

# Wahl and Jaffe to Gelles and Griffel

Edward Gelles

## Introduction

My parents were Dr David Gelles and Regina Griffel. They came from Jewish families in Austrian Galicia and had a millennial background, brought together through the inter-marriages of leading rabbinic families in the course of their migrations across Europe. I was born in Vienna, where my father had obtained his law degree and practised as an advocate.

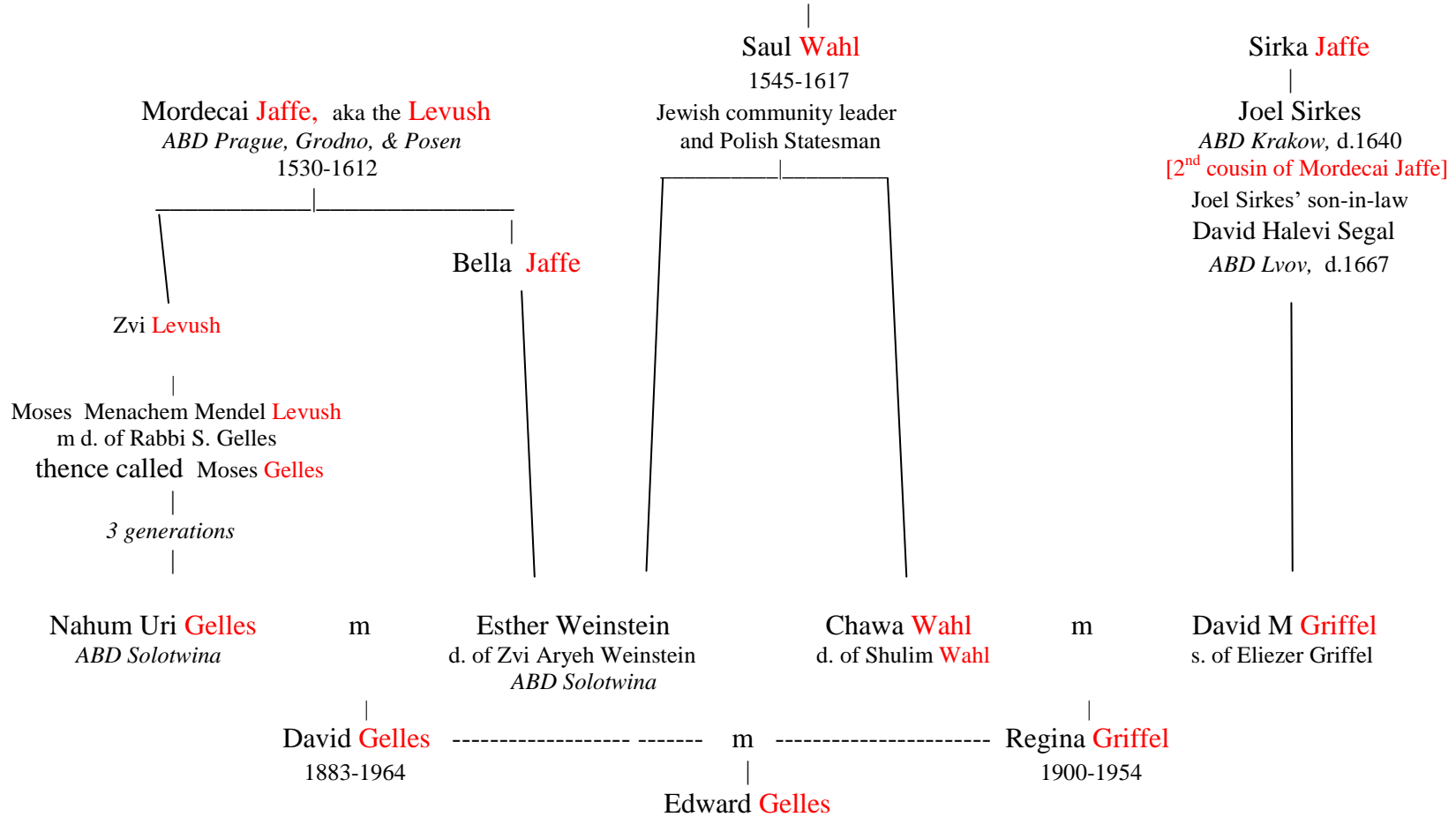
We had many old sacerdotal connections with names of HaKohen (rendered as Cohen in English and Kohn in German) or Katz, which is an acronym of “Kohen Tzedek” meaning “Righteous Priest” .

Connections on my father’s side included Jaffe and Horowitz rabbinic lines with their ancient Sephardic roots and the Ashkenazi lines of Halpern and Shapiro (who took their names from Heilbronn and Speyer in Germany). On my mother’s side were the Katzenellenbogen of Padua and Venice and the Chayes from Portugal, who produced long lines of rabbis, scholars, and community leaders. Prague was a particularly important milestone in our journey where my ancestors included its 16<sup>th</sup> century Chief Rabbis Isaac Chayes, Judah Loew, and Mordecai Jaffe. In the course of centuries inter-marriages overlapped to an extent that some forebears had different connections to both my father and my mother.

## Wahl and Jaffe to Gelles and Griffel

[ ABD ( Av Beth Din) = Head of Rabbinical Court / Chief Rabbi ]

Samuel J Katzenellenbogen    m    Abigail **Jaffe**  
*ABD Padua & Venice*



## **Saul Wahl and Mordecai Jaffe.**

Saul Wahl (1545-1617), was the son of Chief Rabbi Samuel Judah Katzenellenbogen and his wife Abigail Jaffe. Saul went from Padua to Poland where he acquired the name of Wahl and played a role in affairs of state, as well as leaving a historically important Wahl Katzenellenbogen progeny. His children made marriage connections with the leading families of the time.

Mordecai Jaffe (1530-1612) was Chief Rabbi of Prague, Grodno, and Posen, a community leader involved in the establishment of the “Council of the Four Lands” (the semi-autonomous governing body of Polish Jewry), and author of a major work, the “Levushim“ after which he and some of his direct descendants were called. He lived in Venice for 10 years and was presumably a cousin of the above-mentioned Abigail Jaffe .

The above chart outlines descent from these two ancestors to my four inter-related grandparents. Details of the lines of descent shown on the chart are to be found in my published books, particularly :

Edward Gelles, “An Ancient Lineage : European Roots of a Jewish Family”  
(Valentine Mitchell, 2006)  
“The Jewish Journey : A Passage through European History”  
( I.B.Tauris 2016 & Bloomsbury Publishing )

and in the following files on my web page < Edward Gelles >  
( Modern Manuscripts – Edward Gelles Collection - Balliol Archives )

“Descent from Mordecai Jaffe (Levush) “            B 12  
“ Gelles of Brody”    B 1  
“Descent of Edward Gelles from Rabbis Judah Loew and Isaac Chayes of Prague” B 3  
“ Some lines of descent from Saul Wahl ”            B 21  
“ Wahl of Tarnobrzeg and Wohl of Krakow “        A 14  
“ Some Family Connections with Wahl Katzenellenbogen ”        A 16

### **Note on Mordecai Jaffe's descendants including Levush**

see the entry for JAFFE in the Jewish Encyclopedia

### **Note on Eliezer Griffel**

My maternal great-grandfather, Eliezer Griffel of Nadworna (1850-1918) is described by Meir Wunder as one of the distinguished Chasidim of Vizhnitz and later of Otiniya. Eliezer Griffel was close to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Hager, the 1<sup>st</sup>. Vizhnitzer Rebbe, and to Rabbi Meshullam Zusia Weissblum, a descendant of the famous Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk who lived in Nadworna (Meir Wunder, Meorei Galicia, Vol. 6 : 381-383). I have copies of the original birth records of Nadworna in which Griffel's first name is shown as Eliezer He was born in 1850 and his eldest son (my grandfather) David Mendel Griffel is shown in his birth record of 1875 as the son of Eliezer Griffel.

Eliezer (known as Zeida or "grandpa") was patriarch of the Griffel family and head of the Nadworna Jewish community. He was a highly successful business man with major interests in oil, timber, and other enterprises in Galicia also extending as far as Vienna. The family's close association with the Hagers included a Griffel – Hager marriage and, according to family tradition, both families were descended from David Halevi Segal (1586-1667), the Chief Rabbi of Lvov, who was a son-in-law of Rabbi Joel Sirkes of Cracow.. Eliezer Griffel and his wife Sarah Matel Chajes had ten children. Their two eldest sons, David Mendel and Isaac Chaim took over most of the Griffel enterprises. They served on the community council of Nadworna as representatives of the Agudas Israel (ultra-orthodox) party. (Edward Gelles, "Gelles – Shapiro – Friedman " p.28 (Shaker Publishing, Maastricht, 2009)