

Babylonian Talmud, tractate Bava Kamma. Printed by the Widow and Brothers Romm; Vilna, 1882.

The illustration of the gate and pillars on the title page is familiar to us from today's editions.



Romm's 1880–1886 edition of the Talmud made a vital contribution to the Torah world and to Talmud study. It was reprinted many times and became the model for all subsequent editions from any printing house. With the advent of photomechanical methods of printing in the 1930s, it was this edition which was used: essentially, a photograph was made of Romm's original text.¹¹ Even the new, computer-set editions of today are replicas of Romm's Talmud.¹²

The Romm press was active in Vilna until 1940 when, after the Soviet invasion in World War II, it was confiscated and turned into a Russian-Lithuanian printing house.

11. The photomechanical method was another innovation in printing which would bring great benefit to the publishing world. Instead of having to completely reset a text, a photograph could be made of an existing page and transferred to a light-sensitive plate from which to print, saving great time and expense.

12. In the fifteenth century, the Soncino printers of Italy gave us the layout of the Talmud page, with Rashi on the inner column and Tosafos on the outer. This was the first time these were all printed together on the same page. In the sixteenth century, Bomberg of Venice gave us the first complete edition of the Talmud with its pagination and exactly which words appear on each page. However, it was Romm's 1880–1886 edition which gave us the final fixed page of the Talmud today — exactly *where* the words appear on the page — with many additional commentaries.