

Horowitz-Gurevich Family

The Horowitz family is a family of rabbies, scholars, Jewish community leaders - originated in Medieval Spain and can be traced to **Rabbi Zerakhya Ha-Levi**, the author of "Ha-Maor". At the end of the 15th century the family lived in the small town of **Horovice** (Horowitz, according to its German spelling) in Bohemia, by which it acquired its name: "Horowitz", or "Ish Horowitz" (the man Horowitz, or the man from Horowitz) or Ish Ha-Levi Horowitz (**The Levite Horowitz**). This surname has been spelled in a variety of ways: Horowitz, Hurwitz, Horvich, and under influence of Russian pronunciation, **Gurevich**, Gurvich, Gurwitz, etc. Often the surname of the same person had a number of spellings. The great majority of the bearers of this surname are **Levites**.

A **Levite** is one who is born of a father whose lineage reaches back to Levi, son of Jacob. All families of Jews have an assumed proper lineage unless there is a reason to suspect otherwise; this assumption of unbroken lineage applies to Kohanim and Levites as well.

Common names of Levite families today include Levy, Levin, Lewis, Segal and Horowitz-Gurevich.

The sons of Levi were set apart to perform the holy service. It is an affirmative command for the Levites to be available and prepared to serve in the Temple. The role and laws of the Levites and the Kohanim (who are sometimes called Levites by the Torah) is discussed by Maimonides in his section concerning the vessels of the Temple. A Levite is a holy vessel. The ideal of each Levite is to be doing holy service, the ultimate of which is the Service in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Levites have an extra measure of holiness. Though they are permitted to come into contact with the dead, in contrast to Kohanim, at the time of the Temple they were instructed to avoid impurity. When the time will come for the purification of the tribes of Israel, the tribe of Levi will be purified first.

A Levite receives the second aliyah to the Torah, with a Kohen receiving the first. This is to give honor and avoid quarrels. If no Kohen is present, a Levite is not called. A Levite may also receive the maftir or an "acharon" (additional after the set order of seven) aliyah.