

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

Rupert and Bekhor Shor¹

Isaac Gottlieb, Bar Ilan University
Stewart Vanning, Independent Scholar

Joseph Bekhor Shor of Orléans was a French Tosafist, a student of Rashi's grandson Rabbenu Tam. His commentary is considered to be the last northern French commentary on the Pentateuch to be written in the mode of the *peshat*, with its stress on literal or straightforward explanation of the text, in place of the traditional midrashic approach.² As is well known, twelfth-century Northern France is the place where this “dramatic change” took place in biblical interpretation.³ According to Yehoshafat Nevo, who published this commentary, Bekhor Shor was born around 1140 and apparently died around the year 1200.⁴

Rupert of Deutz (c. 1075–1129) was born in Liège, Belgium, and served as a monk at the nearby abbey of St.

¹ The research for this paper was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant No. 483/12).

² For a readable and insightful explanation of *midrash* and *peshat*, we suggest the chapters “Midrash” by Barry W. Holtz and “Medieval Bible Commentaries” by Edward L. Greenstein in *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. Barry W. Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 177–211, 213–259.

³ A. Grossman, “The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation*, ed. M. Saebø, vol. I/2, The Middle Ages (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 323, describes with these words the “new predilection for the plain, literal interpretation of the text (*peshat*).”

⁴ Yehoshafat Nevo, *Perushe Rabbi Yosef Bekhor Shor al haTora* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1994), 1. Ephraim Kanarfogel, *The Intellectual History and Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 161, n.137, cites Rami Reiner's suggestion that Bekhor Shor was born in the early 1120s.

Lawrence for almost forty years. For the last nine years of his life, from 1120-1129, he was abbot of Deutz, a Benedictine monastery across the Rhine from Cologne, whence his name. At Liège, between the years 1112-1116, he wrote his massive work, *De sancta Trinitate et operibus eius*, a presentation of Trinitarian theology as it plays itself out in the salvation-history of the Bible. However, unlike in other theological compositions, Rupert integrated his exposition into a biblical commentary, consisting of over 2,500 printed pages on practically all the books of the Old and New Testaments.⁵

It is our contention that even though Rupert's work presupposes "an allegorical, that is to say, christological reading of all Scripture,"⁶ a number of his interpretations show similarities in their content or method of exegesis to those of Bekhor Shor. It is chronologically impossible for Rupert to have borrowed from Bekhor Shor; if anything, the influence might have run in the opposite direction. The wider question is therefore whether such similarities are evidence for some sort of contact between Christians and Jews, familiarity of one community with the actual literature of the other, or a tendency to common but unrelated explanations propelled by the spirit of the age.

To what extent did Rupert know Jews? In his day there was no Jewish settlement in Liège, but he spent from 1092-1095 in exile in northern France during an ecclesiastical controversy in which he was involved, and later sought refuge in Siegburg (1116-1117) and Cologne (1119), both in the Rhineland. Northern France and the Rhineland had established Jewish communities, and it is most probable that in these places he came into contact with Jews. As John H. Van Engen has demonstrated, several passages in Rupert's *Commentary*

⁵ John H. Van Engen, *Rupert of Deutz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 82. Great length seems to be characteristic of monastic commentaries. See Gilbert Dahan, "Genres, Forms and Various Methods in Christian Exegesis of the Middle Ages," in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, ed. Sæbø, 197.

⁶ Van Engen, *Rupert*, 89-90.

on the *Minor Prophets*, an independent work written between 1121 and 1124, definitely reflect such discussions.⁷ Rupert's complex engagement with Jews and Judaism has been dealt with previously in the scholarly literature, which in the main has stressed his polemical content without addressing his methods of interpretation as they relate to Jewish exegesis.⁸ As we claim in a forthcoming paper, Rupert also provided close to twenty explanations in the book of Genesis that parallel those of Rashi (1040–1105), the father of northern French biblical exegesis in the spirit of the *peshat*.⁹ Rupert and Rashi concur not only in idea but also in style, meaning that Rupert's explanations at times tend toward the literal, something he himself noted from time to time. For example, he introduced a literal reading with the words, *iam ipsa litterae vestigia sequamur*, "Let us now follow the very paths of the letter."¹⁰ This is similar to the exegetical route that Rashi declared he was taking.¹¹ Obviously, though, as Rashi was no longer alive when Rupert wrote these commentaries, any direct influence was one-way.

In two of the examples in that paper, though, we note parenthetically that Bekhor Shor, who was born after Rupert's death, objected to precisely that explanation which had been

⁷ Van Engen, *Rupert*, 242.

⁸ David E. Timmer, "Biblical Exegesis and the Jewish-Christian Controversy in the Early Twelfth Century," *Church History* 58 (1989): 309–321. M.L. Arduini, *Ruperto di Deutz e la controversia tra Christiani ed Ebrei nel secolo XII*, a cura di Rhabanus Haacke, OSB (Rome, 1979), 119–121; A. S. Abulafia, "The Ideology of Reform and Changing Ideas Concerning Jews in the Works of Rupert of Deutz and Hermannus Quondam Iudeus," *Jewish History* 7 (1993): 46–63. Van Engen devotes several pages to "Disputes with Rhineland Jews" (*Rupert*, 241–248).

⁹ "Rupert and Rashi," forthcoming in *JANES* 33 (2014).

¹⁰ In Gen. 5.37, *CCCM* 21, 373. All quotations of Rupert's writings are taken from Hrabanus Haacke, *Ruperti Tuitiensis: De sancta Trinitate et operibus eius, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis* vol.21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971). Quotations past Exodus are taken from *CCCM* 22.

¹¹ As stated by Rashi at Gn 3:8 and in his introduction to the Song of Songs.

given by both exegetes. Here we seek to examine whether Bekhor Shor's opposition arose only on the basis of his knowledge of Rashi's commentary, or whether he knew what Christians like Rupert had said about the Bible.

Almost thirty years ago, Sarah Kamin raised the possibility of a connection between a comment of Rupert on the subject of allegorical interpretation of the Bible and equally lengthy remarks of Bekhor Shor on the same topic.¹² Bekhor Shor chose to invalidate the allegorical approach of Christian exegesis from the very same verses in Nm 12:6-8 that both Origen (185-254 CE) and Rupert had used to prove that the Torah is to be explained as an allegory. Following Kamin's lead, we will cite further examples from Bekhor Shor that seem to have similarities with Rupert or other Christian interpretations.

Similarity does not necessarily mean borrowing. First, both exegetes could have arrived at similar insights independently, particularly if both tended towards a literal reading of the text. Second, Rupert might have heard biblical interpretations¹³ that originated from earlier Jewish sources, and Bekhor Shor may have cited those very same sources, without having heard them in Rupert's name. For example, Rupert might have heard comments on the Torah made by R. Joseph Qara, a contemporary of Rashi and teacher of Scripture (1060-1130). As Bekhor Shor himself cites Qara some ten times by name, this could explain similar comments found in Rupert and Bekhor Shor. Unfortunately, we cannot investigate this possibility, as Qara's commentary on the Pentateuch is

¹² Sarah Kamin, "The Polemic against Allegory in the Commentary of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor," in Sarah Kamin, *Jews and Christians* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2008), 89-112 [Heb.], rpt. from *Mehkera Yerushalayim beMahshevet Yisrael* 3 (1984): 367-392.

¹³ We stress hearing, as there is no evidence that Rupert read or knew Hebrew.

lost to us, with the exception of several leaves discovered in the “Italian Genizah.”¹⁴

A third possibility is that both Rupert and Bekhor Shor cite interpretations from earlier Christian sources. Both Samuel Poznanski and E. E. Urbach assumed that Bekhor Shor read Latin.¹⁵ However, Ephraim Kanarfogel thinks otherwise: “The single most important factor that limited what Jews could receive from their Christian surroundings is a linguistic one. Ashkenazic Jewry as a whole...did not read Latin....Among the Tosafists...it is hard to identify even one figure other than Rashbam who had any familiarity with Latin.”¹⁶ Joseph Bekhor Shor was among these Tosafists. Kanarfogel instead puts stock in oral communication as a vehicle through which each side learned about the exegetical methods of the other.¹⁷ It is therefore possible that Bekhor Shor heard interpretations in the name of Rupert or other Christians and responded to them.

We will now present several examples which seem to show that Bekhor Shor had some knowledge of Christian

¹⁴ See Mauro Perani, “Yosef ben Simon Kara’s Lost Commentary on the Psalms: The Imola Fragment from the ‘Italian Genizah,’” *The Words of a Wise Man’s Mouth Are Gracious (Qoh 10,12): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Mauro Perani (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 248–395; Avraham Grossman, “Mi-Genizat Italia: Seridim miPerush Rabbi Yosef Kara laTora,” *Pe’amim* 52 (1992): 16–36 [Heb.]; idem., *Genuze Italia u-Ferushav shel Rabbi Yosef Kara laMikra*, in *HaMikra beRe’i melareshav—Sefer Zikaron leSara Kamin*, ed. Sara Japhet (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 335–340 [Heb.].

¹⁵E.E. Urbach, *Ba’ale haTosafot* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1968), 116, cites a comment of Bekhor Shor from his no longer extant commentary on Psalms, preserved in the polemical work *Sefer Yosef haMeqanne*, in which he criticized a reading of Jerome from the Vulgate. Samuel Poznanski, *Mavo al Hakhme Zorfat Mefarshe haMikra* (Warsaw, 1913), lvi, preceded Urbach in claiming that Bekhor Shor knew Latin based on the above reference to Jerome, and added that Bekhor Shor notes the translation of the Bible into Latin in his comment to Nm 12:8.

¹⁶Kanarfogel, *Intellectual History*, 85–87.

¹⁷Kanarfogel, *Intellectual History*, 103–105.

exegesis, perhaps even that of Rupert. We base our claim on similarities in the structure, content, or language of Bekhor Shor's remarks.

1. Dosage Necessary from the Tree of Life

Gn 3:22-23 And the LORD God said, Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever! So the LORD God banished him from the garden of Eden...¹⁸

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֱלֹהִים הֵן הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאַחַד מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וָרָע וְעַתָּה פֶּן־יִשְׁלַח יָדוֹ וְלָקַח גַּם מִעֵץ הַחַיִּים וְאָכַל וְחַי לְעֹלָם: וַיִּשְׁלַחֵהוּ ה' אֱלֹהִים מִגַּן־עֵדֶן...

Rupert: It should be noted that it did not say only, “so that he may not send forth his hand,” but it says “*in case by chance he may send forth his hand.*” Through this it is plainly evident that that tree of life was not as follows: wood, just as any herb is a drug for health. Certainly the chance ingestion of a medicinal herb does not bestow eternal good health, but with application and care health is preserved against the chance recurrence of sickness. It says, however, concerning this tree, “*in case by chance...he may eat and live forever.*” Therefore in no way was it necessary to have repeated recourse to the tree as a temporary drug for preserving life (as some think), but once it was taken the body would live forever.¹⁹

¹⁸ NJPS translation used throughout, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁹ *Nunc illud notandum quod non dixerit solum, ne mittat manum suam, sed ne forte, inquit, mittat manum suam. Plane per hoc liquet, quod non sic fuerit illud lignum vitae: lignum, quomodo est herba aliqua sanitatis medicamentum. Siquidem medicinalis herba forte sumpta non perpetuam confert sanitatem, sed studio provisa servatur contra forte redituram infirmitatem. De hoc autem ligno dicit: ne forte...comedat et vivat in aeternum. Ergo nequaquam (ut nonnulli arbitrantur) frequentandum erat necessario lignum tamquam perpetuandae vitae transitivum medicamentum, sed semel hoc sumpto viveret corpus in aeternum. (In Gen.3.30, CCCM 21, 270).*

The version of the Vulgate that Rupert used read verses 22 and 23 as if they were one: “In order that Adam not stretch out his hand and take from the Tree of Life, God sent him out of the Garden.” The Latin also adds the word *forte*, “by chance,” i.e., “In order that Adam not stretch out his hand by chance.” Why add “by chance,” asks Rupert. From this he understands that the verse describes a situation where Adam might grab a fruit from the tree of life and with a single bite attain immortality. He therefore rules out the possibility that the tree was a type of medicine to cure illness if taken regularly. It had a magical quality to extend life even if eaten only once.

Andrew of St. Victor (1110-1175), an early Christian Hebraist, was also aware of these two interpretations, for he writes on this verse:

From this Scriptural text it is given to understand that he had not yet tasted the tree of life, because if he had once tasted it, he could never have died. Certain people however seem to assert that he would ingest from the other trees to alleviate hunger and thirst, but from that one for the weakness of old age, nor would it suffice to take it once; rather it would have to be taken repeatedly in order to extend life.²⁰

Both Rupert and Andrew first cite the explanation that the fruit of the Tree of Life could miraculously bestow immortality immediately, and then the understanding that it did not magically give eternal life but was instead a drug that healed sickness, and so would extend life with repeated doses. They both prefer the first idea and reject the second.

²⁰ *Ex hoc loco Scripturae datur intelligi, quod necdum de ligno vitae gustaverat, quia, si semel gustasset, numquam mori potuisset. Quidam tamen videntur asserere, quod cetera ligna in remedium famis et sitis, istud vero contra senii defectum sumeret nec semel sumere sufficeret; immo frequenter sumendum, ut vitam continuaret. (Andreas a s. Victore: **Expositio super Heptateuchum**, eds. C. Lohr, R. Berndt, *CCCM* 53 [1986], 39).*

Bekhor Shor (Gn 3:22): “also from the tree of life”: the tree of healing, as in, “and if anyone who is bitten looks at it, he shall recover [literally: live]” (Nm 21:8), that he would be healed, and as it says regarding the pressed figs: “and they shall spread them on the rash and he will recover [literally: live]” (Is 38:21), and like the talmudic expression, “the wound healed” [literally: “lived”]. For anyone who was ill who ate from that tree was healed, and if he was weak, he was strengthened, and if he was old, he returned to the days of his youth. Therefore if Adam had weakened, he would have eaten from it and been strengthened and returned to the days of his youth. When he would become old again, he would eat again and so on forever. It was not effective at all however for one who was healthy and strong and was not as people think, that one who would eat from it would live forever. This is not so, since if it were so, Adam would have eaten after he ate from the tree of wisdom or before, but it would not have helped at all.²¹

Bekhor Shor explains the name עץ החיים, *the tree of life*, as “the tree of healing,” citing several prooftexts in which the word “life” means “recover.” After the fiery serpents were to bite and kill grumbling Israel, God directed Moses to make a figure of one, mount it on a pole, and those who had been bitten could look at it and recover/live. (Nm 21:8) Isaiah calls for healing Hezekiah’s life-threatening illness by applying a cake of figs to his rash and promising that “he will recover.” (Is

²¹ גם מעץ החיים: עץ הרפואה, כמו: והיה כל הנשך וראה אותו וחי, שהוא נתרפא, וכמו שאומר בדבילה: וימרחו על השחין ויחי, וכמו 'חיתה המכה' בתלמוד. כי אותו עץ כל מי שהוא חולה אם יאכל ממנו יתרפא, ואם תש כחו יתחזק, ואם זקן ישוב לימי עלומיו, ולפיכך אם יהיה אדם בגן עדן כשיזקין ויחיש כחו יאכל ממנו ויתחזק ויחזור לימי עלומיו, וכשיחזור ויזקין יחזור ויאכל, וכן לעולם, אבל לבריא וחזק אינו מועיל כלום, ולא כמו שסוברים בני אדם: שמי שיאכל ממנו יחיה לעולם, אין זאת, דאם כן היה אדם אוכל לאחר שאכל מעץ הדעת או קודם, אבל לא היה מועיל כלום.

38:21) Finally, the talmudic expression (B. Niddah 64b) that literally says, “the wound lived” also indicates healing.

Aside from the similarity of content, we point to the following expressions used by Rupert, Andrew, and Bekhor Shor respectively.

1. “In no way was it necessary...(as some think)”
2. “Certain people however seem to assert”
3. “And [it] was not as people think”

It seems that Bekhor Shor, Rupert, and Andrew all drew from a common source. However, there is no trace in previous Jewish or Christian writings of an interpretation that one need repeatedly to eat from the tree of life; Bekhor Shor is the first Jewish commentator to cite it. Thus, it seems more likely that Rupert or Andrew was the source of Bekhor Shor’s comment. As in the disagreement about allegory between Rupert and Bekhor Shor which we cited above from Kamin’s article, Bekhor Shor rejects the explanation that the Christians prefer. In the present case, he does this on semantic grounds, based on the meaning of *ḥayyim* in several proof texts as health or recovery rather than life; apparently he seeks to ground his exegesis in the grammar of the text. Rupert bases his explanation on the superfluous word *forte* “by chance” in Jerome’s translation, also relying on the literal meaning of the text. Both Rupert and Bekhor Shor here exhibit interpretive traits that fall under the rubric of *peshat*.

2. Abraham’s Mental Abandonment of a Return to His Homeland

Gn 12:1 The Lord said to Abram: “Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you.”

נִאמַר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֹרְאָךְ.

Bekhor Shor: *From your native land:* Although he was no longer there because he had already come to Ḥaran, He said to him: remove yourself completely from there so that it should not be any longer your mind to return.

And from your father's house: where you are now.²²

It might seem that if there is anything distinctive to point out here, perhaps it is Bekhor Shor's concern for the inner life or psychology of biblical characters, considered by several scholars to be a trait of his *peshat* approach.²³ Abraham's departure from his native land was to be not only physical but mental as well. Bekhor Shor's comment was addressing a legitimate problem: when the Lord commanded Abraham to leave, he had already left his birth-place Ur of the Chaldees in Mesopotamia, and was now residing in Ḥaran in present-day Syria. It is from Ḥaran that he departed for Canaan. Why then is he asked to leave his native land? In answer to that question, Bekhor Shor explains that God was now asking Abraham to forget about the comforts and benefits of his original homeland, to divorce himself mentally from that place.

A survey of Christian exegesis on this verse, even before Rupert, enables us to see Bekhor Shor's comment in a different light. The *Glossa Ordinaria* in the name of Walafrid Strabo (c.808–849) writes on Gn 12:1, "It should be noted that he had already gone out from his land, but then he had gone out in body not in mind and will. Perhaps he thought of returning when He (the Lord) said to him, 'Go out'."²⁴ Richard

²² מארצך וממולדתך - אע"פ שלא היה שם, שכבר בא לחרן, אמר לו: סלק עצמך לגמרי משם, שלא יהא עוד דעתך לחזור. ומבית אביך שאתה עתה שם.

²³ Kanarfogel, *Intellectual History*, 146-147.

²⁴ *Notandum quod iam egressus fuerat de terra sua, sed tunc egressus fuerat corpore non mente et voluntate, habebit enim animum fortisan revertendi, quando dictum est ei: egredere* (*Biblia Sacra cum glossis interlinearibus et ordinaria* [Venice, 1588], vol. 1).

of Præaux (d. 1131/2) wrote, “Moreover it should be known that Abram had already gone out from his land when the Lord said to him, ‘Go out from your land.’ Nevertheless the Lord urged him that just as in body so he should go out also in mind from the land of his birth.”²⁵ Augustine, Bede, and the Carolingian authors had commented similarly on this verse.²⁶

Rupert wrote:

Leave your land and your family etc. Why did it not say only, “Leave your land,” but added, “and your family,” unless his land was in one place and his family in another?²⁷ If indeed his land was Chaldea, his family was now in Haran, that is: it had reached Syria in its flight. Therefore the fact that the Lord said, “Leave the land,” and added, “and your family” is the same as if He were to say, Just as you have physically left Chaldea, do so now also in your mind so that you will never return there, and in addition leave where you now live, ‘leave your family’.”²⁸

²⁵ *Porro sciendum est Abram iam egressum fuisse de terra sua cum ei diceret Dominus: Egrederere de terra tua. Caeterum Dominus hortatur eum ut sicut corpore sic exeat et mente de terra nativitat* (*Ric. de Pratellensis: in Genesim*, book 7; MS Lambeth VI, 5 [Stegmüller 7284]).

²⁶ Augustine, 12:1, *De Civitate Dei* 16.16, *CCSL* 48, 520; Bede, Gen. 12:1-2, *In Genesim* 3, *CCSL* 118A, 168; Angelomus of Luxueil, Gen. 12:1, *Comment. In Gen.*, *PL* 115/169A; Haimo of Auxerre (Pseudo-Remigius), *Commentarius in Genesim*, *PL* 131/82A; Remigius of Auxerre, 12:1, *Expositio super Genesim*, *CCCM* 136, 104.

²⁷ Jerome’s translation of Gn 12:1, *Egrederere de terra et de cognatione tua*, “Leave your land and your family,” has only two elements, rather than the three in the Hebrew text—your land, birthplace, and your father’s house. It seems that Jerome understood the first two elements as one (hendiadys). NJPS, cited above, renders in similar fashion. The old JPS cites “country, kindred, and father’s house,” following the Hebrew literally.

²⁸ *Egrederere de terra et de cognatione tua* etc. *Cur enim non dixit solum: Egrederere de terra tua sed addidit: et de cognatione tua, nisi quia alibi terra et alibi cognatio eius erat? Siquidem terra eius Chaldea erat, cognatio autem eius nunc in Haran id est in Syriam profugiendo devenerat. Quod ergo cum dixisset: Egrederere de terra addidit et de cognatione tua idem est ac si diceret: sicut de terra Chaldeorum corpore egressus es, animo quo-*

What all these Christian commentators have in common is the use of the words *mente* or *animo* (both in the ablative) meaning “mind.” Bekhor Shor is the sole Jewish commentator who echoes this long tradition of Christian commentary. Further, Rupert’s explanation that the first element of the command, to leave his land, referred to Abraham severing mental or emotional ties with his homeland, while the second element, “your family,” actually meant leaving his family that was now residing in Haran, is found among the Christians only in the commentaries of Bede (673–735) and Rupert. And behold, Bekhor Shor says exactly the same thing. “He said to him, Remove yourself completely from there so that it should not be any longer your mind to return’.” Then follows a second lemma: “*And from your father’s house*: where you are now.” All this suggests that Bekhor Shor may have been influenced by the Christian exegetical tradition for this verse.

On the other hand, the phrase Bekhor Shor used in Hebrew was “דעתו לחזור.” This is a rabbinic Hebrew expression which means “it was his *intention* to return.” While it is true that the word *da’at* alone means “knowledge,” a derivative of the verb ידע, “to know,” and hence can in certain contexts be translated “mind,” already in the Bible the phrase “בבלי” דעת (Dt 4:42), literally “without knowledge,” bears the meaning “without intention.”²⁹ Therefore, the phrase Bekhor Shor used, “שלא יהא עוד דעתך לחזור” could be translated as, “so that it should no longer be your intention to return.” Our translation of Bekhor Shor’s comment as, “so that it should not be any longer your mind to return,” might have been biased by the Christian use of “*mente*” in this verse. If in fact Bekhor Shor did not know of the Christian comments, it would be dif-

que sic egredere ut nunquam illuc redeas, insuper es hinc, ubi nunc habitas, egredere de cognatione tua (In Gen. 5.3, CCCM21, 333-4).

²⁹ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 395, column B, s.v. *da’at*.

difficult to justify our translation. However, it is quite possible that Bekhor Shor, knowing the Christian comments, did intend a double entendre, choosing a phrase that reflects both the sense of intention as well as the notion of Abraham's abandoning his homeland in mind as well as in body.³⁰

3. The Servant's Oath to Abraham

Gn 24:2 And Abraham said to the senior servant of his household, who had charge of all that he owned: "Put your hand under my thigh."

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִרְהָם אֶל-עֶבְדוֹ זָקֵן בֵּיתוֹ הַמְּשָׁל בְּכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ שֵׁם-נָא יָדָךְ תַּחַת יָרְכִי.

Following Rashi, who cites the midrash, the common Jewish explanation is that the servant placed his hand on Abraham's circumcision, in line with the halakhic requirement that an oath be taken while holding a sacred object such as a Torah scroll or *tefillin* (phylacteries).³¹ As these sacred objects did not yet exist, Abraham made the servant swear on his circumcision. However, Bekhor Shor, in a comment which shows his originality as a *peshat* exegete, understood Abraham's words as metaphor:

Bekhor Shor: *Place your hand* and trust *underfoot*, be subservient to me and under my foot [control], with regard to fulfilling the following oath, and not that he actually placed his hand there [near Abraham's groin]. But the *haggadah* (GenR 59:8) says, "Because at that

³⁰ The ambiguous meaning of *da'at* as both "knowledge" as well as "intention or desire" was discussed by Nahmanides on Gn 2:9, who preferred to call the Tree of Knowledge the Tree of Desire. Especially relevant to our discussion is his comment, "Therefore it is called 'the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil' (Gn 2:9) for the word *da'at* (knowledge) is used in our language to express one's will, as the Rabbis said (B. Pesahim 6a), 'this was stated only in a case where he intended to return' (לא שנו אלא שדעתו) (לחזור)."

³¹ Or a Bible, as in western courts of justice.

spot we find the commandment of circumcision.” And the Christians say, “Because from that spot Jesus, their abomination, came out.” We should respond to them, “They do not believe that Jesus was born of a man. Why then do they not take oaths on the womb of a woman?”³²

Bekhor Shor’s polemical taunt seems a direct response to Rupert’s comment on this verse:

Rupert: The Hebrews have a tradition that he ordered him to swear on his sanctification, that is, he commanded him to swear on his circumcision. But we say that he made him swear on his seed, that is to say on Christ, who would be born from it.³³

Rupert’s comment is almost a verbatim quote from Jerome’s *Hebraicae Quaestiones*.³⁴ The Latin *ex illo* (from it) in the phrase *qui ex illo nasciturus erat* (who would be born from it) is ambiguous. It may refer to the antecedent “seed”; however, *ex illo* may also be understood as “from him,” meaning from Abraham. Perhaps Bekhor Shor understood that the Christians were claiming that Jesus was born of Abraham, to which he responded with derision. In reality, Jerome was claiming that Christ was to be born of the *seed* of Abraham, which is why the servant placed his hand near Abraham’s sexual organ. Our explanation of the difference between them presupposes that Bekhor Shor was citing from a written text. However, it is possible that Bekhor Shor had heard the Chris-

³² שים נא ירך ואמונתך תחת רגלי, להיות משועבד לי ונתון תחת רגלי לזאת שתעשה לי שבועה זאת; ולא שישים ידו שם ממש. והגדה (ב"ר נט, ח): מפני שיש שם מצות מילה. והמינין אומרים: מפני שמשם יצא ישו תרפותם; ויש להשיבם: הלא לא הורה על ידי גבר לדבריהם, על רחמה של אשה היה להם לישבע!

³³ *Tradunt Hebraei quod in sanctificatione sua, hoc est in circumcisione iurare iusserit. Nos autem dicimus quod illum adiuraverit in semine suo, hoc est in Christo, qui ex illo nasciturus erat;* (In Gen. 6.39, *CCCM* 21, 417).

³⁴ *Hebraicae Quaestiones in Genesim* 36, 19-24= *CCSL* 72, 28ff.

tian tradition about the oath from an oral source.³⁵ Either way, there is an element of potential retort to Rupert in Bekhor Shor's writing, a feature we have noted in other examples.

4. The Function of Angels

Gn 32:2 Jacob went on his way, and angels of God encountered him.

ויַעֲקֹב הֵלֵךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ; וַיִּפְגְּעוּ-בּוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים.

Bekhor Shor: *Angels of God encountered him:* it appears that since these angels did not say anything that needed to be written, they came solely to honor him. They came out to meet him in order to honor him as is done to a man who comes from a distant place.³⁶

A reader familiar with Jewish Bible exegesis might be reminded of the verse “וירא אליו ה'” And the Lord appeared unto him” (Gn 18:1) and Rashi's citation of the midrash that the Lord came to pay Abraham a visit after he had undergone the rite of circumcision. Rashi did not elaborate on this gross anthropomorphism, but Nahmanides *ad loc.* did. Abraham, he explains, was sitting at the door of his tent, neither praying, nor beseeching the Lord, nor awaiting a prophecy. Nevertheless, the Lord appeared to him “לְמַעַן וּכְבוֹד לּוֹ” as a mark of distinction and honor.” The Almighty did not appear in order to command Abraham or to inform him of anything, but simply as a reward for fulfilling the commandment of circumcision. And, adds Nahmanides, “about Jacob as well we read, ‘And angels of God encountered him’ (Gn 32:2). They did

³⁵ The introductory phrase *Tradunt Hebraei* usually refers to a tradition cited by Jerome.

³⁶ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ בּוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים: נראה שאלו המלאכים שלא אמרו דבר הצריך שנכתב, שלא באו רק לכבודו, כאדם שבא ממקום רחוק ויוצאין לקראתו לכבודו.

not speak to him or tell him anything; he merited a revelation of angels as a sign that his actions were deemed worthy.”³⁷

We know to what extent Nahmanides relied on the commentary of Bekhor Shor to the Pentateuch for his own exegesis.³⁸ It seems that Nahmanides’ idea that the Lord appeared to Abraham “as a tribute and honor to him” was taken from Bekhor Shor’s comment that the angels who appeared to Jacob “came solely to honor him, to greet him as a sign of honor, as is done to a man who comes from a distant place.”³⁹

If all we possessed were Rashi, Bekhor Shor, and Nahmanides, this would seem a case of internal Jewish exegesis that is midrashic in origin. But in light of Rupert’s comments on Jacob’s angels we may have to reconsider:

Rupert: It is not said that an angel appeared to him or that angels appeared to him, which also happened to many people, but it is said that *angels of God met him* (Gn 32:2). This resounds with the distinction of a veteran conqueror whom a heavenly procession came to meet in triumphal glory and to whom in a festive reception it provided a glad show of allegiance.⁴⁰

³⁷ וזה גלוי השכינה אליו לְמַעַלָּה וּכְבוֹד לּוֹ, ... וכן ביעקב אמר "ויפגעו בו מלאכי אלהים" (בר' לב,ב), ואין שם דבור ולא שחדשו בו דבר, רק שזכה לראית מלאכי עליון.

³⁸ Hillel Novetsky, “The Influences of Rabbi Joseph Bekhor Shor and Radak on Ramban’s Commentary on the Torah” (M.A. Thesis, Yeshiva University, 1992).

³⁹ Ramban’s originality lies in the application of Bekhor Shor’s comment about angels to Abraham, even though Bekhor Shor himself did not apply it there (instead he agrees with Rashbam that the Lord appeared to Abraham in the guise of three men).

⁴⁰ *Non dictum est quia apparuit angelus vel apparuerunt ei angeli, quod et multis accidit, sed dictum est quia fuerunt ei obviam angeli Dei, quod in-signis sonat victoris et emeriti, cui pro gloria triumphis pompa caelestis obviam procedens festiva exceptione laetum obsequium praebuerit* (In Gen. 8.2, CCCM21, 487).

Rupert's "heavenly procession" which came to meet Jacob "in triumphal glory and to whom in a festive reception it provided a glad show of allegiance" sounds very much like Bekhor Shor's reference to an honor guard that went forth to greet Jacob. Once more it seems that Rupert and Bekhor Shor are sharing an exegetical thought. Possibly, Rupert is the source. As in the first case above, Rupert relies on a semantic point in the Vulgate: the words *fuertunt ei obviam angeli Dei*, "angels of God met him" is not the same as *quia apparuit angelus*, "that an angel appeared to him." Once again, Rupert anchors his idea in the grammar or semantics of the sentence. Bekhor Shor makes the same point in the form of a logical deduction from the context: since the Torah does not record what the angels said, they apparently did not come to say anything. Their very appearance was reward enough for Jacob. Both styles of explanation, based on grammar or context, are typical of the method of *peshat* in their stress on a literal understanding.

Can we be certain that Bekhor Shor was relying on Rupert? Did both perhaps arrive independently at a similar understanding? This question, which has to be asked in every case of similarity, is further complicated here by an additional source. *Midrash Rabbah Numbers* 4:1⁴¹ records the following comment:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Jacob: You are exceedingly precious in My sight, for I, as it were, and My ministering angels came out to meet you when you set out to go to Paddan-aram and when you returned. At the time when you set out: what is written? "Jacob left Beer-sheba.... He came upon a certain place (ויפגע במקום)...and the Lord was standing beside him..." (Gn 28:10-13) Happy the mortal, said R. Hoshaya, who beheld such a thing! The divine King and His attendants standing beside him and guarding him! Whence

⁴¹ Compare the parallels, with variants, in *Tanḥuma Bemidbar* 19 and *Tanḥuma Buber Bemidbar* 22.

do we infer that when he came back God met him again? Because it is said, “Jacob went on his way, [and angels of God encountered him (ויפגעו בו)].” (Gn 32:2) This is proof for the angels.¹²

Perhaps Rupert and Bekhor Shor are both rooted in this Midrash. Both commentators tried to present the midrashic idea that Jacob was honored by attendant angels in a way that was commensurate with a literal approach: the midrashic idea had to be the outcome of language analysis or contextual explanation. From previous examples that we have gathered, we know that Rupert sometimes included aggadic ideas which he probably heard from Jews, perhaps in the name of Rashi; but unlike Rashi, Rupert never resorted to midrashic rules of exegesis to put across an idea. While he was capable of understanding a midrashic idea, he had no concept of midrashic techniques or hermeneutic rules.

In this case the Midrash is based on the appearance of the identical predicate in both expressions: encountered (ויפגעו) (בר מלאכי אלוהים – ויפגע במקום). For Rupert, Scripture is the Vulgate, and he therefore seeks to express the idea of an angelic honor guard based on the difference between two Latin verbs. Bekhor Shor was of course familiar with midrashic techniques but being a *pashtan* (one who engages in the *peshat*), he did not rely on the wordplay of the midrash on these two appearances of “encounter” as the source of this idea. On the contrary, he explains that “He came upon a certain place” (Gn 28:11) means “purely by accident.”¹³ Instead, Bekhor Shor

¹² אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא ליעקב הרבה יקר את בעיני שכביכול אני ומלאכי השרת שלי יצאו לקראתך בצאתך לילך לפדן ארם ובביאתך בשעה שיצאת מה כתיב ויצא יעקב וגו' ויפגע במקום וגו' ... והנה ה' נצב עליו וגו' אמר רבי הושעיא אשרי ילוד אשה שכך ראה המלך ופמליא שלו נצבים עליו ומשמרים אותו ומנין בביאתו שנאמר (בראשית לב) ויעקב הלך לדרכו וגו' הרי המלאכים.

¹³ ויפגע במקום - כל דבר שאין אדם מתכוין לו, אלא על ידי מקרה אירע לו שבא שם, קורא 'פגיעה', כאדם שפוגע בחבירו על ידי מקרה; וכן יעקב לא נתכוון למקום ההוא, אלא על ידי מקרה בא שם.

roots the idea of an angelic honor guard in his understanding of the narrative; if the angels bore no message, they must have been an honorary entourage.⁴⁴

Ephraim Kanarfogel also notes that “a most interesting aspect of *Bekhor Shor*’s exegetical method concerns how he presents talmudic and rabbinic sources not just to accompany *peshat* interpretations as possible and sometimes preferred options, but as vehicles for putting forward a basic (*peshat*) interpretation...”⁴⁵ In other words, *Bekhor Shor* presents talmudic and midrashic interpretations as the outcome of the *peshat* method itself.⁴⁶ Presenting midrash-like content in the form of rational interpretation is one of the interesting similarities found in Rupert and *Bekhor Shor*, though as we explained above, each refrained from midrashic hermeneutics for different reasons. Perhaps the case of Jacob’s angels is an example of this.

5. Typology and Symbolism in Leviticus

Lv 14:4-7 The priest shall order two live clean birds, cedar-wood, crimson stuff, and hyssop to be brought for him who is to be cleansed. The priest shall order one of the birds slaughtered over fresh water in an earthen vessel; and he shall take the live bird, along with the cedar-wood, the crimson stuff, and the hyssop, and dip them together with the live bird in the blood of the bird that was slaughtered over the fresh water. He

⁴⁴ On the story of the angels, see Kanarfogel, *Intellectual History*, 145.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

⁴⁶ For example: On Dt 26:2, “you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil,” the Rabbis explained that the intention was to bring *bikkurim*, first fruits, only from the seven species with which the Land of Israel was blessed (Dt 8:8). This teaching, cited by Rashi *ad locum*, was derived from a *gezera shava*, a comparison based on the identical word, *erets*, “land,” which appears in both verses in Deuteronomy. *Bekhor Shor* arrives at the same halakhic determination by explaining the word *reshit* as “best,” rather than chronological “first,” a meaning which he then supports from a proof-text (Am 6:6). He identifies the best fruits as the seven species enumerated at Dt 8:8. He thus arrives at the midrashic teaching, not through a midrashic rule, but by a semantic proof.

shall then sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed of the leprosy⁴⁷ and cleanse him; and he shall set the live bird free in the open country.

וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְלָקַח לְמִטְהַר שְׁתֵּי צִפְרִים חַיִּים טְהוֹרוֹת וְעֵץ אֲרָז וְשְׁנֵי תוֹלְעוֹת וְאֵזב. וְצִוָּה הַכֹּהֵן וְשָׁחַט אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הָאֶחָת אֶל פְּלֵי קֶרֶשׁ עַל מַיִם חַיִּים. אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּה יָקַח אִתָּהּ וְאֶת עֵץ הָאֲרָז וְאֶת שְׁנֵי הַתּוֹלְעוֹת וְאֶת הָאֵזב וְטָבַל אוֹתָם וְאֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּה בְּדָם הַצִּפּוֹר הַשָּׁחֻטָה עַל הַמַּיִם הַחַיִּים. וְהָיָה עַל הַמִּטְהַר מִן הַצָּרַעַת שֶׁבַע פְּעָמִים וְטָהָרוּ וְשָׁלַח אֶת הַצִּפּוֹר הַחַיִּה עַל פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה.

Bekhor Shor (Lv 14:4): And he [the priest] slaughters the bird and mixes its blood with running waters, to indicate that the dead one – the “leper” who was considered dead, as it is written: “*let her not be as one dead*” (Nu 12:12) – may now mix with the living and enter into the camp like other men. He [the priest] releases the one bird into the field, to indicate that the leper who sits alone “*like a lonely bird upon a roof*” (Ps 102:8) and was forbidden and restrained from socializing with other people is now permitted to rejoin his fellows, just as the bird that was restrained by man [i.e. the priest] is now released into the field to go off and fly with its fellows.⁴⁸

Rupert (Lv 14:1-7): But two birds are to be offered, “*and one,*” it says, “[the priest] *shall command to be slaughtered in an earthenware vessel over living water...but he will dip the other live one in the blood of*

⁴⁷ NJPS reads “eruption.” Although probably scientifically imprecise, we use the language of “leprosy” here throughout because it provides concise terminology.

⁴⁸ ושוחט הצפור ומערב דמה במים חיים, לומר שהמת הוא המצורע שהוא חשוב כמת, דכתיב: אל נא תהי כמת, מתערב עתה עם החיים לבא במחנה ולהיות כשאר בני אדם, ושולח הצפור האחת על פני השדה, לומר המצורע שהוא יושב בדד כצפור בודד על גג ואסור ונקשר מלבא עם שאר בני אדם, עתה הותר לבא עם חבריו, כמו הציפור שהיתה קשורה בידי אדם ועתה משולחת על פני השדה לילך ולעוף עם חברותיה.

the slain bird etc.” (ibid. 14:5-6).⁴⁹ Why is this, if not because it is a duty upon the one who is restored to the Church to acknowledge Christ, because he was crucified or died due to our weakness and lives now due to divine power? For it is as a shadow, at any rate, or as a figure (*figura*)⁵⁰ that these two birds are offered,⁵¹ but in the truth of reality it is one Christ, one and the same, I say, one person of twin substance, crucified in respect to one, as has been previously mentioned, now living in respect to the other, in respect to which “he” also “no longer dies, death will rule no further over him” (Rom.6:9).⁵²

This example is the only one we have not taken from Genesis. We include it to indicate that Rupert’s commentary on the entire Pentateuch should be studied and compared with the work of Jewish exegetes. Although allegory is a basic device of Christian exegesis, Rupert alone seems to have explained this particular passage in such a manner. Employment of symbolism and allegory is rare in Jewish exegesis in general, partly because of its Christian associations, partly because of its antinomian tendencies. Certainly we should not expect to find it in a commentary which is literal in nature, such as that of Bekhor Shor. Yet, here he explains that the two identical

⁴⁹ Translated directly from Rupert.

⁵⁰ This word indicates a typological explanation, see further, note 67.

⁵¹ The shadow also indicates a meaning besides the thing itself, i.e. a typological meaning. Rupert uses this word, *umbra*, to explain the dual meanings of Joseph’s dreams, see *In Gen.* 8.21, *CCCM* 21, 506, ll. 784-787.

⁵² *Sed duo passeris offerendi sunt, et unum, inquit, e passeribus immolari iubebit in vase fictili super aquas viventes...alium autem vivum tinget in sanguine passeris immolati etc. Cur hoc, nisi quia oportet eum qui reconciliatur ecclesiae confiteri Christum, quia crucifixus vel mortuus est ex infirmitate nostra et vivit nunc ex virtute Dei? Nam in umbra quidem vel in figura ista duo passeris offeruntur, sed in veritate essentiae unus est Christus, unus, inquam, idemque, una geminae personae substantiae, ex altero crucifixus, ut praedictum est, ex altero iam vivus, ex quo etiam iam non moritur, mors illi ultra non dominabitur (In Levit. 2.24, CCCM 22, 883-884).*

birds, one destined to die, the other to live, represent one individual, the leper himself, first in his illness and its limitations and later in his healing and its consequences. It must be that Bekhor Shor understands that to explain the birds as symbolic falls within the realm of *peshat*, since a mere literal reading ignores the context and Scriptural intention in its elaboration of this ritual.

For Rupert, the *motif* of one individual who could be considered both living and dead existed already in the case of Isaac in his near sacrifice.⁵³ This view of Isaac is to be found in the midrash as well, which notes that “Isaac’s ashes are as if gathered on the altar.”⁵⁴ Christianity therefore saw in Isaac a figure of Jesus in his crucifixion and resurrection.⁵⁵ In the case of the birds of the leper, where one dies and one lives, their identical nature allows for their combination into a symbol of one individual, as both Rupert and Bekhor Shor proposed. Unlike Bekhor Shor, once he has demonstrated that Scripture intends a deeper message, Rupert does not feel himself constrained to follow a literal approach. If a spiritual lesson can be found, the passage no longer needs to apply to the leper and can refer to Jesus alone. This is the antinomian side of Christian typology; Bekhor Shor, in contrast, ties the symbolic explanation to the literal reading and the ritual of the leper.

6. Typology and Symbolism II

⁵³ See Rupert on Gn 22:9, *In Gen.* 6:32, *CCCM* 21, 411; Gn 48:3-4, *In Gen.* 9.22, *CCCM* 21, 554-555.

⁵⁴ J. Ta’anit 65a; *Leviticus Rabbah* 36:5; cf. B. Ta’anit 16a; B. Zevahim 62a.

⁵⁵ “Christians tend, revealingly, to call it, the “sacrifice” of Isaac, as opposed to the Jewish term, the “binding” of Isaac. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 131. See however chapter 14, “The Rewritten Aqedah of Jewish Tradition,” 173-199, in which he discusses midrashic sources where the blood of Isaac is related to the blood of the paschal sacrifice. For Isaac as the prefiguration of Jesus, see p. 200 ff. Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), also deals with the terms “the blood of the binding of Isaac” and “the ashes of Isaac,” 127-135.

The previous example illustrated Rupert's use of spiritual, rather than literal exegesis, using mystery, allegory, and moral interpretation. These methods were typical of schools in Paris in the twelfth century.⁵⁶ In fact, they were part of the Four Senses of Scripture that served all Christian interpretation: literal, allegorical, anagogical (*i.e.* typological), and mystical. Aside from the literal meaning, the remaining three methods were not at all typical of Jewish exegesis. Yet there are signs of contact between Christian and Jewish hermeneutics. Though not common, midrash sometimes considered biblical stories in Genesis predictive of later events in Jewish history. The most striking is a passage in *Genesis Rabbah* which sees the story of Abram and Sarai in the court of Pharaoh (Gn 12:10-20) as foreshadowing the Exodus from Egypt:

"It went well with Abram, etc." (Gn 12:16) ...R. Phinehas commented in R. Hoshaya's name: The Almighty said to our father Abraham, "Go forth and mark a path for your children." For you find that everything written in connection with Abraham is written in connection with his children:

In connection with Abraham it is written, "*And there was a famine in the land*" (Gn 12:10); while in connection with Israel it is written, "*It is now two years that there has been famine in the land.*" (Gn 45:6)

In connection with Abraham, "*And Abram went down into Egypt*" (Gn 12:10); while in connection with Israel, "*And our fathers went down into Egypt.*" (Nm 20:15)

Abraham: "*To sojourn there*" (Gn 12:10); Israel: "*We have come...to sojourn in this land.*" (Gn 47: 4)

⁵⁶ Dahan, "Genres...", 206.

Abraham: “*For the famine was severe in the land*” (Gn 12:10); Israel: “*But the famine in the land was severe.*” (Gn 43:1)

Abraham: “*As he was about (hikriv) to enter Egypt*” (Gn 12:11) ; Israel: “*As Pharaoh drew near (hikriv).*” (Ex 14:10)...

Abraham: “*And he proceeded (vayelekh lemasa'av)*” (Gn 13:3); Israel: “*These were the marches (mas'e) of the children of Israel.*” (Nm 33:1).⁵⁷

In the way of midrash, every verse cited from the story in Genesis 12 has its mirror image in a verse related to the Exodus. Moreover, there is always a shared word in the juxtaposed verses, something evident even in the English translation above. Here is what Rupert wrote on these verses:

Rupert (Gn 12:10-13): But the very surface (*facies*) of the present historical account rejoices in a clear light and amasses for us mysteries which shine through, with

⁵⁷ “*Lemasa'av*” and “*mas'e*” both are forms of the word “*masa*.” Translation based on *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis (Lech Lecha), XL.6, ed. and trans. H. Freedman, Maurice Simon (London: Soncino Press, 1951), vol. 1, 330-331, with some changes. Hebrew text from Theodore-Albeck edition, vol. 2, 385-386.

ולאברהם היטיב וגו' ויצו עליו פרעה אנשים וגו' ר' פינחס מש' ר' הושעיה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לאבינו אברהם צא וכבש את הדרך לפני בניך, ואת מוצא כל מה שכתוב באבינו אברהם כתוב בבניו, באברהם כת' ויהי רעב בארץ בישראל כת' כי זה שנתים הרעב (בראשית מה ו), באברהם כת' וירד אברם מצרימה בישראל כת' וירדו אבותינו מצרימה (במדבר כ טו) באברהם כת' לגור שם בישראל כת' לגור בארץ באנו (בראשית מז ד), באברהם כת' כי כבד הרעב בארץ בישראל כת' והרעב כבד בארץ (שם /בראשית/ מג א), באברהם כת' ויהי כאשר הקריב לבוא מצרימה וגו' בישראל כת' ופרעה הקריב (שמות יד י)...באברהם כת' ויצו עליו פרעה אנשים וישלחו בישראל כת' ותחזק מצרים על העם למהר לשלחם (שמות יב לג), באברהם כת' וילך למסעיו בישראל כת' אלה מסעי בני ישראל וגו' (במדבר לג א).

which it is filled. For it is not without purpose that famine forced Abram to go down to Egypt and Pharaoh was chastised because of him; his descendants afterwards similarly would go down to Egypt when there was a famine in the same land of Canaan and Pharaoh was to be chastised with famous plagues because of them. It is not, I say, without Divine insight... “*And then Abram went up out of Egypt, he and his wife and everything that he had, and Lot with him to the southern region. Now he was very wealthy, owning gold and silver.*” (13:1-2) Indeed when the people had been allowed to worship their God they went up out of Egypt with all that they had according to Pharaoh's statement, “*take your flocks and herds as you had requested*” (Ex 12:32), and they were wealthy, owning gold and silver, for they had despoiled the Egyptians at the Lord's command through Moses, that a man should demand from his friend and a woman from her neighbor vessels of silver and gold and garments.⁵⁸

“The present historical account” means the literal text; it stands on its own (“rejoices in a clear light”) but also contains a spiritual meaning, the typological one (“mysteries which shine through”). However, where Christian writers generally see the typologies of the Old Testament as pointing towards the New, Rupert here parallels the midrash in seeing a patriar-

⁵⁸ *Verum ipsa facies praesentis historiae iam sereno lumine arridet et translucentia nobis ingerit mysteria, quibus plena est. Non enim ab re est, quod Abram facta fame descendit in Aegyptum et flagellatur Pharaeo propter eum, cuius progenies postmodum itidem facta fame in eadem terra Chanaan descensura erat in Aegyptum, et flagellandus est Pharaeo plagis notissimis propter eam. non, inquam, absque Dei consilio est... et tunc ascendit Abram de Aegypto, ipse et uxor eius et omnia quae habebit, et Loth cum eo ad australem plagam. Erat autem dives valde in possessione auri et argenti: etenim permissus cultui Dei sui populus ascendit de Aegypto cum omnibus quae habebat dicente Pharaone: oves vestras et armenta assumite ut petieras, erantque divites in possessione auri et argenti, spoliaverant enim Aegyptios iubente Domino per Moysen, ut postularet vir ab amico suo et mulier a vicina sua vasa argentea et aurea et vest (In Gen. 5.7- 5.8, CCCM21, 338-40).*

chal story as pointing towards an event in the Hebrew Bible, in this case the Exodus.⁵⁹ However, as we have seen several times before, he adopts the midrash's ideas without its hermeneutics. He does not cite a verse from the life of Abraham and compare it to a verse about the Exodus which shares a common word. Instead he paints the similarity in broad strokes, based on the literal reading of the texts, making reference, as does the midrash, to the most obvious similarity: Abraham leaves Pharaoh's palace with many flocks, gold and silver, paid as an indemnity to the forefather; Israel leaves Egypt with its flocks and with silver and gold vessels which the Israelites had borrowed from their Egyptian neighbors. While possibly, Rupert developed this comparison on his own, it is also possible that he learned the midrash from a Jewish informant.

In this case we have not found a parallel to Rupert in the northern French commentaries, but there is a striking similarity to the comments of a major Jewish exegete of the thirteenth century. Here is Nahmanides' (1194-1270) comment on this story:

Nahmanides: "*And Abram passed through the land.*" I will tell you a principle by which you will understand all the coming portions of Scripture concerning Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is indeed a great matter which our Rabbis mentioned briefly, saying, "Whatever has happened to the patriarchs is a sign to the children." (*Tanḥuma Lekh Lekha* 9) It is for this reason that the verses narrate at great length the account of the journeys of the patriarchs, the digging of the wells, and other events...in truth they all serve as a lesson for the future....Concerning all decrees⁶⁰ of the

⁵⁹ He does the same with the story of Abraham, Lot, and their inability to live together (Gn13:6-8), seeing it as foreshadowing the sojourn of the Israelites in the desert and their constant grumbling. See *In Gen.* 5.9, *CCCM* 21, 340-341.

⁶⁰ Chavel (see the following note) translated *gezerat* as "decisions," but we changed it to "decrees" to make the sentence clearer, especially in light of

guardians [angels], know that when they proceed from a potential decree to a symbolic act [מכח גְּזֵרָה אֶל פְּעֵל [דְּמִיּוֹן], the decree will in any case be effected....It is for this reason that the Holy One, blessed be He, caused Abraham to take possession of the Land and symbolically did to him all that was destined to happen in the future to his children. Understand this principle.⁶¹

It is well known that Nahmanides' commentary is composed of different modes of interpretation: *peshat*, *derash*, *derekh haRemez*, or typology, and *derekh haSod*, the mystical way. These methods, described by the acronym *pardes* (**P**eshat, **R**emez, **D**erash, **S**od), are not some ancient formulation of Jewish exegetical technique; the fourfold mode of exegesis has its identical parallel in Christian biblical study.⁶² In the above comment, it would seem that Nahmanides combines typological explanation of the patriarchal stories with a belief in the efficacy of symbolic acts, which he illustrates, in his full comment, from acts performed by Jeremiah (Jer 1:63-64) and Elisha (2Kgs 13:17). Nahmanides' explanation seems identical to the definition of typology given by Julius Africanus (c.160-c.240): *prophetiae in rebus*, "prophecy through things,"

Funkenstein's observations, see further. "Decrees of the guardians" is a phrase Nahmanides took from Dn 4:14, בְּגֵזֵרַת עִירִין.

⁶¹ *Ramban (Nachmanides) Commentary on the Torah*, trans. Charles B. Chavel (New York: Shilo Publishing House, 1971), Genesis XII, 6, 168-169.

⁶² Menahem Haran, "Midrashic and Literal Exegesis and the Critical Method in Biblical Research," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 31 (1986): 33. Haran quotes the epigrammatic formulation of a Dominican monk, Augustinus of Dakia: "*Littera gesta docet, quid credas allegoria, moralis quid agas, quid speras anagogia*," which he explains as follows: The literal meaning teaches the occurrences (the eternal reality); the allegory [teaches] in what you should believe; the moral interpretation—what you should do; and the mystical explanation— for what you should hope. These four methods are the equivalent of *peshat*, *derash*, *remez*, and *sod*. The acronym *pardes* was first coined by Moses de Leon, who lived after Nahmanides.

prophecy based on the events themselves.⁶³ Nahmanides did not take the typological explanation of Gn 12 from Rupert but rather from *Genesis Rabbah* and *Tanḥuma*, both of which he cites. However, he did choose to make a methodological statement about the nature of typology and how it works precisely at the same place where Rupert did.⁶⁴ Further, Nahmanides, like Rupert, ignores the basis of the midrashic “typology” at Gn 12 in apposite verses and identical words, substituting a structural parallel between the events.⁶⁵ Nahmanides’ statement that the potential decrees of the angels, when symbolically acted out, turn into reality, has a deterministic ring about it, as does Christian prefiguration. The key word in Nahmanides’ understanding of typology is the word *dimyon* (translated “symbolic act”) in the quotation above (Gn 12:10), which Funkenstein claims must be understood as the translation of Latin *similitudo*, a synonym for Greek *topos* or Latin *figura*.⁶⁶ All of this means that Nahmanides’ ideas about typology or *remez* were influenced by Christian thought and vocabulary; the parallels with Rupert support this conclusion. It is therefore entirely possible that Nahmanides’ reliance on Christian exegesis in the thirteenth century might indicate a relationship similar to that between Northern French Jewish exegesis and Christian Bible interpretation in the twelfth.⁶⁷

7. God as the Architect of Creation

⁶³ Amos Funkenstein, *Styles in Medieval Biblical Exegesis: An Introduction* (Tel Aviv, 1990), 57 [Heb.].

⁶⁴ “This type of exegesis Nahmanides applied to Scripture, without doubt under the influence of Christianity, and he called it *remez*.” Funkenstein, *Styles*, 57.

⁶⁵ Funkenstein, *Styles*, 60.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ However, such a conclusion must be modified to accord with the different locations: Nahmanides resided in Gerona in Christian Spain, the French exegetes in northern France. Was a Spaniard in the thirteenth century more likely to borrow from Christian exegesis than a French Jew in the twelfth?

To the above six cases, we cite another case of similarity between Rupert and Bekhor Shor. This example, however, differs from all those previously cited, because here Rupert's comment is clearly based on a midrash cited by Rashi and Bekhor Shor's comment is quite similar to Rupert's.⁶⁸ We hope to devote a separate study to these exegetical "cross currents," which are further evidence of mutual influence between Christian and Jewish interpreters.

The question discussed by Rashi and Rupert is why the words "כי טוב, *ki tov*, that it was good" do not appear after God's activity on the second day of creation. Both Rashi and Rupert offer the identical explanation in their comments on Gn 1:7 and Gn 1:8 respectively: work which is not yet completed cannot be graced with the expression, "that it was good." The creation of the firmament (*rakia*) on the second day had to await the separation of land and water on the third day. In the course of this explanation, Rupert (but not Rashi) offers the following example:

Rupert: For what did God as Architect intend when He said, "*Let a firmament be made in the midst of the waters, and let it separate waters from waters.*" At any rate that He should make a spacious house of this world, a beautiful house, whose roof, as it were, is this firmament. The roof of a house can be beautiful workmanship, but it is not yet a house, until it is placed over a foundation and walls, and it is not something whole.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ This example is therefore discussed in our forthcoming paper on Rupert and Rashi.

⁶⁹ *Quid enim intendebat ille architectus Deus cum dixit: fiat firmamentum in medio aquarum, et dividat aquas ab aquis?* Hoc utique, ut faceret mundi huius amplam domum, pulchram domum, cuius quasi tectum hoc firmamentum est. Et sicut tectum domus pulchrum quidem opus esse potest, sed nondum domus, nisi quando fundamento et parietibus superpositum est, atque idem non totum quid est...(*In Gen. 1.30, CCCM 21, 159*).

Bekhor Shor wrote as follows (Gn 1:3):

At this point the Almighty created everything necessary for the world, just as when a man wants to build a house he prepares all that he needs, then he builds his house and puts each thing in its place, then he puts in the moveable items. So the Lord prepared all that was necessary for the building on the first day, and he installed the firmament on the second...and when he completed his house he created fish and fowl and reptiles and animals, which are comparable to movables within a house.⁷⁰

Rupert could not have taken the idea of God as architect from Bekhor Shor because Bekhor Shor was born after Rupert had completed *De sancta Trinitate*. Possibly, both of them were relying on an earlier Jewish source, though we could find none. This may mean that Bekhor Shor heard the idea from Christian sources, perhaps cited in the name of Rupert.

* * *

Each interpretation of Bekhor Shor on its own, as well as the one case cited from Nahmanides, could be explained as an original thought or as one rooted in the Jewish exegetic tradition. All seven examples taken together, when compared to Rupert's explanations, raise the possibility that Bekhor Shor (and Nahmanides) indeed heard Christian explanations of Scripture and chose to cite those interpretations, sometimes in order to disagree. Possibly, Bekhor Shor was citing earlier Jewish exegesis which was also the source of Christian comments. It also seems beyond question that Rupert utilized Jewish

⁷⁰ עתה ברא הקדוש ברוך הוא כל תיקוני העולם, להבדיל, כאדם שרוצה לבנות בית, ומכין כל צרכי בניינו, ואחר כך בונה ביתו ומשים כל אחד על מקומו, ואחר כך עושה לו מטלטלין, כך הקדוש ברוך הוא תיקן כל צורכי הבניין ביום ראשון; ותיקן הרקיע ביום שני והושיבו על כנו...ואחר שגמר בניינו, ברא בחמישי ובששי דגים ועופות ורמשים ובהמה וחיה, שהם כמטלטלין בתוך הבית, שמטלטלין לכאן ולכאן.

sources in his commentary. It does not seem probable that in each case, Rupert and Bekhor Shor happened upon the same explanations and ideas by chance.

On the efficacy of the tree of life, it is entirely possible that the Christian tradition was known to Bekhor Shor, who in effect was reacting to it by choosing one explanation over the other. In the second case, Rupert's comment that Abraham was commanded to leave his homeland mentally as well as physically caps a long line of Christian writers who explained in that fashion, while Bekhor Shor is the only Jewish source to make this point. The third example, the nature of the oath that Abraham administered to his servant, is indeed a polemic. Yet it seems to show that Bekhor Shor was reacting to something that Rupert and earlier Christians had written.⁷¹

The fourth case, the appearance of angels as an honor guard, first appears in Bekhor Shor's comments on Gn 32:2, when the angels meet up with Jacob. Among Christian exegetes, Rupert is the only source to make a similar comment. Both may have adapted an idea that first appears in the Midrash to the methods of literal explanation. In the fifth case, Bekhor Shor understands the slaughtered bird and the one set free as representing the leper who was considered dead and was now restored to communal life. Rupert understood the two birds as prefiguring Christ who died and was reincarnated. The parallelism of ideas is certainly remarkable. We found no precedent in either Christian or Jewish exegesis for these interpretations. As Rupert completed his works before Bekhor Shor was active, we must therefore conclude that Rupert came up with this idea and Bekhor Shor adapted it, or else that both came up independently with similar ideas.

At this point (example 6), we introduced the topic of typology, used regularly by Rupert and, in the thirteenth century, by the Spanish Jewish commentator, Nahmanides (Ramban). Both offer methodological comments on typology

⁷¹ Rupert took his interpretation from Jerome, see n. 35 above.

upon reaching the story of Abram and Sarai in Egypt (Gn 12). This similarity highlights the fact that Nahmanides used elements of Christian typology in his own definition of the term. Finally, in the seventh example, the use of an architectural metaphor to describe Creation is once again found only in Rupert and Bekhor Shor.

The more cases we examine, the more it seems that Jews and Christians in the twelfth century were aware of each other's interpretations, and these occasionally found their way into the Bible commentaries of both groups. Perhaps it was the *zeitgeist* of the twelfth century, what might be termed cultural congruity, expressed in a mutual interest in literal or *peshat* exegesis, that made such exchanges more acceptable.⁷²

⁷² "Literal exegesis was emerging there and then as a particular principle of culture that manifested itself beyond the boundaries of religion. As we have already stated, the history of Bible exegesis is the history of culture." (Haran, *Midrashic and Literal Exegesis*, 35.)