**Publishing the Babylonian Talmud: A Tale of Two Houses (1834-1836)**

The Babylonian Talmud is the most basic and important Jewish creation in the world of traditional Jewish learning. The Talmud contains a large number of volumes and required significant financial and technological resources to produce. [Moreover,] many new commentaries on Talmud were written over the years and added to subsequent editions, making its publication increasingly costly and complicated. It’s important to note that over one third of the titles published by the Shapira family during these years were Talmudic tractates, which shows just how crucial publication of the Talmud was to the publishing house’s business. The Shapiro family published its Talmud during the first years of its operation (beginning in 1800). The publication was financed by the *Admo”r* [Chassidic Master] Rabbi Shneur Zalman ben Baruch of Liadi [founder of the Chabad rabbinic dynasty] with most of the profits going to him and only one sixth going to the Shapira family.

After selling all his first edition copies, Moshe Shapira received publishing rights from the *Admo”r*, and between 1808 and 1813, created a new edition of Talmud that was even more elegant than the first. The Shapira family published it twice within a few years of each other (the first publication between 1808 and 1813, the second between 1816 and 1822).

Prior to its publication of the Talmud, The Shapira publishing house made sure to get endorsements from various rabbis which enabled them to retain their copyright. These endorsements ensured that all Jewish publishing houses would be banned from publishing other editions of the Talmud for a period of 25 years. This form of copyright is based on Jewish law [*halakhah*], which in this instance was enforced by Chassidic masters, headed by Rabbi Shneur Zalman.