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 usḥa. Instead, I have chosen to look at the problem from a less obscure and more promising vantage point, that is, the concept of usḥa 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 usḥa, is, in some aspects, similar to the concept of sensus literalis in the thought of Rashi’s contemporary, Hugh of St. Victor. Indeed, a comparison of Rashbam’s usḥa and the sensus literalis 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 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 (הרולאכ, הדרות ותרım). The exegetical rules which govern this, the non-literal level, are, according to Rashbam, the thirteen principles of R. Ishmael—to be applied to 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 non-legislative sections of the Torah. To these two sets of rules Rashbam adds the typical Rabbinical exegetical consideration, ḳארימ לשלש, (superfluities or redundancies) as a basis for non-literal derivations. In a few other methodological statements, Rashbam mentions another such consideration, שים לשלש (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, אלולחא ומשתתא אראם המפורט: “These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.” The word המפורט (‘when they were created’), was explicated in the Midrash as referring to Abraham, נאmédia because the word המפורט itself is superfluous.5 Rashbam notes both the sense of

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.


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.

the Midrash and the method by which this sense was derived. 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.

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, just as the literal sense in a given context is governed by laws of nature and of human conduct (דרכי נפש), so is the sense of a given text, as well as by rules of grammar, lexicography, and modes of Biblical style (דרכי הקאנסא). 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, איה הנבואה והממש אל מנהיג, 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. Rather, he intended this categorization to provide a basis for an ad litteram exposition of Scripture in its own right. By allocating to the הלכות ההלכות independently an independent yet co-existent realm within a twofold pattern, Rashbam could concentrate on the literal meaning (פירוש לש מקרא) in its historical and literal context without endangering the truth and validity of Rabbinic exegesis, particularly the Law. Moreover, Rashbam admits the inferiority of הפירוש לש מקרא to the non-literal level containing the law and suggests that because of its inferiority, the Sages neglected this mode of interpretation. However, Rashbam’s declared reason for taking upon himself this neglected mode of interpretation is anchored in the Rabbinic dictum:אין מקרא アינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ מקרא אינ麥Speak not evil against your neighbor, that you not be blotted out of your name— which he had in common with the Christian exegesis 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 Quid sit necessaria interpretatio litteralis et historicis. 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?”

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6 “...and the Sages interpreted this as referring to Abraham because of redundancy, since there was no need for the word hóbām.” See p. 271.
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.
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 aurem ignorare est ignorare quid littera significat, et quid significetur a littera... cum ignis res illae quas littera significat, spiritualibus intellectuibus signa sint, quomodo signa ibi esse possint, quae nescio ibi significata sunt.” 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 topological 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 — 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 described 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, Hugh 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, דַּיָּקְפֶּל פַּסְחָר, exegetical notes which presuppose the existence of a non-literal exposition.

Rashbam mentions several times that his intention is to limit himself to מֵשָׁר יְשָׁרִי,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 fuisse." Ibid., 14.
¹⁷ Beginning of Ex. 21, end of the commentary on Exodus, beginning of the commentary on Leviticus.

is advised to consult Rashbi’s commentaries. At the beginning of his commentary on Leviticus, Rashbam writes: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."

¹⁸ Andrew on Gen. 1:6 according to an unpublished manuscript of his commentary. MS BSB, 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 The quotation is according to N.M. Haring. "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 'משנה in Jewish exegesis of Christian Europe compared to the notion of 'משנה 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 interpretations, 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 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 יי אלスーパט , allocating the non-literal level to Rabbinic הלבד. Ibn Ezra, who followed Saadya, does not allow a separate level, and so he declares that in those passages which contain יי אלスーパט, 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 exegeses 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?

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."


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 sense 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. 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. 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 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 Smalley, “to lay more stress on the literal interpretation relatively to the spiritual and to develop the sources for it.”

Gregory’s advice to lay first the fundamenta historiae 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.” 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 ( חשבון and non-literal, homiletical (דִּרְשָׁה) exegesis. 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, אִם מָצָא אָדָם מִידֵּרָדוּ שֵׁם, to the thirteenth and the thirty-two hermeneutical principles and he acknowledges Rashi as his predecessor in the 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 (i.e., “Scripture cannot be deprived of its immediate, primary, literal meaning”) is mentioned by Rashbam to justify his choice to interpret הלל עליך, yet the dictum itself appears only three times in the whole of the Babylonian Talmud. Whether it was a guiding principle in Rabbinic exegesis is doubtful; the meaning of the

31 Nam primum quidem fundamenta historiae ponimus; deinde per significationem typicam in arcem fidel fabricam mentis exigimus; ad extremum quoque per moralium gratiam, quasi super ducto oedificium colore vestimus, Epistola Historia, C. iii, PL 75, 5130. On Hugh’s similar concept, cf. above.
34 B. Sabb 63a, b, Yeb. 11b, 24a.
term מָשָׁרָה, 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 Rashbam concerning its meaning. \(^{35}\) Rashbam 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 a מָשָׁרָה 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, originally, 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. \(^{39}\)

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40 See Kamin, Rashbi.
41 “Though one verse may have several meanings, it is never to be deprived of its literal meaning.” The term מָשָׁרָה in this context is parallel in meaning to מָשָׁרָה. Rashbi’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, Rashbi, 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 לְפִנֵי מַעֲשָׂה, 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 טעם. 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 טעם or with the actual 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 Rashb., 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 literalis — of מַעֲשָׂה 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 מַעֲשָׂה 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 מַעֲשָׂה של מקרא אָדַר לְצָא לְמָשְׂמַח מַעֲשָׂה יָדָא יָדָא מַעֲשָׂה.

46 Cf. S. Kamin, Rashi, chs. 2 and 5.
47 Gen. Rabbah, 84, 19.
48 Cf. note 44 above.
particular Jewish motivation. Moreover, the appreciation of the literal-philological 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 exegesia 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 \textit{WWE} should not be underestimated. Once Biblical exegesis adopted the literal method, the polemic continued along this line of exegesis and developed it.

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\textbf{RASHBAM'S CONCEPTION OF THE CREATION}
\textit{IN LIGHT OF THE INTELLECTUAL CURRENTS OF HIS TIME}

Rashbam's exegesis of the story of creation\footnote{Unfortunately, we do not have Rashbam's complete commentary on Genesis. A commentary on chaps. 2-17 has not yet been found. The edition of Rashbam's commentary on the Pentateuch used in this article is that of D. Rosin (Breslau, 1905). The edition of Rashi's commentary is that of A. Berliner (Frankfurt, 1905). A translation of biblical passages has been eclectic.} lies in a distinction drawn 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 Torah narrative describes only part of the process of creation and only a portion of the created universe. He points out that the first act of creation related to 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 earth had already been created, whether a long time or a short time before. Thus, the creation of the upper heavens and the earth is not included in the "six days of creation".

\footnote{Regarding the meaning of "upper heavens," see n. 16 below.}