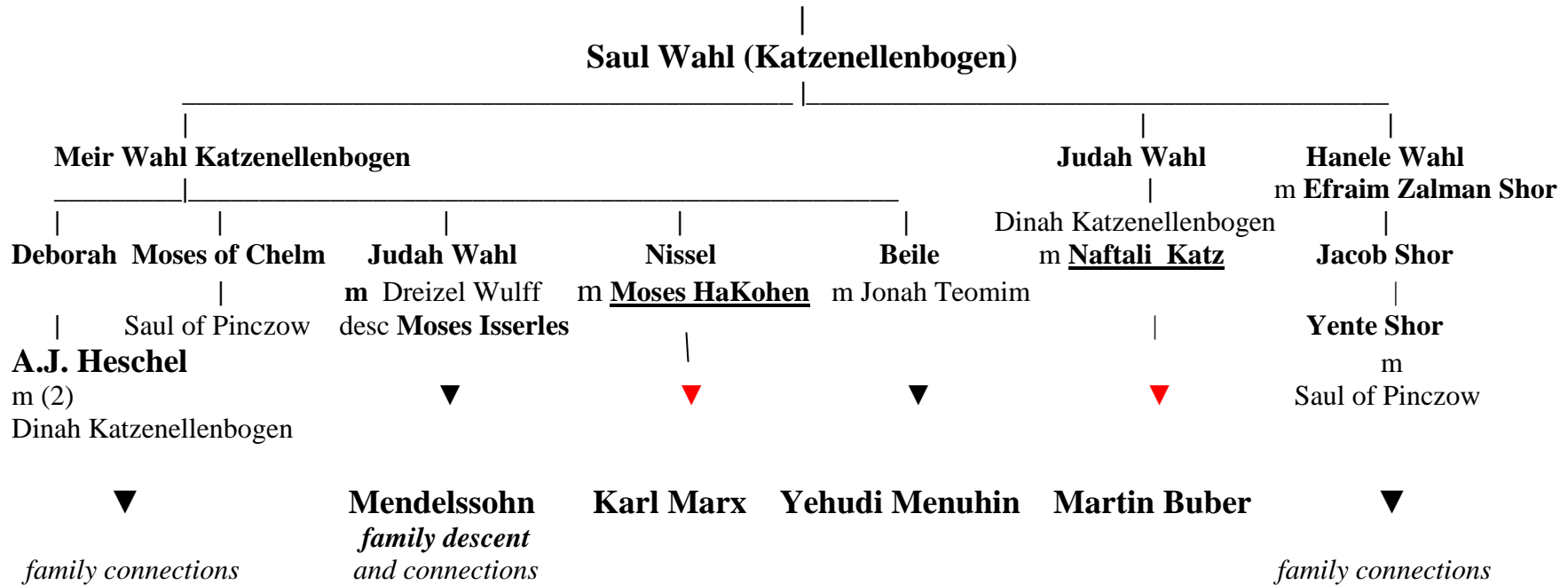
From this union a Kahane line continued with its descendants including my great-grandfather Rabbi David Isaac Gelles who studied at Glina and was buried with earlier Gelles of his line in Brody (5). A female line of descent from the same union via rabbis of Treves proceeds to the Levitic forebears of Karl Marx.

References

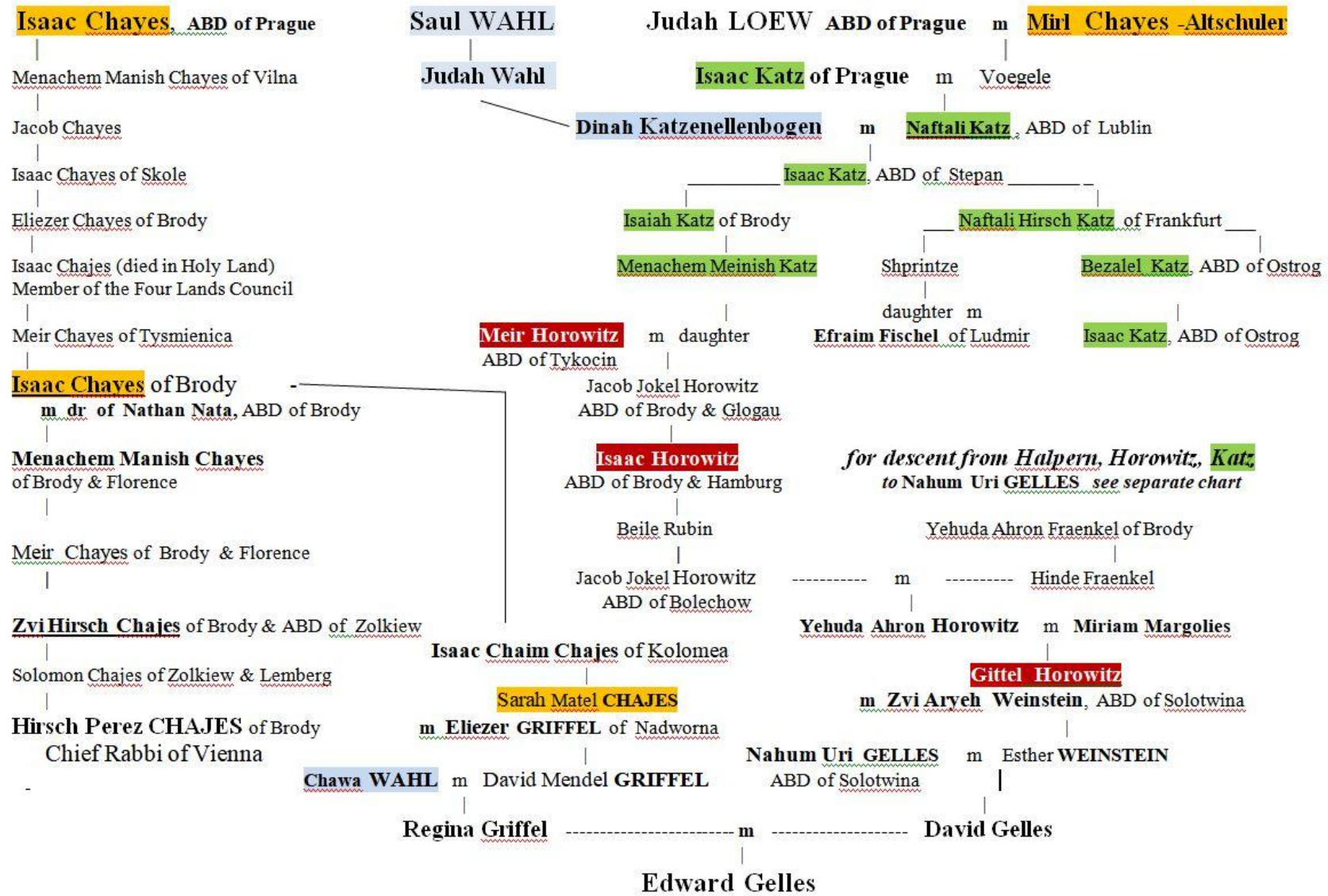
- 1 E. Gelles. An Ancient Lineage (Vallentine Mitchell, 2006)
- 2 idem, The Jewish Journey : a Passage through European History (Bloomsbury, 2016)
- 3 idem, Papers of Edward Gelles on Balliol College web site “Archives & Manuscripts”
(A 29) Ancestral Links of Edward Gelles and the Mendelssohns
- 4 idem, (A 18) Some family connections with Wahl - Katzenellenbogen
- 5 idem, The Jewish Journey, chapter 15 and specifically page 187.

Some Lines of descent from Saul Wahl

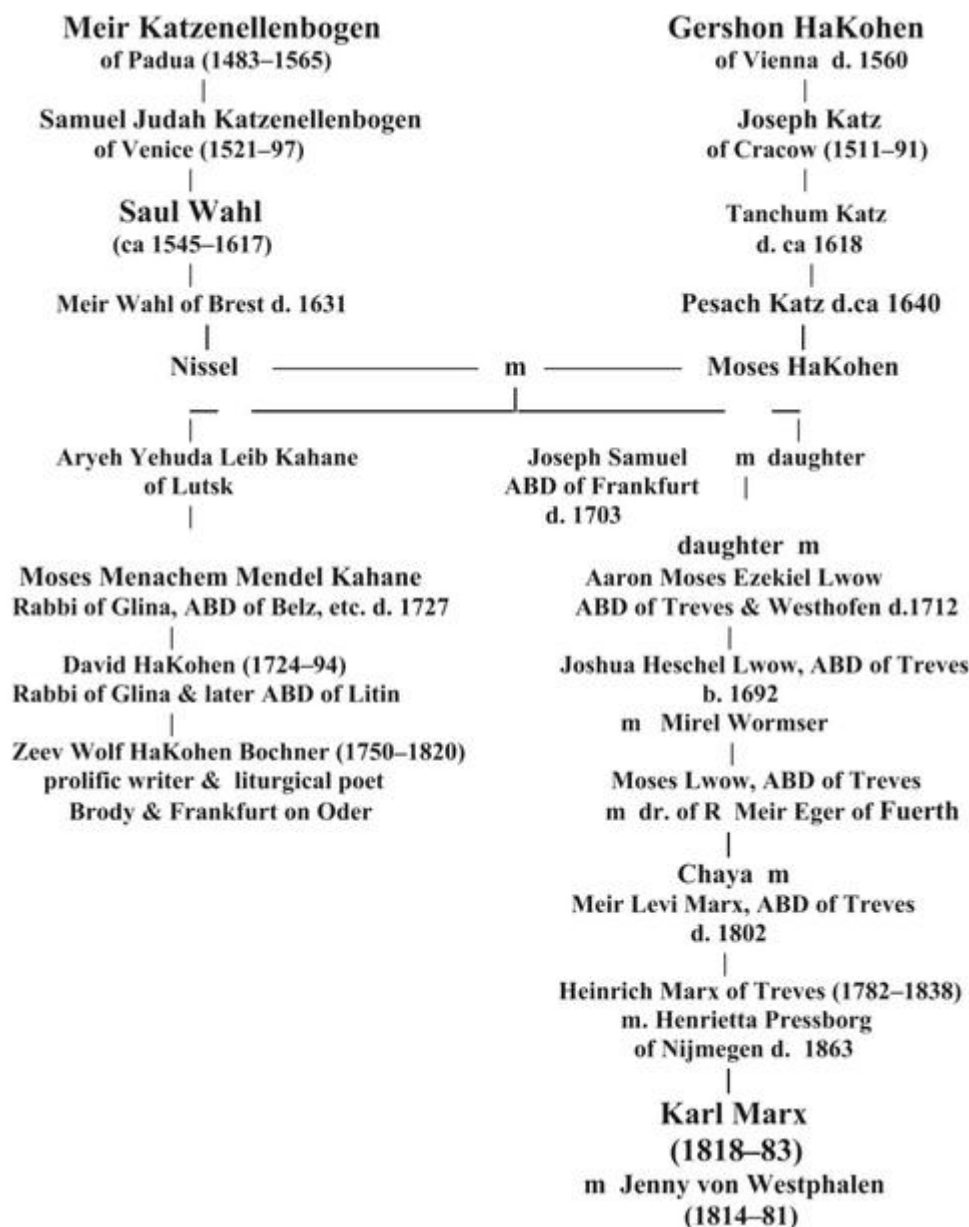
Rabbi Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen of Padua and Venice
m. Abigail Jaffe



Some Ancestors of Edward Gelles



Wahl - Katzenellenbogen and HaKohen connections
Descent from Nissel Wahl and Moses HaKohen



Rabbi David I. Gelles of Glina and Brody

my paternal great-grandfather studied in Glina
 and was buried in Brody in 1868 –
 he was descended from Rabbi Moses Kahane of Glina and Belz