**The Printing of the Babylonian Talmud in Two Printing Houses (1836-1834)**

Translated by Jason Tron

The Babylonian Talmud is the most important and fundamental piece of Jewish literary work in the realm of traditional religious orthodox Jewish studies.[[1]](#footnote-1) the Talmud contains multiple volumes and its printing required many complexed technological and economic means.

Over the years many Talmudic interpretations where composed, and the printers added those to the Talmudic new editions, as a consequence the printing of the Talmud became more expansive and complex.

It is important to note that over one third of the book titles that where printed over the years by the Shapira family where Talmudic tractates, this fact shows how important was the Talmudic printing for the very existence of the printing house.[[2]](#footnote-2)

From the very first years of the printing house, the Shapira family published the Talmud (since the year 1800.) This printing endeavor was supported economically by the Hasidic leader of Chabad, the Rabi Shneor Zalman Ben Baruch Maladi, and in accordance most of the profits went to the Rabi, and only one sixth went to the Shapira family. [[3]](#footnote-3)

After selling all the copies of the first edition Moses Shapira received from the Rabi the printing rights.[[4]](#footnote-4) Between the years 1808-1813 the Shapira family printing house published a second and more lavished Talmudic edition than its predecessor. This edition was printed twice in two consecutive printings (the first publishing was in the years 1808- 1813, and the second publication was in the years 1816-1822.)

Towards the beginning of the printing project of the Talmud at the Shapira printing house, the personal of the printing house made sure they got the consent of various rabbis in order to protect their royalty rights. This consent of the rabis made sure that other Jewish publishers where forbidden to print other additions of the Talmud for the next twenty five years. This was a kind of a form of royalty rights in the traditional world validated in the Jewish Halachah (religious law) and in this case validated by the greater *Zadikim* (great rabbis- literally- righteous ) in the Hassidic courts of those days headed by the rabbi Shneor Zalman Maladi the founder of the Hasidic sect of Chabad.[[5]](#footnote-5)

1. Dolgopolski Sergey, What is Talmud? - the art of disagreement, Fordham: 2009. Jay M. Harris, Talmud Study, The Yivo Encyclopedia,

<https://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Talmud_Study> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. see: אוצר הספרים הממוחשב אצל בית המסחר לספרים וינוגרד - רוזנפלד [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. שנייאור זלמן מליאדי, אגרות קודש, ברוקלין: 2012 .עמ' רמ"ט-רנ"ב [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. שם: עמ' שנ"א- שנ"ז [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A long discussion on the Talmudic agreements in the first additions in the Slavitta printing house first additions see: Marvin Heler above, footnote 6 . [↑](#footnote-ref-5)