

University Doctorate (PhD) Dissertation Thesis

FORGERY VS. AUTHENTICITY

An evaluation and adjudication of notorious forgeries
in Jewish history

by the example of Shlomo Yehuda Friedländer's forgery
of the Jerusalem Talmud

Bernard Oberländer

Supervisor: Dr. Anikó Prepuk



THE UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN

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I. Reasons for the chosen theme, research objectives

Forgeries from generation to generation

The falsification of works that bear historical or artistic value has been widespread for centuries; and is still a flourishing industry in any society that values antiquities and has a vested interest in unfolding grey areas of the past. There have always been people who aspired to get famous or rich fast and were therefore drawn to forge antiquities for fame and/or money.

When observing falsified documents of historical significance it is useful to thoroughly examine the background of the forgery, the idea that may have instigated it, the procedures applied in falsifying the artifact in question, the extent to which it was successful, the methodologies that ultimately exposed the forgery – and whether they were instantly convincing to experts in the given field, or whether any one continued to support the authenticity of the falsification regardless. It is a question of significance whether the scholars who unmasked the different forgeries applied scientifically approved methodologies on a consistent basis, or if they had to invent different original means of uncovering the falsifying of the artifact(s) in question.

Idiosyncrasies of rabbinical literature and their falsifications

During the course of this doctorate I comprehensively assessed – based on the points of analysis elucidated above – the most notable cases of the past three hundred years through which Talmudic or Halachic works were falsified. I examined the circumstances within which these forgeries were carried out, their differences and similarities, as well as the way they were in due course treated by the authorities that investigated them. An in-depth comparison of each case is significant because it often reveals new angles worthy of consideration.

Forgery of Rabbinical literature is a genre to itself, given that it is predominantly founded on Theology and faith; its study is based on unique Talmudic logic – which is unlike any other kind of logic. Consequently, the question arises: to what extent were experts of this particular field able to objectively investigate the authenticity of these “new findings”?

The falsification of three rabbinical works of historical significance

The three forgeries investigated in depth:

1) Saul Berlin (1740-1794), previously a rabbi in Frankfurt (Oder), published the ‘responsum’ book of Rabbi Asher ben Yechiel (1250-1328) also known by the acronym *Rosh*, based on the three initial letters of his name. The book was published in Berlin in 1793 under the title *Bsamim Rosh*, stating how the work included previously unknown correspondences of the Rosh and other rabbis of the era, and that in fact it was rabbi Yichak de Molina – who lived in the 16th century – who had discovered the manuscript during his extensive travels in Turkey. Apparently he had copied the letters but found no means to print them. As soon, however, as the book reached the public domain, certain parts of it were received with immediate distrust – some of the laws presented seemed much too lenient or plainly unacceptable. The suspicion arose that Rabbi Berlin may have simply falsified the text. Others went even further, as to personally attack his integrity: he was heralded a heretic, a corrupt – somebody who intended to falsify tradition through alleviations under the surreptitious cover of Rosh’s name.

2) A famous rabbi of Germany, Cvi Benjamin Auerbach (1808-1872) published Rabbi Avraham of Narbonne’s book *Haeshkol* in 1868-69 in Halberstadt with supplementary notes and a large commentary. An article that openly questioned the authenticity of the work was published almost immediately in 1869. Though everybody recognized that there originally existed a work by this title and author, it was nonetheless assumed that each line of the published book was corrupted by a forger’s hand. They ruthlessly accused him to have arbitrarily erased certain parts, added lines or quotes taken from other Rishonim (early Talmudic commentators), and that he may even have invented entirely new parts to the original.

3) Over a hundred years ago there lived a mysterious man in Transylvania, in the town of Szatmár: a Sefardi scholar (a Jewish man of Eastern origin) by the name Slomo Yehuda Algazi. He was also known and referred to as Friedländer. According to his story, he ‘by some divine accident’ found the previously considered lost *Kodashim* Order of the Jerusalem Talmud based on which he, in 1907, printed the tractates *Chulin* and *Bechorot*; to be followed, in 1909, by the tractates *Zvachim* and *Erachin*.

Not long after publishing the first volume, the Talmudic parts of the book were severely attacked for being out of integrity as well as lacking authenticity. Professors and scholars of the academic world spoke up alongside the most revered rabbis of Hungary, Galicia and Poland. The dispute went on for several years. Numerous studies were published in a number of languages seeking to prove that the New Jerusalem Talmud was a fraud; while Friedländer and his advocates kept their defenses up by responding to the questions raised in the form of never ending articles.

The primary aim of this present dissertation is to assess the story of this notoriously rare case of forgery.

II. Applied methodologies

An overview of the Talmud and Talmudic literature

The Talmud embraces several hundred years of studies which originate from renowned scholars of Israel and Babylon up until the early Middle Ages. It is in many ways considered to be the most significant book of Jewish culture. It is comprised of the Mishna, a Halachic compilation of rules and regulations of Jewish religious law in Hebrew, along with the Gemara – a compilation of thorough interpretative studies written in a unique combination of Aramaic and Hebrew.

There were two historical centers of extensive interpretive studies of the Mishna, and these lead to the birth of the two Talmuds. The **Jerusalem** (or **Palestinian**) **Talmud** was compiled in the 370s, and it is a record of the religious and philosophical ideas of scholars who lived and taught in Israel in the III-IV. centuries. The Babylon **Talmud**, which is unlike the Talmud of Jerusalem in both its language and style, was assembled from the teachings of the scholars who lived in Babylonia in the III-V. centuries.

The texts of these two Talmuds available to us today are far from complete: not every tractate of the six parts or “Orders” of the Mishna have a Gemara part to them. Thus, the interpretation of the Fifth Order of the Mishna (*Kodashim* – Holy Things), relating mostly to the laws around sacrifices and the Jerusalem Temple, is entirely missing from the Jerusalem Talmud. Friedländer’s scheme was to fill this gap with the “Talmud” volumes of these missing sections that he published. The for-

gery was noted and widely disputed due to the significance of the gap it intended to fill – contents that had been missing and sought after for centuries.

The Friedländer polemics' existing literature to date

The literature that overviewed the countless discourses on Friedländer's forged Talmud volumes drew on references from three major sources:

(1) The "Shaalu shlom Yerushalayim: which includes analysis of the new book that was published under the name of Chulin and Bechorot of the Jerusalem Talmud..." – These are words from the title page of Rabbi Meir Dan Plocki's book. Plocki (1866-1928) was the rabbi of Warta. On the first 13 and last 31 pages of his indictment of Friedländer's work he describes the polemics that were ignited around the theme, quoting also from correspondences of Friedländer as well as other rabbis. The middle 73 pages are a compilation of commentaries and remarks on the contents of the newly published Jerusalem Talmud's first volume. The book mostly documented the incidents that transpired in 1908, not what may have happened before or after that date.

(2) In 1951 Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda (Lipót) Greenwald published an article titled "About the *Kodashim* Order of the Jerusalem Talmud" on pages 345-349 of the *Sefer ha-Yovel ha-Pardes*. A large part of the article recalls memories that the author put into writing directly before the publishing of this manuscript. There is a lot of information available in these memories that cannot be found anywhere else. Since, however, the author does not back up his version of events by unbiased factual data and documents, the historical authenticity of his notions are questionable.

(3) Researcher Samuel Hacoen Weingarten's critical article titled "The *Kodashim* Order of the Jerusalem Talmud" was published in the February-March edition of the *Sinai* periodical in 1968, and it relates numerous annotations and commentaries of significance on the incident.

There were other publications on the theme in more recent years as well; however, these articles only sum up the story based on the above mentioned earlier sources without drawing any new conclusions. It is surprising that, though the native land of Friedländer's Jerusalem Talmud was Hungary, except for four documents on the subject we find no

mention of him in Hungarian literature. He does not even appear in József Szinnyei's major work "*The lives and works of great Hungarian writers*", which otherwise mentions every name of significance in Hungarian literature. A large number of scholars in Hungary debated Friedländer in both Hebrew and German –, however, there was almost no written reaction to the incident in Hungarian.

Research objectives and questions

The story of the Friedländer forgery has not, to date, been dealt with in scholarly depth – hence the reason I considered it an opportune step to unravel and take into account the most momentous facts of this fascinating incident. In this extensive body of work I am looking for answers to many questions, some of which are:

When did Friedländer begin to prepare his Talmud? What were the initial reservations, doubts, and overall skepticism concerning the authenticity of the book? How to evaluate Friedländer's overly personal reaction to these attacks, which lack any kind of objectivity whatsoever? When and how was Friedländer's true identity revealed? Who defended Friedländer – how and why?

New resources

It is an essential part of any research to identify existing resources in the given theme. In the archives of Professor Solomon Schechter – who funded the publishing of the first volume with a large sum of money – I came across many pieces of his correspondences with Friedländer. I found further letters relating to this particular episode in Salomon Buber's archives in Jerusalem, as well as among other private collections. In total, I collected almost 70 pieces of Friedländer's private correspondences that eventually formed a solid base for my research and which served to factually back up and clarify details of the story in question.

Additionally, many of the articles and publications of the time appeared in periodicals that are a rarity in our present day: many of them were not even available in some of the largest libraries of the world. Such was, for example, the *Machzikei ha-Dat* of Galicia. It was nonetheless a necessary component of the research to wait until each document of significance was finally uncovered – and only then investigate every detail in question.

I based my final conclusions on comparing several different sources/evidence (wherever it was possible), especially if one of the references belonged to Friedländer, which could not be considered a reliable source of information. I mostly resorted to documents written around the time of the book's publishing, and less so on later memoirs that merely commemorated the event.

III. Results, theses

1. The compilation, reception and verification of the forged Talmud

The initial success of the forgery

Let us attempt to define the time period when Friedländer came up with the idea of publishing a falsified Talmud. In his 1906 initial “Manifesto”, where he for the very first time announced the existence of his Talmud, he proclaimed to have first heard of the manuscripts in 1900. The only true basis of this proclamation (given that we now know that finding the manuscripts was nothing but a story invented by Friedländer himself) is probably that it was around this time that Friedländer began to entertain the idea of the Jerusalem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order. This was also when he, for the first time, publically announced himself as a Sefardi Jew (in the Vác periodical *Tel Talpiyot*). He invented this idea of Sefardi descent for himself in order to strengthen his connection to the unraveling of the Talmud manuscripts in Izmir.

It took five-six years for Friedländer to execute his plan. The forgery was initially received with remarkable success. Many great men both in the rabbinical and the academic world of the time came to the conclusion that the published manuscript was *authentic*. I would in particular highlight the reactions of six renowned Hungarian and Galician rabbis, whose enthusiastic letters of recommendation were published in the beginning of the first volume of Friedländer's publication.

Furthermore, significant personalities from the academic world stood by him as well, such as *Salomon (Shlomo) Buber* (1827-1906) from Lwow; Professor *Solomon Schechter* (1847-1915) from New York; *Vilmos Bacher* (1850-1913), Professor of the Neolog Rabbinical Seminary in Budapest; or *Lázár Grünhut* (1850-1913), a scholar in Jerusalem with Hungarian roots. Though Bacher and Grünhut had expressed a vague

sense of suspicion, Buber and Schechter had complete faith in the legitimacy of the manuscript.

Based on the correspondences of this particular era, we can assert that Buber was a fully devoted, keen enthusiast of the ‘newly revealed’ manuscripts from the very beginning. He took an active part in the process throughout, funded the publication financially, and also recommended Friedländer to several foundations in order to help him with financing the publication. He was also the one to suggest him to turn to Professor Schechter for financial support.

Reading through a series of Friedländer’s private correspondences that I discovered, I found out that professor Schechter was the primary, if not sole sponsor of the Talmud publication supporting the endeavor with far-reaching financial means. Upon hearing of the manuscript he became an immediate advocate for publishing the Talmud manuscript and promised financial support on the spot.

Friedländer’s forgery as the ultimate fruit of the era’s unprecedented fever for uncovering antiquities

Shlomo Yehuda Friedländer’s *Kodashim* Order of the Jerusalem Talmud was inevitably connected to historical antecedents and unexpected discoveries of the era. It was in this period of time that an upsurge after lost manuscripts of the past swept through the land – numerous works that were until then deemed lost were suddenly uncovered. This was the XIX-XX century – and one could hardly find a prestigious scholar devoted to the extensive research of Judaism who did not have some sort of lost ancient manuscript from the Middle Ages or Antiquity to present to the world at large. Friedländer’s Talmud was also intended to seep into this era. Given that in those times it almost became a common notion to uncover and reveal significant manuscripts of the past and then publish them, Friedländer’s actions in themselves were not as extraordinary or unusually suspicious as one might suppose.

Buber and Schechter were especially susceptible to this collective fever after redeemed antiquities and thus immediately fell into Friedländer’s trap. Buber was a leading researcher of the *Midrashim* of the Talmudical and Gaonic era: he published many critical editions based on ancient manuscripts and old editions. Schechter became widely known for successfully unraveling the illustrious Cairo *Gniza* (a depot of damaged holy manuscripts), and for disclosing his findings along

with their scientific relevance to the public in 1896-1897. It was Shechter's notable accomplishment that, from among a million pages uncovered in Egypt, more than one hundred thousand ended up at the Cambridge University of the United Kingdom. It is understandable that, after such exceptional worldwide success, hearing Friedländer's fairy tale about the Jerusalem Talmud's manuscript, he was liable to believing it despite any loose ends or illogical details. Based on his *own* experiences in the past, he was able to consider Friedländer's ideas potentially accurate and genuine in nature.

2. Criticism, accusations, disputes

Three ways to prove forgery of the Talmud

This dissertation presents the following three contemporary methodologies that were used to prove the forged nature of Friedländer's Talmud:

(1) *The scientific methodology of critical text analysis.* Experts and researchers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* ("The Science of Judaism") school based their judgments on this method. Its principle spokesman was Dov Baer Ratner (1852-1917), a researcher of Talmudic literature from Vilna. He thoroughly examined Friedländer's work in two lengthy research papers, clearly demonstrating his final conclusion: "This Jerusalem manuscript is a fraud – and this fact could be effectively proven based on any one of its pages...".

(2) One of Poland's leading rabbis, Meir Dan Plocki's (1866-1928) *criticism, written in the rabbinical dispute form.* Plocki was not fond of Ratner's critical notes since they did not follow the Yeshivas' style of dispute, but an academic methodology of critical text analysis. These academic means were not nearly convincing enough in his eyes to pronounce the Jerusalem Talmud's manuscript forged. However, he was able to identify a number of peculiar details which "ought to be investigated in the body of the original manuscript first, where the text was originally taken from, in order to then see whether these words from the Talmud appear *there* the same way that they appear in the printed edition." According to him then, and only then, should one dispute and comment on the text's legitimacy. Rabbi Plocki consequently tried eve-

rything in his power to convince Friedländer to “provide the address of the manuscript’s owner”.

(3) *Questioning the publisher’s personal integrity in order to prove that his statements lacked accuracy and authenticity.* Rabbi David Cvi Katzburg (1856-1937) from Vác based his opinion on this latter notion in the fortnightly rabbinical periodical *Tel Talpiyot* – which argument ultimately convinced Plocki, as well as other rabbis. In the reply section of the periodical he wrote: “I am confident that the only verdict in the case of this Jerusalem Talmud’s *Kodashim* is: it ought to be burnt... without any further hesitation!” Katzburg supports this by detailed Halachic arguments that point to how Friedländer’s work ought to be burned akin to the way Torah scrolls written by heretics are halachically to be burnt.

According to Katzburg, it is not the forgery that requires proof but the actual authenticity of the work – and until one can adequately prove its credibility, one has no right to accept it as an authentic body of work. The fact that “the publisher’s past is clouded in obscurity and that he is constantly using new names to adorn itself” only further complicates the already complicated scenario. Consequently, one ought to be ever more wary of validating the publication of a book that clearly does not stem from a credible source. At long last, the *Tel Talpiyot*’s later editions dealt with Friedländer’s dark, personal past in more detail, based on which it became outright impossible for anyone to assign any form of credibility to his words.

It was a rabbi from Rotterdam known by the name Dr. Dov Arje (Bernhard Löbel) Ritter who did the most for Friedländer’s final exposure. He wrote an entire sequence of articles on him – first for the periodical *Der Israelit*’s literary appendix in German, starting from 20th July 1907; then, from 1st May 1908 for the periodical *Hakol Kol Yaakov* in Warsaw in Hebrew. The articles written in Hebrew were intended mostly for the Polish and Galician rabbinical communities, while those in German were directed toward readers of the academic world. There were two fundamental elements in Ritter’s criticism: the first was an academic and philological dispute; whereas the second was an evaluation on Friedländer’s personal integrity.

Ritter introduced three points of reasoning in his very first article:

1. Friedländer is lying when he calls himself a Sefardi. Ritter quotes several contradictory sources of information and has every right

to, in the end, put the question to his readers: if he started off as a Hungarian in his early years, then became a native Russian, how did he ever turn into a Sefardi by 1907?!

2. He reminds us of Friedländer's earlier forgeries in relation to his two volume *Tosefta* edition published in 1889-1890.
3. The letters of rabbi Benvenisti are plain forgeries. Based on Friedländer's own admission, these letters were to be taken as principle clues in unveiling the Jerusalem Talmud's manuscript. However, given that they lack credibility, there are no further clues to lead us to the alleged manuscript.

According to my opinion, the first and the third points convincingly prove the forged nature of the Jerusalem Talmud, though the second method also defines several important notions that serve to further back it up. Considering the arguments raised by each one of the above three methodologies, we can indisputably and conclusively declare that both Jerusalem Talmud volumes were well-structured forgeries. This current study reinforces mainly the arguments in Ritter's third method of proof elucidated above.

It was owing to the Ritter's articles that during the course of the disputes and never ending clashes over the authenticity of the manuscript new, previously unknown details of Friedländer's past finally surfaced and inescapably damaged his credibility, making it particularly difficult to accept his Jerusalem Talmud.

Rabbi Ritter expressed his doubts early on regarding Friedländer's true identity. Finally, the response of Jehoshua Nimoytin, Beshankovichy's rabbi (near Vityebsk), shed light on Friedländer's true identity: "...Shlomo Leib Friedländer was born in our city Beshankovichy... he still has relatives and close friends living here who still remember him. His name comes up every now and then (though not necessarily in a positive way). The way they knew him over here, in his native land, was by the name Zusye or nicknamed Zuske... However, he is *not* a rabbi and *not* a *dayan*, he is *not* a scholar and *not* even Friedländer – only Zuske exists, Rachel Leah's... I do not wish to put into writing other anecdotes about his life that gained him a notorious reputation throughout the community, not to mention those that concern dishonest behavior towards his wives ever since he was drafted..."

My research also shed light on Friedländer's shady stories with several women. Newspapers of the time documented the way Friedländer,

though he had a wife and small children, migrated from city to city, got married over and over again – only to one day decide to go on without leaving any trace behind, without even a divorce, only to embark on yet another romance.

Defense

Friedländer fought until the very end, attempting to defend himself against attacks with shrewd and crafty means. His schemes of defense were the following:

(1) Friedländer “created” numerous fictional characters connected to the discovery of the new Jerusalem Talmud, as well as its later disputes – only to then speak up in their names. Already in 1906 in his initial “Manifesto” he declared that he was not the one to have discovered the historical manuscripts, but his “brother, Torah scholar and researcher Eliyahu SaT Algazi... who, owing to commercial activities, lives in Izmir... along with another Torah scholar, a friend, known by the name Yaakov Kobi SaT...”. Having proclaimed all of the above, he simply told everyone who inquired about the whereabouts of the original manuscript that it was not his, but his brother’s affair.

Then, once he was faced with severe prosecution, he placed in the forefront his alleged student, Abraham Rosenberg, who in turn ardently defended his “master”.

It seems Friedländer gained a lot by calling on his fictitious student, Rosenberg. His initial plan was to impress and manipulate the addressees of the Rosenberg letters, to convince them that Friedländer was a foremost rabbi who was unconditionally supported by his students. This in itself must have been positively convincing to the world at large, at least to some extent, when his credibility was debated.

The other function of having Rosenberg step up was to gain time. When, for example, he answered letters in place of his Master, coming up with various excuses such as “My master and wise teacher... is, to our greatest sorrow, ill...”. This way Friedländer gained additional time and was able to postpone having to answer questions he in effect had no answer for – especially in regard to Schechter’s interest in buying the original manuscript. Further advantages of the roles he assigned to his students: he came up with the idea that they ought to read out aloud let-

ters that were originally addressed to him, which notion was intended to assert that he was a Sefardi, who did not know how to read Ashkenazi handwriting. Since he was not reading the letters himself, he gained further time by having to find someone who could do that for him. He could even, at any point, say that he knew only a brief summary of the letters' contents and was therefore simply unable to respond to every question.

In addition to all of the above, I eventually unraveled letters that were written by Friedländer and Rosenberg to Buber and Schechter. Comparing the two handwritings and seeing the similarity of words that should have been formed differently if they were written by different persons categorically reinforced the hypothesis that Rosenberg being a student of Friedländer was nothing but a figment of Friedländer's imagination.

(2) Even before anyone began to make judgments on the new Talmud, Friedländer asserted in his introductory chapter of the first volume of his printed Talmud that it was a rather strenuous task to copy and print the manuscript and that during the process of the final copying he simply had to make up some of the missing parts "because as time went by even I (at certain parts) forgot the original meaning of the (shorthand) signs and lines" that he apparently "had to make up to be able to finish copying the manuscript faster." "Proofreading... was not possible for a number of different reasons..." It took some time for the mystery to unfold, once accusations began and it became evident that there were certain phrases and readings that had no place in the Jerusalem Talmud. Friedländer kept defending himself by stating that these words do not weaken the credibility of the text, and that they were nothing but mistakes of the one who had copied the text, or the one who had printed it. He later attempted to reinforce his own defense by declaring that along with the original manuscript from 1212, he also discovered a more recent copy of the same text from 1669-1670. One of Friedländer's main objectives with the new manuscript was through it correct certain "mistakes" found in the first one, proclaiming that the "new" manuscript was "discovered" only after the first volume was published. He was hoping to this way vouch clean those parts of the first volume that were most frequently criticized.

(3) Friedländer responded to accusations with arguments that lacked real substance, and instead he chose to attack the person he was chal-

lenged by. He, for example, accused Ritter that he had bribed everyone with large sums of money so that they would question the Jerusalem Talmud. His plan through this tactic was to “prove” that there was no consensus in regard to the text among the several different scholars who stepped up against it, openly implying that this was because Ritter had corrupted everyone who could possibly have anything to say in the matter. He then attacked Ritter once again, announcing that he knew little of the Talmud or rabbinical literature as it is...

Taking advantage of the abyss between the rabbinical and academic worlds

Ever since the emergence of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (“The Science of Judaism”) there was tension and an ever continuing discord between the advocates of “science” and the religious world of the Torah, between the Yeshivas and the academic world of *Wissenschaft*. The *Maskilim* (followers of the Hashkalah, the Jewish “enlightenment”) were disdainful of the rabbis and Orthodox leaders, asserting that they were not applying any modern research methodologies, more so had no knowledge of them either. On the other hand, Orthodox rabbis spoke up against the application of scientific methodologies to the study of holy texts, asserting that such actions were a sign of infidelity to the tradition of Moses and the Commandments.

Friedländer took advantage of this chasm between the two parties and tried to be present *in both* worlds at the same time. When he was in the presence of rabbis, for example, he did all he could to appear as a rabbi who regularly wrote rabbinical works; while among the Academia’s advocates he introduced himself as a scientific researcher and a *Maskil*.

In the course of my research I eventually discovered that Friedländer printed both the *Yevamot* tractate of the Jerusalem Talmud and the Manifesto – in which he declared finding the *Kodashim* manuscript – in *two versions*: one with the approbation of rabbis, the other without. I presume that the copies sent out to scholars of the *Wissenschaft* world were missing the approbation of rabbis as Friedländer did not want to seem too attached to the rabbinical world. The *Kodashim* volumes of the Jerusalem Talmud were likewise published in duplicates: one of the two title pages was in German – geared toward the careful consideration the scholars –, while the one intended for rabbis was conveniently missing the German title page.

Friedländer maximized the abyss between the two parties to his own advantage when attacks against the Jerusalem Talmud began, accusing him of forgery. He attempted to defend himself by labeling his offenders “enemies of the Orthodoxy”. Being fully aware of the irreconcilable tension between the two parties, he was certain that if he managed to make his critics “unacceptable” it will not matter what they write of him. He was hoping to at least defend himself in the rabbinical world.

The end of the dispute

When and why did the dispute around Friedländer’s Jerusalem Talmud come to a closure?

During the course of my research I came to the conclusion that the articles of Ritter, Ratner and Katzburg, which were already published in 1907, and the articles that saw daylight in 1908 ultimately convinced both the average reader and most researchers that the Jerusalem Talmud’s manuscript was nothing but a fraud. This would also be the reason why there was almost no review or critical study on the second printed volume of the Jerusalem Talmud, because by that time both the rabbinical and the academic world considered the case closed and nobody took Friedländer’s publications seriously any more.

Technically, there was one other reason for this as well. According to Friedländer’s admission in one of his private correspondences, he was facing serious financial difficulties at the time which held him back from publishing the third volume. Quite recently, a family memoir was published about Jakob Wider, the printer from Szinérváralja, elucidating on his association with Friedländer and the printing of the Jerusalem Talmud’s *Kodashim* Order. The memoir allows us insight into the financial troubles that arose due to the publishing of the first two Jerusalem Talmud’s volumes. Once the public found out about the dubious nature of Friedländer and “his” scripts, hardly anyone was interested in buying the second volume any more. By 1915, Wider’s financial situation literally collapsed and his press went bankrupt. Hence, the dispute around the Jerusalem Talmud’s manuscript was effectively closed by printer Wider’s irreversible financial situation. Once the funds ran out, the printer could not print the intended third volume, or the polemic scripts that were to defend Friedländer against his critics.

I would also question Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda (Lipót) Greenwald’s study “About the *Kodashim* Order of the Jerusalem Talmud (excerpts

from my memoir)". One of the most crucial as well as most dubious parts of the article is where he states that Friedländer personally confessed his forgery to Greenwald. The confession before Greenwald is quoted by all who write on the subject, and it is considered as the final closing of the case. I point to many inaccuracies of Greenwald's memoir, and propose that the above confession *probably* never, actually took place.

3. The many different methods of exposing Friedländer's forgery compared with other forgeries

In what way did Friedländer's Talmud differ from other forgeries in rabbinical literature?

This dissertation presents how rare it is in rabbinical literature that any publication is repudiated for suspicion of forgery. Why, therefore, was Friedländer treated differently and why was his Jerusalem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order so entirely rejected?

According to my opinion, the reasons for renouncing Friedländer's work may be summed up by the following:

1. The cornerstone of Friedländer's story was that the person who allegedly discovered the manuscript was of Sefardi origin and that the key figure of this story was Friedländer's Sefardi brother, allegedly living in Turkey. As it became clear that Friedländer himself was an Ashkenazi, the dubious nature of the manuscript was all of a sudden beyond question.

2. The repudiation of Friedländer's Jerusalem Talmud was induced by its evidently dubious contents. In the case of Rabbi Auerbach and Rabbi Berlin even if they were accused of falsifying books of earlier authors, rabbinic scholars could still rely on their own logic and intellect regarding the texts – and if their interpretation was in line with the internal logic of Halachic literature, they could then be considered valid. From this perspective, it does not matter who the real author was. In the case of Friedländer's work, however, it was a matter of falsifying the Talmud itself, one of the fundamental pillars of Jewish Oral Teachings. New chapters were born, which, based on their universal significance, one could not validate by mere logic.

3. Finally, the crux of the matter: Friedländer lost his credibility when his immoral past became widely known to the public. This was the most significant difference between him and the other authors discussed above.

– Rabbi Auerbach was known as a devout, deeply religious rabbi. Consequently, the works published by him are acknowledged and accepted almost without a doubt.

– Rabbi Saul Berlin was considered a sharp witted genius, though many laid blame on him for his open relations with the *Maskilim*. His work *Bsamim Rosh* was nonetheless acknowledged – though with more reservation than the *Haeshkol* by Auerbach.

– Shlomo Yehuda Friedländer, however, lost all moral credibility – consequently each and every one of his published works was rejected.

From all of the above, it is easy to see that the most effective tool for exposing forgeries in rabbinical literature is not by academic, nor by traditional rabbinical argumentation. The person behind the work seems to be the critical key to any investigation, as Friedländer's case clearly shows: the validity of the Jerusalem Talmud's *Kodashim* was, ultimately, undermined foremost by his personal lack of moral integrity.

Methods for the exposure of forgery in modern science

In this dissertation I also aim to present how, though at the time it was mostly members of the rabbinical world who did not acknowledge any scientific means of exposing forgery, all three procedures expounded above are still applied in our modern day academic world.

In more recent years, a couple of dozen relics from Biblical times were “uncovered” and revealed. One example would be the “Ivory Pomegranate” with ancient inscriptions on it (which was considered the single object that had remained from the time of the first Jerusalem Temple, and for a long time it was exhibited at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem); the “Yehoash Inscription”; or the “James Ossuary” (Jesus’ brother). Initial investigations seemed to justify that each one of the above mentioned objects were *original*. However, as time went by, more and more doubt emerged regarding the actual authenticity of these objects. A monitoring committee finally came to the conclusion that the objects were merely “forged to appear ancient”.

In the year 2004 an indictment was submitted to the Judiciary of Jerusalem against Oded Golan and his associates (who had been involved in collecting antiquities) accusing them of forging “antiquities” over the past 20 years, including the above mentioned “relics”, and selling them to many aggrieved parties.

Despite the fact that the *Israel Antiquities Authority* (the office that supervises archaeological excavations and locations of archaeological significance) at one point reached the unequivocal verdict on the invalidity of the objects, we cannot assert that this verdict convinced everyone. In January 2007 Hershel Shanks, editor in chief of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, invited renowned experts to negotiate the authenticity of the objects in question. The final report of this conference was published under the title “*Special Report on the Jerusalem Forgery Conference*”.

In relation to the debate of the “James Ossuary” is a most interesting comment on page 10 of the above report. Following an elongated investigation of experts in the field of paleography, the report states that it was not sufficient to investigate this issue through humanistic sciences, but that material scientific methods were ought to be considered in any final verdict – such as petrology or epigraphy, along with human factors. The report quotes professor of the Hebrew University’s archaeological department, Gabriel Barkai’s standpoint: “Inscriptions are cultural [products]. The final word should be with the epigraphers, the humanities, not the sciences.”

On page 13 of the report discussing the human factor, we read that some questions arose when authorities found artifacts and tools at the apartment of Oded Golan which undoubtedly proved he was involved with forgery. Further down the line one reads: “Even if he is a forger, it does not mean his entire collection of the thousands of pieces were all forgeries. As one participant stated, 'Oded Golan may be a crook, but he's not an Einstein, not a genius'.”

On pages 13-16 we find the summary of the discussion on the “Ivory Pomegranate”. On page 13 Professor Aron Demsky, paleographer of the Bar-Ilan University’s Jewish History department, comments that one of the principle reasons for declaring the ivory pomegranate a forgery was that its origins were unknown – therefore it’s not up to us to prove its forged nature, but quite the opposite: we’re ought to prove the artifact’s authenticity first. Contrary to this, the resolute viewpoint of Professor

André Lemaire of the Sorbonne University in Paris is that though the artifact's unknown origin undoubtedly raises suspicion, any kind of final verdict ought to be based on reasoning as well as actual facts.

Though we cannot illustrate here each and every detail of the above arguments, however, a large part of the viewpoints and interpretations articulated reminds one of the heated discussions on the Jerusalem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order 100 years ago – different content, but still the same perspective.

– The clashes between the academics' approach of critical text analysis and Rabbi Plocki's assessment written in rabbinical dispute style seem to somehow correspond to the above mentioned clashes between humanistic and material sciences.

– Rabbi Katzburg's critical assessment published in the *Tel Talpiyot* was very similar to one of Professor Demsky's statements: "the origin of the artifact is unknown". Rabbi Katzburg is of the same opinion: "... how could we possibly accept the Jerusalem Talmud based on a single man's testimony... we ought to demand proof, he should introduce the original manuscript in order for us to be able to verify its authenticity and antiquity...". He further elucidates on his point of view by personally criticizing Friedländer, who allegedly discovered the manuscript, adding negatively: "... and, the crux of the matter is that we are dealing with someone I have 'known' personally for years."

– Rabbi Yekutiel Arye Kamelhar's opinion is strikingly similar to that of professor Lemaire: the Jerusalem Talmud's manuscript is to be debated based only on its contents and internal logic. "How and where this manuscript was found I'll never know... in fact, I don't even wish to know, it does not interest me." From this standpoint we may draw a parallel between Friedländer – whose life is littered with forgeries and frauds – and Oded Golan – in whose house authorities found artifacts and work tools that had been unmistakably utilized for forgery.

There are nonetheless several differences alongside all the similarities and parallels as well. By presenting them I aim only to illustrate how the methodologies that were employed to thoroughly inspect the Jerusalem Talmud's authenticity are still applied in today's modern scientific era. Last, but certainly not least, I draw attention to possibilities of further research in this subject matter.

VI. Publications in the theme of the dissertation

1. Studies

DOCUMENTS AND STORIES ON FRIEDLÄNDER – A study series in relation to Friedländer's forgery:

Part 1.: The beginning of the publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 11, April 1998, pages 146-164.

Part 2.: The publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 12, July 1998, pages 154-168.

Part 3.: Debates over the publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, 13th edition, October 1998, pages 134-154.

Part 4.: Debates over the publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order and the publisher himself, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 14, January 1999, pages 62-82.

Part 5.: The publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order and the publisher's personality (1), in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 15, April 1999, pages 170-182.

Part 6.: The publication of the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order and the publisher's personality (2), in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 24, July 2001, pages 209-226.

Part 7.: New documents on the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order and the publisher Shlomo Yeuda Friedlander (1), in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 44, July 2006, pages 176-194.

Part 8.: New documents on the Jersuaem Talmud's *Kodashim* Order and the publisher Shlomo Yeuda Friedlander (2), in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 45, October 2006, pages 187-210.

The text of the *Book of Esther* according to the fourth Lubavitcher rebbe, rabbi Shmuel Schneerson, in: *Hearot ubiurim* periodical, New York, February 22 2002, volume 833, pages 73-74.

Criticism on the new editions of Maimonides' *Mishne Tora*, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 23, April 2001, pages 215-224.

The Mishna and its most noteworthy commentaries, in: *Jewish sciences*, volume IV.; published by Chabad-Lubavitch, Budapest, 2004, pages 61-77.

The Babylonian Talmud and its most noteworthy commentaries, in: *A thesaurus of Jewish knowledge*, volume IX, published by Chabad-Lubavitch, Budapest, 2005, pages 16-57.

Variants of the Masoraic text in the Bible, in: the *Ohr Yisroel* periodical, volume 10, January 1998, pages 142-148.; as well as in volume 11, April 1998, page 200.

Distorted authenticity – Mood, clothing and language in the ancient Israel, in: *História*, published by: the História Foundation. Specialty: History. Editor: Ferenc Glatz, Budapest, 2004/5. 33-35. 1.

2. Lectures

ELTE – ÁJK Department of Roman Law. Special College of Roman Law: “Modern judiciary questions looking at the evolution and formation of Hebrew Law: The authenticity of sources” 2002, Autumn semester, Budapest

Pesti Jesiva – School of Higher Education in Jewish Studies: “«Wissenschaft des Judentums» vs. tradition, the world of rabbis and Yeshivas” November 2003, Budapest

KERT – Council of Central-Eastern European Rabbis, II. annual conference: “Authentic and fake in the Jewish religion and economic life” January 21 2007, Budapest

Pesti Jesiva – School of Higher Education in Jewish Studies, Shavuot lecture series: “Forgery vs. authenticity – An evaluation and adjudication of notorious forgeries in Jewish history” May 22 2007, Budapest

Pilgrims’ Conference at Kárpátalja, 2007: “The approach of the rebbe of Munkács, Cvi Hirs Spiró, to the forgery of the Jerusalem Talmud (1906-1909)” April 13 2007, Munkács, Ukraine

Weekend seminar series at the bank of the Danube, Between the Jewish and non-Jewish worlds: “The Jewish forgery of the Talmud in Hungary” May 2-4 2008, Ráckeve

Rabbinical Centre of Europe, Bi-Annual meeting: “Rabbinical Forgeries” May 4 2009, London.