AFFINITIES BETWEEN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN EXEGESIS IN TWELFTH CENTURY NORTHERN FRANCE

One of the great enigmas of Jewish exegesis in Northern France is the emergence of the literal method of exegesis in the middle of the eleventh century. Unless we are at the mercy of some chance textual survival, it would appear that this method started with Rashi. The enigma, therefore, is the origin of Rashi's exegetical approach. At the present stage of research, however, this remains a riddle and the clues necessary to solve it are missing.[1] This being the case, I will not deal with the origin of Rashi's פשט. Instead, I have chosen to look at the problem from a less obscure and more promising vantage point, that is, the concept of פשט in the exegesis of Rashbam, Rashi's grandson and disciple. Since Rashbam's method is closely related to that of Rashi, its study may offer some insight into Rashi's exegetical thought as well.

Rashbam's exegetical thought, his concept of פשט, is, in some aspects, similar to the concept of *sensus litteralis* in the thought of Rashbam's contemporary, Hugh of St. Victor. Indeed, a comparison of Rashbam's פשט and the *sensus litteralis* of Hugh of St. Victor proves most enlightening. Both Rashbam and Hugh were active in Northern France during the first half of the twelfth century. Each of them, within his own culture, was an outstanding scholar and an innovator in Biblical studies. The innovations of both Hugh and Rashbam reflect the intellectual changes which characterize the twelfth century.[2] Most important, the hermeneutical

1 Regarding the complex nature of this enigma and the various solutions suggested in recent scholarly research, see A. van der Heide, "Rashi's Biblical Exegesis — Recent Research and Developments," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 41 (1984): 292-318.

2 For general studies see C.H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1927); J. Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Oxford, 1979); G.R. Evans, *Anselm and a New Generation* (Oxford, 1980); *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. R.L. Benson and G. Constable (Oxford, 1982). On Biblical exegesis in the twelfth century, see B. Smalley, "The Bible in Medieval Schools," *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. G.W.H. Lampe (Cambridge, 1965), II: 187-220; B. Smalley, "An Early Twelfth-Century Commentator on the Literal

concepts of both had some essential points in common: both championed the lost honour of the literal sense; both made the "letter" a proper subject of study; and both treated the literal sense as one within a dichotomy of two co-existent senses of Scripture.

Rashbam, like the other Jewish exegetes of Northern France, did not offer a systematic presentation of his method. One has to be satisfied with the few short methodological statements to be found in his commentaries.[3] The most comprehensive of these statements is the one found within Rashbam's exposition of Gen. 37:2. Here Rashbam presents a very clear distinction between the literal and the non-literal senses. They differ, according to him, both in content and in the exegetical rules by means of which this content is derived from Scripture. The content of the non-literal level pertains to law, faith, and moral conduct (הלכות, הגדות ודינים). The exegetical rules which govern this, the non-literal level, are, according to Rashbam, the thirteen principles of R. Ishmael — to be applied to הלכה, the legislative sections of the Torah, and the thirty-two principles of R. Eliezer the son of R. Yose the Galilean — to be applied to the הגדה, the non-legislative sections of the Torah. To these two sets of rules Rashbam adds the typical Rabbinical exegetical consideration, אריכות לשון (superfluities or redundancies) as a basis for non-literal derivations. In a few other methodological statements, Rashbam mentions another such consideration שינוי לשון (deviations in the language).[4] Both redundancies and deviations are textual hints to an implied meaning intended by Scripture.

In his commentary on Gen. 1:1, Rashbam gives an example of the way a deeper, non-literal meaning stems from redundancy. In this, his opening commentary, he refers to Gen. 2:4: אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created." The word בהבראם ("when they were created"), was explicated in the Midrash as referring to Abraham, בהבראם suggesting באברהם because the word בהבראם itself is superfluous.[5] Rashbam notes both the sense of

Sense of Leviticus," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 36 (1969): 78-99; N.M. Häring, "Commentary and Hermeneutics," *Renaissance and Renewal*, pp. 173-200; R.G. Evans, *The Language and Logic of the Bible* (Cambridge, 1984). On the school of St. Victor, see B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 1970), 83-186.

3 Gen. 1:1, 37:2, beginning of Ex. 21, end of the commentary on Exodus, beginning of the commentary on Leviticus, Lev. 13:2.

4 Gen. 1:1, end of the commentary on Exodus.

5 Gen. Rabbah 12,9.

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the Midrash and the method by which this sense was derived:[6] ודרשו חכמים באברהם מאריכות הלשון שלא היה צריך כתוב בהבראם. Thus, at the very outset of his commentary on the Torah, Rashbam probably wanted to introduce his readers to the main differentiation between the two modes of interpretation.[7]

Though the non-literal level is defined in the commentary on Gen. 37:2, the other, literal level is not defined at all. Its characteristics can only be deduced from Rashbam's interpretations. We find that פשט, the literal sense in a given context, is governed by laws of nature and of human conduct (דרך ארץ) as well as by rules of grammar, lexicography, and modes of Biblical style (דרך המקראות).[8]

Derived by means of two different sets of methodological principles, the literal and the non-literal senses are not *alternative* senses. Both senses co-exist simultaneously as meanings of the same text. Each sense is independent of the other. One sense is not built upon the other; both are derived directly from the text, each according to its own rules. Thus, whatever the grammatical, syntactical and contextual interpretation of the verse אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם, such an interpretation is of no significance in deriving the non-literal meaning which, in this case, is based solely on one particular feature of the text, the superfluity of one word, a feature which may be totally disregarded on the literal level.

In presenting the clear exegetical categorization in his commentary on Gen. 37:2 and in his other methodological statements, Rashbam was hardly interested in presenting categorization for its own sake.[9] Rather, he intended this categorization to provide a basis for an *ad litteram* (לפי פשוטו) exposition of Scripture in its own right. By allocating to the הלכות הגדות ודינים an independent yet co-existent realm within a twofold pattern, Rashbam could concentrate on the literal meaning (פשוטו של מקרא) in its historical and literal context without endangering the truth and validity of Rabbinic exegesis, particularly the Law. Moreover, Rashbam

6 "...and the Sages interpreted this as referring to Abraham because of redundancy, since there was no need for the word *bhbrm*" [בהבראם].

See p. 27* 7 Regarding the motivation underlying this introductory passage, cf. S. Kamin, "Rashbam's Conception of the Creation in Light of the Intellectual Currents of his Time," *Scripta Hierosolymitana XXXI* (1986), pp. 91-132.

8 For a comprehensive bibliography of studies dealing with Rashbam's exegetical methods, see S. Japhet and R.B. Salters, *The Commentary of R. Samuel Ben Meir (Rashbam) on Qoheleth* (Jerusalem, Leiden, 1985), pp. 242-244.

9 See note 3 above.

admits the inferiority of פשוטו של מקרא to the non-literal level containing the law and suggests that because of its inferiority, the Sages neglected this mode of interpretation:[10] והראשונים מתוך חסידותם נתעסקו לנטות אחרי הדרשות שהן עיקר ומתוך כך לא הורגלו בעומק פשוטו של מקרא. However, Rashbam's declared reason for taking upon himself this neglected mode of interpretation is anchored in the Rabbinic dictum: אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו, which though overlooked by the Sages was, nevertheless, put forth by them and bears their authority.[11]

One senses apologetical undertones in Rashbam's words, and one wonders if they were caused by his awareness of the novelty of his approach. Indeed, he mentions only Rashi as his predecessor in interpreting פשוטו של מקרא.[12] We may assume that Rashbam's appreciation of פשוטו של מקרא — which he had in common with the Christian exegetes of his time — was the driving force behind his hermeneutical categorization. This begs the question, how did Hugh of St. Victor deal with the growing interest of his time in the *littera* within his own tradition?

Unlike Rashbam, Hugh presents the problem of literal exposition in a systematic manner in several works. Such a treatment of exegetical questions is rooted in Christian literature, and Hugh had the relevant considerations and required terminology at his disposal. In his work, *De Scripturis et Scriptoribus Sacris*, Hugh claims the necessity of literal interpretation in a chapter headed *Quod sit necessaria interpretatio litteralis et historica*.[13] His treatment of the necessity of the literal exposition is based on the concept of the threefold senses of Scripture — the literal-historical, the allegorical, and the tropological or moral sense. He argues with those who neglect the literal exposition out of contempt of the literal sense and proves the absolute dependence of the allegorical and tropological understanding on the literal meaning signified by the "letter". "To ignore the letter," he declares, "is to ignore what the letter signifies and what is signified by the letter... the objects which the letter signifies are signs.... How can that which is meaningless be a sign?"[14]

10 "The early sages, because of their piety, tended to occupy themselves with the *drashot* which are of primary importance, and, therefore, they did not delve into the literal meaning of Scripture" (Gen. 32:2)

11 "Scripture cannot be deprived of its immediate, primary, literal meaning." See below.

12 Gen. 37:2.

13 *PL* 175, 13-15.

14 "*Litteram autem ignorare est ignorare quid littera signifcat, et quid significetur a littera... cum igitur res illae quas littera significat, spiritualis intelligentiae signa sint, quomodo signa tibi esse possunt, quae necdum tibi significata sint?*" *Ibid.*, 13.14.

Hugh adds a theological argument to prove the necessity of the literal exposition. If it were possible to arrive at spiritual understanding without paying attention to the letter, then the particular way in which Scripture chose to convey the sense would have proven to be in vain.[15]

The importance of the literal for Hugh is apparent in his work *Didascalicon* where he makes extensive use of the image of a building in explaining his methodology. Whereas the building itself represents the allegorical sense and the building's colour the tropological sense, its very foundations represent the literal sense. In other words, the literal stands at the base of any exposition or understanding of Scripture.[16]

Thus, time and again, Hugh advises his readers to diligently expound the literal meaning — and not only the meaning of the word itself (*litera*) but also the sense (*sensus*) it conveys within a given context. He also stresses the need for a careful study of the historical sequences desribed in the historical books before one begins the next stage of exposition, i.e. allegorization. Hugh himself composed notes *ad litteram* to various passages of the Octateuch. In these notes he deals with linguistic, textual, and contextual difficulties, and he refers to the Hebrew text and to Jewish interpretations, though his knowledge of these is probably at second hand. In the *Didascalicon*, Augh presents a syllabus for the understanding of each of the three senses of Scripture, a knowledge of the liberal arts, science, history, and geography being required for the understanding of the literal sense.

Hugh and Rashbam both appear as advocates of the literal sense. Both conceive this sense as but one in the two- or threefold division of senses embodied in the nature of Scripture. (Though Hugh speaks of three senses, he thinks mainly in terms of the spiritual versus the literal sense.) Both Hugh and Rashbam do not consider the literal sense to be the apogee of Scripture's intention. Hugh composed *ad litteram*, Rashbam, לפי פשוטו, exegetical notes which presuppose the existence of a non-literal exposition.

Rashbam mentions several times that his intention is to limit himself to פשוטו של מקרא;[17] he who wishes to gain knowledge of the non-literal sense

15 "...*frustra a spiritu sancto figurae et similitudines rerum... in sacro eloquio interpositae fuissent.*" *Ibid.*, 14.

16 *Didascalicon — De Studio Legendi*, ed. C.H. Buttimer (Washington, D.C., 1939), p. 116.

17 Beginning of Ex. 21, end of the commentary on Exodus, beginning of the commentary on Leviticus.

is advised to consult Rashi's commentaries. At the beginning of his commentary on Leviticus, Rashbam writes:[18] הלכות מרובות יש בו והתבוננו חכמים בפרושי זקני כי לא אאריך אלא במקומות שיש לפרש פשוטי מקראות. An interesting parallel is the remark of Hugh's disciple, Andrew of St. Victor, stating that he will concentrate only on the exposition of the letter: *solam litterae expositionem exequi temptabimus.*[19] Another contemporary, the Parisian master Abelard, in a letter to Heloise, prefacing his exposition on the Hexameron, notes the importance of the literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2, and complains of its neglect in Christian tradition. The only one who attempted to explain these chapters *ad litteram* was, according to Abelard, Augustine, and he, Abelard, is following in his footsteps.[20] One is reminded of Rashbam's mention of Rashi as his only predecessor in interpreting the neglected פשוטו של מקרא. Another contemporary master, Thierry of Chartres deliberately refrained from discussing the allegorical and moral meanings because, as he claimed, "the saints had sufficiently elaborated on them". Accordingly, he made up his mind to interpret Genesis *secundum phisicam et ad litteram.*[21] One is reminded of Rashbam's פשוטו של מקרא and דרך ארץ. Indeed, Rashbam's interpretation of the Pentateuch belongs to the group of *ad litteram* compositions.

Hugh and Rashbam met the challenge posed by literal-philological exposition in a similar way, within the pattern of the sense division of Scripture. Yet they differ on an essential point: Hugh presents his hermeneutical concept within the Christian allegorical approach to scripture; Rashbam presents his within the Jewish non-allegorical approach. Consequently, while Hugh stresses the interdependence of the literal and allegorical in order to prove the necessity of the literal exposition, Rashbam stresses the independence of the literal and non-literal senses of the text.

How are we to explain the similarities and the differences between Hugh and Rashbam? Are the similarities to be dismissed as insignificant

18 "There are many laws [in Leviticus] and the wise will consult the commentaries of my grandfather, because I will only deal with those points where there is need to explain the literal sense of the scriptural texts."

19 Andrew on Gen. 1:6 according to an unpublished manuscript of his commentary. MS Bibl. Nat. Lat. 356. I wish to thank Rainer Berndt S.J. who was kind enough to let me consult his transcription of this manuscript.

20 *Expositio in Hexameron, PL* 178, 731. For a critical edition of the *Hexameron*, see M. Foster-Romig, Unpublished Diss., University of Southern California, 1981.

21 The quotation is according to N.M. Häring, "Commentary and Hermeneutics," p. 195.

because of essential differences in their conceptions? Or does the basic similarity in their distinction between literal and non-literal co-existent senses point to some sort of direct relationship between Rashbam and Hugh? My question refers only to their distinction between the literal and non-literal sense and not to their appreciation of the literal sense. I assume, following recent studies, that in their common attitude toward the literal sense, Rashbam and Hugh shared the same intellectual climate.[22]

It is the twofold concept, the twofold pattern, that I would like to examine. I would like to suggest that the Christian notion of the co-existing distinctive senses of Scripture played a role in the formation of Rashbam's exegetical categorization, though, of course, necessary changes were made in order to fit this Christian approach into the Jewish non-allegorical system.

This suggestion is based on two major considerations. First, the different character of the notion of 'פשט' in Jewish exegesis of Christian Europe compared to the notion of 'פשט' which developed in Islamic culture; and second, the novelty of Rashbam's concept in the history of Jewish exegesis compared to the traditional character of Hugh's concept.

The Jewish hermeneutical concept in Islamic culture is basically a concept of one level, or dimension, of meaning, which consists of the harmonization, when required, of the Biblical text with reason and established tradition. Saadya Gaon in the tenth century (882-942) formulated the exegetical and theological principles of this one-dimensional concept. Any human language, according to Saadya, consists of two kinds of expressions — those that lend themselves to only one interpretation and those which are open to various intepretations, literal or metaphorical. As a rule, according to Saadya, the literal and most common meaning of an expression is to be preferred by the exegete, as long as this meaning does not run counter to reason or established tradition and does not contradict another scriptural passage. If, however, the expression does run counter to reason or established tradition, or if it contradicts another scriptural passage, it is the religious duty of the exegete to look for the unusual meaning within the boundaries of lexicographical, grammatical, syntactical, and rhetorical rules.[23] Once the solution is found and harmony

22 See E. Touitou, "Rashbam's Exegetical Method against the Background of his Times," *Festschrift E.Z. Melamed* (Ramat Gan, 1982), pp. 48-74; S. Kamin, "Rashbam's conception."

See p. 27*

23 Cf. Saadya's introduction to his commentary on the Torah in J. Kapah, *The Commentaries of R. Saadya Gaon on the Torah* (Jerusalem, 1962), pp. 155-163.

established, that solution is considered the one and only meaning of the text.

The question whether an expression can hold more than one meaning was discussed in the works of Saadya and his follower the Gaon Samuel Ben Hofni.[24] It was allowed that in some cases, under certain conditions, an expression could hold more than one meaning, but even then, these meanings, too, stemmed from the same exegetical considerations and therefore belonged essentially to the one-dimensional level.

The different approaches of Rashbam and Ibn Ezra to the legislative material in the Torah is instructive. Rashbam declares his intention to interpret the Law לפי פשוטו, allocating the non-literal level to Rabbinic הלכה. Ibn Ezra, who followed Saadya, does not allow a separate level, and so he declares that in those passages which contain מצוה, he will reconcile grammar with the Rabbinic interpretations.[25]

The theological and exegetical ideas of Saadya and his follower the Gaon Samuel Ben Hofni, their terminology, their arguments and considerations, find their exact parallel in the Islamic thought of their day.[26] This, of course, does not mean that Christian thought played the same role in the Jewish exegesis of Northern France as Islamic thought played in the Jewish exegesis of Islamic countries. This certainly is not the case. Hugh and Rashbam, Rashi and his contemporary Lanfranc of Bec, did not speak the same language, literally and metaphorically; they did not think along the same lines. We cannot reconstruct the thought of one by referring to the thought of the other. Having said this, however, it is obvious that the Jewish exegetes of Northern France could not have lived and worked in splendid isolation from the surrounding culture. Indeed, that such was not the case has been demonstrated by recent research.[27] Might it not, therefore, be a possibility that the essential difference in the hermeneutical concepts of the two centres of Judaism is bound up with the cultures within which each of them developed?

24 See *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, edited with introduction, translation and notes by M. Zuker (New York, 1984), "Introduction," pp. 50-57.

25 וכפי דבריהם אתקן דקדוק לשוננו — Ibn Ezra's introduction to his French recension of his commentary on the Torah, in M. Friedlaender, *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra* (London, 1877), p. 5. On the differences between Rashbam and Ibn Ezra in this respect see U. Simon, "The Exegetical Method of Abraham Ibn Ezra as Revealed in Three Interpretations of a Biblical Passage, "*Bar-Ilan* (Jerusalem, 1965), III, 130-138 (in Hebrew).

26 See *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, "Introduction," pp. 35-69.

27 Cf. note 22 above.

The second consideration pertains to the novelty of Rashbam's concept in Jewish tradition as opposed to the traditional character of Hugh's concept in Christian thought. Hugh's two concepts, the distinction between the literal and the spiritual senses and his recognition of the literal sense as a necessary substructure, are both rooted in Christian tradition. The allegorical concept of Scripture was the core of Christian exegesis throughout the ages. It served theological purposes of self-definition and was used as an important weapon in polemics with Jews, pagans, and heretics. It had its roots in the Hellenistic world both in theory and in exegetical practice.

Within the allegorical approach, there were always differences between schools of exegesis and between individual exegetes. There was no agreement regarding the number of senses of Scripture or their nature. The degree of importance attached to the literal-historical sense varied. Similarly, there was no agreement regarding the extent which the spiritual interpretation occupied. Does every passage contain a spiritual meaning or is it a characteristic of only some of the passages? Questions concerning the literal sense, its exegetical purpose, the conditions under which it is to be deprived of its historicity or its primary meaning, were dealt with by the Church fathers, their answers being repeated by the medieval authors.[28] The content of the allegory varied. In some circles the historical typology was stressed (Antioch), in others the timeless spiritual truths (Alexandria). However, regardless of all the synchronic and diachronic differences, allegory, with its implied distinction between literal and non-literal, remained unchanged.

Hugh of St. Victor had a rich tradition from which to draw. He was steeped in the writings of the fathers and in the works of medieval authors whose influence is apparent both in Hugh's hermeneutical approach and in his interpretations.[29] Hugh was acquainted with, and influenced by, the works of Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great, all of whom discussed the problems concerning the literal meaning and acknowledged its importance. Hugh followed the advice of Jerome and Augustine to study Scripture in the original, and like Jerome consulted Jews or converts on

28 For a comprehensive study of the concept of the multiplicity of senses in Christian exegesis see H. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959-64).

29 See H.J. Pollitt, "Some Considerations on the Structure and Sources of Hugh of St. Victor's Notes on the Octateuch," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 33 (1966), 5-38.

exegetical and textual difficulties. Hugh's threefold division into literal, allegorical, and tropological goes back to Gregory the Great as does his concept of the literal as a necessary substructure. Hugh's original and important service to Biblical exegesis was, according to Beryl Smally, "to lay more stress on the literal interpretation relatively to the spiritual and to develop the sources for it."[30] Gregory's advice to lay first the *fundamenta historiae*[31] was hardly followed by medieval authors. The spiritual exposition, based mainly on extracts from Patristic interpretations, prevailed. As Hadfield notes, "It has been the merit of Hugh to change Gregory's advice into a workable hypothesis."[32] But Hugh had the advice to follow.

What about Rashbam? Could he turn to Jewish tradition in developing his approach? It seems that tradition had very little to offer in this respect. Space does not permit a comprehensive examination of the Jewish tradition regarding the distinction between literal (פשט) and non-literal, homiletical (דרש) exegesis.[33] I will confine myself to those sources which Rashbam himself mentions in his commentary on Gen. 37:2 as the basis for his categorization. As mentioned above, Rashbam refers to the Rabbinic dictum אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו, to the thirteen and the thirty-two hermeneutical principles and he acknowledges Rashi as his predecessor in the פשט line of exegesis. Do these sources really reflect the pattern of the literal versus the non-literal sense? Or is Rashbam's interpretation of these sources merely a projection of his own pattern?

The dictum אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו (i.e. "Scripture cannot be deprived of its immediate, primary, literal meaning") is mentioned by Rashbam to justify his choice to interpret לפי פשוטו, yet the dictum itself appears only three times in the whole of the Babylonian Talmud.[34] Whether it was a guiding principle in Rabbinic exegesis is doubtful; the meaning of the

30 B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible*, p. 102.

31 "*Nam primum quidem fundamenta historiae ponimus; deinde per significationem typicam in arcem fidei fabricam mentis exigimus; ad extremum quoque per moralitatis gratiam, quasi superducto aedificium colore vestimus*, Epistola Historia, C. iii, *PL* 75, 5130. On Hugh's similar concept, cf. above.

32 G.A.C. Hadfield, Andrew of St. Victor, a 12th-Century Hebraist, (D. Phil. Thesis Oxford, 1972), p. 6.

33 Cf. R. Loewe, "The Plain Meaning of Scriptures in Early Jewish Exegesis," *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 1 (1964), 140-186; B.J. Gelles, *Peshat and Derash in the Exegesis of Rashi*, (Leiden, 1981); S. Kamin, *Rashi, His Exegetical Categorization in Respect to Peshat and Derash*, (Jerusalem, 1986) (in Hebrew).

34 B. Sabb 63a, b. Yeb. 11b, 24a.

term פשוטו, which appears only within this dictum, i.e. three times, is quite uncertain. That there was no single, accepted understanding of the dictum itself is proved, for example, by the disagreement between Ramban and Rambam concerning its meaning.[35] Rambam used the dictum to exclude certain explanations as the original intention of Scripture. Ramban, like Rashbam, explained the dictum in accord with the twofold pattern. The Gaon Samuel Ben Hofni, in line with Saadya, used the dictum as proof that as long as there is no clear indication for a metaphorical or rare meaning, the exegete must keep to the literal, primary, common meaning.[36] It seems that the dictum could serve two very different concepts.

This being the case, it is difficult to see this dictum as the source of Rashbam's elaborated categorization. However, once Rashbam had this categorization, it is easy to understand how it was attached to the dictum, how Rashbam used the dictum as its anchor.

In order to understand the meaning of אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו it has to be examined in the light of Rabbinic exegesis. Is a deliberate distinction between the literal and the non-literal as two modes of interpretation expressed in Rabbinic exegesis? According to recent research,[37] neither terminology nor the actual interpretations indicate the existence of such categorization in Rabbinic thought. Rabbinic thought does not draw a distinction between literal and non-literal meaning. It thinks in terms of a multiplicity of meanings embodied in Holy Scripture.[38] These meanings are not dependent upon each other; nor are they differentiated according to any methodological criteria. Thus, the literal meaning does not, indeed cannot, occupy a distinct level. It seems, then, that Rashbam's concept does not rest on Rabbinic thought. Rashbam was right in observing that the thirteen principles of R. Ishmael govern the non-literal level, but, orginally, these principles do not reflect the dichotomy of literal and non-literal levels.

The case is different regarding the thirty-two principles of R. Eliezer the son of R. Yose the Galilean. They are, according to scholarship, a product of the school of Saadya Gaon and reflect the principles of this school.[39]

35 See Nachmanides' commentary of Sepher Hamitzvoth, Root 2. (ספר המצוות להרמב"ם עם השגות הרמב"ן, מהדורת ח.ד. שעוועל, ירושלים 1981, עמ' כט-נב).

36 *Saadya's Commentary on Genesis*, "Introduction," pp. 42-43.

37 Cf. n. 33 above.

38 See b. San 34a.

39 See M. Zucker, "The Problem of the 32 Exegetical Rules and the Mishna of R. Eliezer," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 23 (1948), 1-20 (in Hebrew).

They indiscriminately include principles pertaining to both the literal and non-literal exegesis. Surely, they cannot account for Rashbam's twofold distinction.

What about Rashi? Could he be considered to be Rashbam's source or forerunner? The answer is basically in the affirmative. It seems that the essential features of Rashbam's concept already exist in Rashi, either explicitly or implicitly. It is in Rashi's commentaries that we see the first steps toward a distinction between literal and non-literal exegesis, between the literal and non-literal senses of Scripture.[40] In Rashi's commentaries we find, probably for the first time, the dictum[41] מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים וסוף דבר אין לך מקרא יוצא מידי משמעו.

Rashi created this dictum by bringing together two separate, unrelated Rabbinic dicta. One is:[42] מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים. This dictum was meant to exclude the possibility of a Biblical text being considered superfluous or redundant, the full dictum in Sanhedrin being:[43] מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים ואין טעם אחד יוצא מכמה מקראות. Rashi brought only the first part of the dictum, מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים and added to it the dictum אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו. By bringing them together, Rashi changed the original meaning of each of the two dicta, fitting them into a new framework of thought. פשוטו של מקרא now represents a distinct realm within the multitude of meanings, Rashi having designated this realm by a special term, the rare Talmudic term פשוטו של מקרא. Thus, Rashi introduced a methodological, discriminative consideration into the Rabbinic concept of multiplicity of meanings. Doing so, he paved the way for Rashbam's clear exegetical categorization.

One can trace the twofold pattern of meanings in Rashi's commentaries in several phenomena. It appears in the phenomenon of two juxtaposed interpretations to a single verse. One is a literal interpretation, לפי פשוטו, the other is the non-literal meaning, לפי מדרשו. Both are co-existent meanings of the text.[44] This twofold pattern also appears in strictly allegorical interpretations, e.g. in Song of Songs, in which Rashi stresses

40 See Kamin, *Rashi*.

41 "Though one verse may have several meanings, it is never to be deprived of its literal meaning." The term משמעו in this context is parallel in meaning to פשוטו. Rashi's introduction to his commentary on Song of Songs.

42 "One verse may have several meanings," *b. San.* 34a.

43 "One verse may have several meanings; several verses may not have but one and the same meaning."

44 On this type of interpretation see Kamin, *Rashi*, ch. 4.

the necessity of the literal interpretation as a basis for the allegorical meaning, in a manner most similar to that of Hugh of St. Victor.[45]

However, Rashi's work does not exhibit a clear exegetical dichotomy. Most of Rashi's interpretations do not exhibit the twofold pattern. Indeed, the majority of his interpretations can be considered neither as literal interpretations nor as interpretations on a separate non-literal level. A great deal of Rashi's work consists of the integration of the explicit Biblical meaning and Rabbinic extra-Biblical data.[46] For example, in his commentary on Gen. 37.29, "And Reuben returned to the pit and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit," Rashi addresses the implicit question or rather the question left hanging by the text: from where did Reuben return? Rashi's solution, based on the Midrash,[47] is that Reuben had not been present when Joseph was sold because "it was his turn to go to attend to his father". Such an interpretation is not לפי פשוטו, nor does it indicate a distinct level of meaning.

It was Rashbam who, developing Rashi's principles, drew a clear line of demarcation between the literal and the non-literal, both in theory and in exegetical practice. By submitting the non-literal meaning to certain rules, Rashbam seems to relate to Rashi's practice. On the one hand, Rashbam seems to have articulated the considerations which, in certain cases, led Rashi to suggest his twofold explanations.[48] On the other hand, these very rules of the non-literal level led Rashbam to exclude a great deal of Rashi's interpretations which, though not derived by these rules, do not conform to the rules of פשט. Thus Rashbam could never include those of Rashi's interpretations which are based on extra-Biblical data. Interpretations such as that found in Rashi's commentary to Gen. 37:29 are very rare, almost non-existent, in Rashbam's work.

It appears then that Rashi and Rashbam may be thought of as representing two stages in the development of a clear notion of literal sense within the concept of a twofold division of co-existent levels of meaning. I have looked at but one aspect of the twofold pattern — the categorization itself, that is the hermeneutical concept underlying the actual literal interpretations. I have not dealt with the notion of פשט or with the actual

45 See S. Kamin, "דוגמא in Rashi's Commentary on Song of Songs — A Study of Rashi's Exegetical Terminology against the Background of Christian Exegesis," *Tarbiz* 42 (1982) 41-58.

46 Cf. S. Kamin, *Rashi*, chs. 2 and 5.

47 *Gen. Rabbah*, 84, 19.

48 Cf. note 44 above.

literal interpretations. Jewish exegetes in both Christian and Islamic cultures had an interest in the literal-philological interpretation of Scripture. Their interpretations are often similar and so are their exegetical methods. They differ, however, in their basic hermeneutical concept. I have suggested that the Christian differentiation between the senses of Scripture played a role in the formation of Rashbam's concept, the Christian pattern undergoing the changes necessitated by the non-allegorical Jewish thought. After looking at Rashi, we see that the influence of the Christian pattern on Rashbam's concept seems to be limited to the sharpness of its distinction, its general and comprehensive character, and its clear articulation.

By concentrating on Hugh of St. Victor and Rashbam, I did not mean to suggest any direct influence of one upon the other. The Christian categorization of the senses was, as mentioned, a commonplace in Christian thought, and it could be expected to have influenced anyone living in that cultural milieu. I have paid particular attention to the concepts of Hugh and Rashbam because in both of them, the exegetical categorization is aimed at a re-evaluation of the *sensus litteralis* — of פשוטו של מקרא. This appreciation of the literal sense is one of the expressions of the "Renaissance of the twelfth century" in exegesis. Paris was its centre. Hugh of St. Victor and Rashbam, each within his own tradition, met the new intellectual challenge. The result was two schools of exegesis, Christian and Jewish, which had many traits in common.

But it all started with Rashi. Rashi's work, too, has its parallels — though less obvious parallels — in Christian Biblical studies of his time. After all, the Renaissance of the twelfth century did not begin in the twelfth century. However, our interest here was not the appearance of פשט exegesis but the hermeneutical categorization within which it was conceived. One wonders whether the beginnings of this categorization in Rashi are to be explained as an inner Jewish development of the Rabbinic notion of the multiplicity of meanings, whether there was any link between Rabbinic thought and that of Rashi of which we are ignorant, and whether the Christian pattern should be taken into account when explaining Rashi's dictum:[49] מקרא אחד יוצא לכמה טעמים וסוף דבר אין מקרא יוצא מידי משמעו.

49 Cf n. 41 above. There is a tendency to explain the emergence of פשט exegesis by anti-Christian motivation. This explanation poses several difficulties. The fact that פשט exegesis flourished both in Jewish and Christian circles at the same time and place (twelfth century northern France) points to a common background rather than to a

particular Jewish motivation. Moreover, the appreciation of the literal-philogical mode of exegesis in the twelfth century in Christian exegesis is one of the aspects of the general intellectual revival of this century. The Jewish factor could hardly be decisive. It is true that Christian exegetes consulted Jews regarding philological and textual matters, but this seems more as a result of the new approach to exegesis than its reason. One of the reasons for ascribing an anti-Christian polemical factor to the emergence and development of the literal method of exegesis is the assumption that the literal method was an efficient weapon in repudiating the Christian allegorical sense of Scripture. Hugh's conception of the literal sense as the necessary foundation of the allegorical sense can hardly justify such an assumption. In other words, Hugh's conception, which is rooted in Christian tradition, shows that Christian allegorical meaning cannot be refuted by a literal interpretation *ipso facto*. Lastly, interpretations motivated by polemical reasons very often distort the immediate literal-contextual meaning, when this meaning does not support the polemic. (Though such a distortion is often based on philological grounds. See, for example, Ibn Ezra's and Radak's commentaries on Is. 52:13-52). Nevertheless, the contribution of polemics to the development of פשט should not be underestimated. Once Biblical exegesis adopted the literal method, the polemic continued along this line of exegesis and developed it.

RASHBAM'S CONCEPTION OF THE CREATION IN LIGHT OF THE INTELLECTUAL CURRENTS OF HIS TIME

Rashbam's exegesis of the story of creation[1] lies in a distinction dra between the process of creation itself and its description in the open chapter of the Torah. According to Rashbam, the story of creation does present a description of the entire process of creation. In his view the To narrative describes only part of the process of creation and only a portion the created universe. He points out that the first act of creation relatec the Torah is "And God said, 'Let there be light'" (Gen 1:3). However, creation of light occurred "at a time when the upper heavens and the ea had already been created, whether a long time or a short time befor Thus, the creation of the upper heavens and the earth is not included in "six days of creation".

[1]Unfortunately, we do not have Rashbam's complete commentary on Genesis. commentary on chaps. 2-17 has not yet been found. The edition of Rashb commentary on the Pentateuch used in this article is that of D. Rosin (Breslau, 1 The edition of Rashi's commentary is that of A. Berliner (Frankfurt, 1905). translation of biblical passages has been eclectic.

[2]Regarding the meaning of "upper heavens," see n. 16 below.