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Master's [ ] Prize Essay [ ]

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"PRELIMINARY STUDIES ON CHRISTIAN FEUDAL EUROPE AND THE PENTATEUCHAL COMMENTARY OF RASHI"

by

Gordon L. Geller

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters
Degree and Ordination

Hebrew Union College
Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio
1967

Referee:
Dr. Ellis Rivkin

DIGEST

The eleventh century in France has been recognized as a crucial era of political, social and economic change and germination in the cultural development of Feudalism. Its institutions have now begun to solidify, primarily based on Christian oath and military service (Jews excluded de jure -- if not yet defacto). There is a noticeable upsurge in Christian art and architecture; and an increasing population results in new and larger towns; a new, Christian merchant and burgher class is rising with its associated guilds (again Jews are officially ineligible).

It has been the contention of this paper that Shlomo Yitzhaki, an eminently worldly scholar situated in vital Troyes -- a most important commercial center of Northern Europe, was thereby "in position" to become fully aware of all the above mentioned developments. That he also sensed their potentially adverse implications for French Jewry (in which local community he was unofficially the recognized leader) is indicated through at least three consistent themes of reaction to the Medieval Christian environment, as reflected in his Torah commentary.

In the first place, it has been possible to extract a considerable, though partial, list of passages which are a probable direct retort to Christian propagandists. Increasingly vociferous polemics against Muslim and Jew stemmed from the heightened militancy of a reformed Christian Church -- then engaged in a bitter Church-State conflict while simultaneously laying the groundwork for fanatic crusades to the Holy Land.

The second theme (Part I of this paper) is a series of remarks cautioning his economically well-situated co-religionists lest they place too much confidence in the continuing beneficence of their

predominantly Christian environment. Such allusions include: a suggested attitude of appeasement toward the Gentile; reemphasis of the traditional woe at being scattered in unholy, exilic lands; necessity to maintain, at all costs, personal, family and community tranquility; group responsibility to enforce peaceful, organized solidarity; caution against excessive non-Jewish acculturation; and strictures against excessive material indulgence or exploitative business practices which might engender jealousy and hostility among less fortunate Gentile or Jew.

A virtual manual for rabbinic leadership, compiled from the commentary, is the third theme of environmental influence. Existence of a religious power vacuum due to decay of the Babylonian geonate (particularly in an Age of Faith, with difficult times ahead) apparently convinced the Parshandata that God-inspired rabbinic scholars could more effectively lead the Jewish community than the secular parnassim. Evidence for such an assertion, taken from Rashi's Pentateuchal work, includes: Strong reliance on the God fearing and hierarchal mentality of the Feudal environment to enforce rabbinic control; stress on the oral law's flexibility of formulation but strictness in operation; exaggeration of the scholar-teacher's importance and prestige; an abundance of accolade and promised reward for rabbinic leaders.

Until a thorough comparative analysis of Rashi's midrashic sources is undertaken, the conclusions of this paper must necessarily remain "preliminary." We would submit, however, that our survey of the structural historical data of Rabbi Shlomo's era provocatively coincides with the exegesis this paper has labeled as polemical, precautionary and leadership themes in his Pentateuchal commentary.

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Introduction: The Problem

I

Though scholars are divided as to the precise year of Rashi's birth, they generally postulate the middle of the eleventh century (1030-1040).[1] Germination and flux are the hallmark characteristics of this crucial period in the cultural development of European Feudalism.

Western Christianity was still in the midst of a sweeping ecclesiastical reform; both pope and king were consolidating their respective Church-state empires for an inevitable monumental and protracted struggle. At this time, also, the masses had begun in earnest a struggle for independence from abject serfhood. Another change was significant population increase, causing an urban boom in both size and number of new towns. The accompanying rapid economic evolution created new industry and trade, guilds and fairs. In other areas art and architecture, nationalism and rationalism were all involved in this vigorous upsurge of Franco-German Feudalism.[2]

It is difficult to imagine, therefore, that the Jewry of Rashi's community, who apparently considered themselves a thoroughly indigenous part of the French scene,[3] could, nevertheless, fail to have been affected by all these unsettling circumstances. For instance, the resulting political stability of the general culture, based on protective military service and Christian oath (both excluded to Jews), was, thereby, crystallizing the dilemma of a declassed French Jewry within a class-oriented society. Similarly, the now widespread appearance of Christian merchants, as well as a revival of towns

controlled by the newburgher class, meant crucial economic competition which the politically powerless Jewish community was increasingly unable to meet.[4]

Furthermore, although most of Rashi's life his co-religionists remained an economically comfortable, yet recognizably iconoclastic, minority;[5] still this whole period contains documented incidents of intermittent expulsions, confiscations and forced conversions throughout north-central Europe.[6] An additional significant compounding to this process of diminution in security (socio-political) was, also, the appearance of a religious-power hiatus; for Jewish religious roots in the East were then disintegrating through the rapid decay and insignificance of the Babylonian Geonate.

It is also important to realize that there were several presumable channels open to Shlomo Yitzhaki by which the aforementioned contemporary developments could have become discernable to him. In the first place, his native Troyes was a major commercial center and capital city in the important principality of Champagne. Its biennial trade-fair generated an unusually cosmopolitan atmosphere, with merchants exchanging wares (also observations and opinions) from every corner of Western Europe.[7] Secondly, historians postulate that Rashi held discussions with the higher clergy (though not public debates) by which Christian Bible exegesis and other Gentile viewpoints would have become familiar to him.[8] Moreover, precisely at this period, scholars

report a resurgence of scholastic activity in Bible studies; no doubt related to the greatly renewed interest of organized Christianity in the holy land (requiring justification in the Old Testament). The Cluniac reform had injected a discipline of heightened militancy into the Church, which now blossomed into renewed literary polemics and religious disputes with Moslems and Jews.[9]

Thus, the intellectual background preparatory to the Crusades appears to have been widespread in Franco-Germany precisely during those years of Rashi's literary productivity. For instance, while a student in Mainz or Worms, he could hardly have overlooked the intensive, general interest in preparations necessary for one of the frequent elaborate pilgrimages to Palestine (in 1064 a single mass relgious voyage, sponsered by four German bishops, involved seven to twelve thousand people).[10]

It must be reiterated, however, that by the mid-eleventh century not only abstract Christian thought, but the entire socio-political environment of Europe (France in particular) was caught in an inexorable surge toward religious fanaticism and crusade. The situation is aptly summarized by H.O. Taylor, an eminent Medieval historian: "They /the crusades/ were a result of all the conditions of the time, an expression of the social situation. The religious motive led, was indeed the torch which fired the whole train of feudal, economic, fanatical combustibles. They could not have taken place had it not been for the "freeing" of social forces during the half century

preceding their [the crusades'] inception in the year 1096."

Could Rabbi Shlomo have been so cloistered in his quiet study as to have been impervious to the above developments and their fateful implications? On the contrary, recent studies of both his responsa and commentaries offer strong evidence that he was summoned to guide the communal destiny of the Jews in Troyes as their unofficial but recognized leader.[11]

Hundreds of French glosses, or loazim -- "a mine of information on the history and culture of eleventh century France"[12] -- amply reveal how careful an observer was the Parshandata of every detail in his daily surroundings. Such passion for embracive knowledge in all branches of arts and crafts (from shoemaking to medicine) also extended to historical data; in particular, contemporary events--about which he cultivated a critical understanding.[13] One very probable illustration of this latter capacity is embodied in Rashi's explanation of Korach's complaint to Moses (Num. 16:3).

(Rashi) "If you have taken royalty for yourself, then at least you should not have chosen the priesthood for your brother."

This remark may very well refer to investiture rights, one of the salient points in the Church-state conflict which reached its highpoint of controversy precisely during the authorship period of Rashi's Torah commentary.

Frequent other implicit societal allusions has led this writer

to reject the traditionalist contention that spiritual and educational ideas among the French community (as reflected in Rashi's commentary) were not affected by the surrounding Feudal Christian environment.[15] In fact, however, several general cultural influences are at once discernable. For example, the surprising near absence of mystic Torah interpretations combined with extensive reliance on Targum Onkelos' anti-anthropromorphism may well reflect Rashi's efforts to combat Christological interpretations of the Old Testament. In another instance, the low level of philosophical and scientific achievement, in eleventh century France, enabled Rashi to authentically account for such phenomena as the formation of the heaven (Gen. 1:6) or the dual creation of man (Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:7) by simplistic midrashic principles totally unacceptable to Ibn Ezra or Nachmanides; products of far more sophisticated surroundings. Finally, one might even attribute the very clarity and brevity of Rabbi Shlomo's commentary style to the pervasive spirit of his French language culture.[16]

Given the above circumstances, together with his active involvement and concern for the contemporary world, a commentator as demonstrably eclectic as Rabbi Shlomo, could hardly avoid natural "assimilative" inroads in his literary works. Even the most fundamental characteristic of the Parshandata's Torah work; i.e. adaptation of previous scholarly opinion; is again in line with general eleventh century French thought, which derived all of its mental tendencies from prior times.[17]

Nevertheless, pressing contemporary demands, no doubt, urged our practical scholar to select only those materials from the well of tradition which would most closely pertain to existing problems among his French co-religionists (Deut. 6:6; Ex. 19:1). The very method which Shlomo Yitzhaki invented for his Bible exegensis (Ex. 6:9); Gen. 1:8) -- unique among Jewish commentators up to that time -- also reveals the attempt to make tradition approximate, as closely as possible, his personal interpretations of current environmental needs.

Accordingly, though our French pedagogue, par excellence, possessed an incisive and realistic mentality; he, nevertheless, felt constrained to employ liberal use of rich imagery in order to guard against his commentary's becoming an uninteresting, anachronistic code. At the same time there is enough literality to fend off farfetched mystical interpretations (normally of Christian origin). Such an analysis substantially aids our supposition that Rashi's Torah commentary was not only directed at the common people; (rather than scholarly students)[18] but, beyond mere interest and illumination, was ultimately intended to be a guiding control for the viewpoint of the Jewish masses. (See part II of thesis body, below).

Which brings us, then, to our fundamental hypothesis. For even if it is now quite plausible to maintain that the Torah commentary was indeed influenced by Rashi's Medieval Christian environment, still the substantive question of precise locus remains; i.e. to locate and substantiate, throughout this literary work, coherent themes

which indicate a conscious reaction to his dominant, Gentile environment.

By surveying the whole of Rashi's Torah commentary it has been possible to extract at least three clear areas of environmental influence. The first has already been alluded to; namely, a body of muted, but apprehensible, anti-Christian polemics. The question of property rights in the holy land (Gen. 1:1) is an especially transparent example of Rashi's confrontation with Christian propagandists. Since an adequate explication of such dogmatics certainly warrants a whole separate study, this paper can only list some of the prominent suspected passages,[19] in addition to their further intermittent mention within appropriate contexts of this paper's body.

Closely related to such polemics is a second major area of environmental impress (Part I of the following presentation), consisting of a significantly wide-scope sampling of what has been termed "precautionary" themes. Their common tone is an apparently defensive concern of the Parshandata -- lest his economically comfortable brethren become too self-confident, and thus dangerously vulnerable, to possible future vicissitudes originating from within the dominant non-Jewish society.

For this reason Rabbi Shlomo reminds his people that no matter how comfortable their current socio-economic status, Jews are still, in effect, dispersed prisoners of an unholy exile. An eminent Rashi specialist appears to independently concur with this paper's conclusion regarding Rashi's precautionary viewpoint. Maurice Liber mentions

our commentator's exhortation to avoid both innovations from tranquil tradition, as well as internal strife, that might diminish the intense solidarity of the organized Jewish community -- "as the surest safeguard against persecution from without." For evidence he cites Rashi's own words: "Apply yourselves to the cultivation of peace." See how much your neighbors are troubled by the greatest evils and how the Christians delight in them."[20]

A third and concluding focus on environmental influence reveals a virtual leadership manual, explaining and justifying the need for the scholar class to assume community leadership. In extracting this material from Rashi's Torah commentary a direct confirmation is thus afforded to the theory of Professor Zeitlin that Shlomo Yitzhaki was the founder of the institutional rabbinate in Europe.[21]

Finally, it is necessary to reiterate that both loyalty to accumulated tradition as well as the past-revering outlook of his Christian environment compelled the Parshandata to garb his personal opinions in a cloak of rabbinic utterances -- especially while commenting on the authoritative Torah. (That he entertained, at the very least, mixed feelings over this constraint is strongly hinted by his expressed but unfulfilled desire to rewrite the Torah commentary in a more literal and, therefore, original fasion: Rashbam, Gen. 37:2. See p. 39, below).

Accordingly, any definitive conclusions as to what precise portions of the Torah commentary Rashi penned, in specific reaction to

his French surrounding, must still await a thorough comparative analysis of the midrashic sources: their selection and adaptation. (For this reason the scope of the present paper is justifiably entitled "preliminary" studies).

Despite the above disclaimer, however, authoritative scholarship has concluded that necessary interpretation of a book as central to Medieval thought as the Bible acted as a veritable mirror for the social and cultural change of different ages.[22] Moreover, we have noted Rashi's avowed criterion for selection of traditional material as that explanation which most effectively approximates the literal meaning of a text and is necessarily germane to current problems of daily life.

We would, therefore, submit that our survey of the structural, historical data of Rabbi Shlomo's era (and his probable awareness of their implication) provocatively coincides with the exegesis this paper has labeled as polemical, precautionary and leadership themes in Rashi's Pentateuchal commentary.

Part I

Precautionary Themes in Rashi's Pentateuchal Commentary

I. Linguistics

Among the external or structural evidences in Rashi's Torah commentary, which clearly indicate the cautious posture adopted toward his Christian environment, is the episode where Jacob in his return to Canaan diplomatically "meets" his brother Esau, bearing a flattering gift in hand. At first, Esau politely refuses the gesture, but Jacob insists (Gen. 33:10).

> "And Jacob said: 'Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found favor in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand; for as much as I have seen they face as the face of God, וַתִּרְצֵנִי.

The translation of the key Hebrew term above is then given a significant twist in meaning from "and you were pleased with me" to, an even more tactful, "and you are reconciled with me".

(Rashi) "Wherever the (root) term רצה occurs in Scripture it means "propitiating"."

To be doubly sure that the correct shade of meaning comes across to his reader, this term is immediately rendered into the French vernacular of the common Jewish populace: "appaisement" (appeasing). Furthermore, within the examples then cited to prove the accuracy of this interpretation, Rashi goes on to equate righteous behavior with a policy of appeasement.

(Rashi) "Similarly (Prov. 10:32) 'The lips of the righteous know רצון' - they understand to conciliate and propitiate."

It should be noted that the word רצון can signify that which gives satisfaction either to God or man.[1] But Rashi's commentary on the Proverbs verse specifically states the referent as: "pacify their fellow-creatures, promoting peace in their midst." It is also significant that this particular Bible text contains a condemnation of the opposite behavior in its second part: "but the mouth of the wicked is rebellious", as well as an open threat to such a non-conciliatory character, in the preceding parallel verse (Prov. 10:31): "and the rebellious tongue shall be cut off." Our commentator, in his typically elliptical (and perhaps even diplomatic!) manner, was well aware of the context, making him confident that his reader would also understand and take heed.

An additional vital matter of context is the fact that appeasement is directed toward Esau in the original Torah text of Gen. 33:10. In rabbinic literature, Esau is always taken as the paradigm of wickedness and is also equated with the tyrannical Roman (or Edom).[2] But since the ninth century coronation of Charlemagne the secular glory of ancient Rome had been purposely transformed into the Holy Roman (i.e. Christian) empire.[3] The astutely observant Rashi could hardly have been unaware of the equation of Rome with

Christianity since precisely at this time Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV were engaged in a bitter battle for supremacy in this church-State empire.[4] It is highly probable, therefore, that our commentator is directing his conciliation toward the surrounding Christian society (Esau) vis a vis the Jewish community (Jacob).

Further references to Esau in Rashi's commentary confirm the above identification. In commenting on the two nations struggling in Rebekah's womb, the opportunity is provided to remonstrate against the tenuous situation of weak and scattered Israel in eleventh century France and Germany.[5]

(Gen. 25:23) "..... two races shall be parted from thy bowels; and one race shall be stronger than the other race."

(Rashi) "They will never be equally great at the same time; when one rises the other will fall... Tyre (colonized by Esau) became powerful only through the ruin of Jerusalem."

In addition to the sociological evidence above, an example of protective polemics clearly identifies Esau with the Christian. When Esau despises his birthright (Gen. 35:34) it is interpreted thusly:

(Rashi) "Scripture testifies to his wickedness: that he despised the service of the Omnipresent".

In the immediately preceding comment we see just what this forsaken birthright (Divine service) entails.

> "Further Esau said: 'What is the nature of this service?' Jacob replied: 'Many prohibitions and punishments.....-just as we read in the Mishna!"

In line with the prevalent Christian dogma that salvation exists through faith, not works, Esau is here depicted as rejector of his religious heritage i.e. the yoke of the rabbinically ordained commandment. Furthermore the rabbis of the midrash frequently used the general term "gentile" (certainly applicable to Esau) as a euphemism when refering to Christians, from within a contextual discussion of the oral law.[6]

A good example of how Rashi's own commentary employed appeasement, by veiling his real and often opposing sentiments, is embodied in a favorable value judgment ostensibly regarding Palestine.

(Deut. 11:12) "A land which the Lord thy God cares for."

(Rashi) "But does He not care for all lands?...However, it is as though He cares only for Eretz Israel, and by means of that caring which He bestows upon it, He cares for all the lands, together with it."

With the spirit of the Crusades already in the air - at least the planning stages according to recognized scholars on Medieval Jewry[7] - such a spiritually blessed description of their much sought-after prize could hardly fail to please contemporary Gentile neighbors. But another reference to the Holyland, further on,

no doubt comes much closer to Rashi's authentic feelings regarding Divine Providence over Eretz Israel (Deut. 11:12).

(Deut. 32:43) "...and He doth make expiation for His land."

(Rashi) "And what is His land? His people: When his people are comforted, His land is comforted."

And how discomforted the soon-to-be crusaders would have been to perceive that Rashi had absolutely no sympathy with their attempt to make Palestine safe for the Church. His was the traditional Jewish hope of an end to exile and Christian domination by restoration of a Jewish state in the Holy land. Unlike the above Deut. 11:12 quote selected from the Siphre, the continuation of the comment in Deut. 32:43 has no stated source and is probably original with the commentator.

> "And similarly it states (psa. 85:82): 'Lord, Thou hast been favorable unto Thy land. 'How hast Thou been favorable unto Thy land? (The words that follow in the psalm proof-text give the answer) 'Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob."

II. Use of Midrash and Halacha

A second key structural evidence of Rashi's defensive attitude toward his environment, as reflected throughout his Torah commentary, is a cautious, exegetical use of midrash which, up to his time, is unique to this author. Thus, Rashi rejects the highly allegorical style of Bible commentary, then prevalent in his Christian environment, thereby closing the door to far-fetched, non Jewish interpretations of Scripture. On the other hand he also finds wanting the traditional mode of Jewish exegesis up to that time which was either primarily pshat (the approach of Saadia) or almost entirely homiletical (such as Menachem ben Helbo). The solution is to invent a synthesis of pshat and drash hewing as closely as possible to the simplest, traditional viewpoints.[8] This doctrine is unmistakably spelled out in Gen. 3:8, even if his own admission prudently eliminates the motivation.

(Rashi) "There are many midrashic explanations.... I, however, am only concerned with the plain sense of Scripture and with such agadoth that explain the words of Scripture in a manner that fits in with them."

A fine example of Rashi's ability to simplify and concretize his ideas by this midrashic method, and yet maintain the all-important emotional attachment for the common reader, is afforded

by the account of the creation of man's helpmate.

(Gen. 2:24) "...that they become as one flesh."

(Rashi) "Both parents are united in the child."

Such a synthetic application of homiletics not only indicates that the Torah is not merely being superficial and euphemistic (Rashi's underlying idea) but equally points up, here in circumspect fashion, deep concern for family unity and loyalty— a defensive precaution to be elucidated in some detail further on in the paper.

Living as our commentator did in a French community of Jews ostensibly oriented around Talmudic law,[9] his significant leniency in matters of halacha is a most important structural clue as to environmental influence on Rashi's religiously expressed viewpoints. His general tendency to permit rather than prohibit often resulted in decisions opposing those of all previous rabbinic sages (regardless of his apparent desire to harmonize with tradition), such as permission for Jews to employ Christians in wine manufacture -- Rashi's own occupation.[10]

The above doctrine, as expressed in his Torah commentary, Gen. 3:3, is taken from the well-known midrash in which Eve added "touching" to the Divine prohibition of eating from the tree of knowledge.

(Rashi) "Add thou not unto His words."

That this most succinct (and ambiguous) formulation, coming from one as tradition-conscious as the Parshandata, was, nevertheless, employed as a support for legislative flexibility; is apparently indicative of the defensive posture thrust upon Solomon ben Isaac -- a viewpoint which we have attempted to document from many of the important topics touched upon in his Pentateuchal commentary. (Thus at least in the above example on vinticulture, Rashi was enabled to dispense with a traditional yet embarrassing equation of Christians and idolaters).

III. Views on Exile

Mention has already been made[11] of that deepest spiritual yearning among French Jewry which looked toward a benevolent Providence for attainment of a speedy end to Jacob's captivity. If one were to search for the most fundamental source of general insecurity and psychological malaise within this community it would no doubt be traceable to their very circumstantial location -- separated from holy Palestine, dispersed as a tiny, iconoclastic and exposed minority, engulfed by the spiritually alien environs of Christian Northern Europe.

Rabbi Shlomo is unmistakably condemnatory in his equation of exilic status with frustration, anxiety and insecurity. One of the most outspoken passages occurs in Abram's vision of an heir.

(Gen. 15:12) "...and, lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him."

(Rashi) "This is symbolic of the woes and the gloom of the Jews in exile."

The spiritual alienation alluded to above (and living at the chronological and geographical heart of an Age of Faith, striving for religious unity at all costs,[12] was no doubt psychologically disturbing to the Jews) is poignantly illustrated in a commentary on Moses' concluding discourse to the wandering Israelites.

(Deut. 30:3) "Then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity."

(Rashi) "...it is as if His Divine presence dwells with Israel in all the misery of their exile, so that when they are redeemed ... He will return with them."

So God Himself shares Israel's sufferings in exile and will return with them.

One further interpretation of their exilic status, emphasized by Rabbi Shlomo, involves the practical consequences of Galut i.e. being widely dispersed in small numbers throughout North-central Europe. This particular circumstance, because of the ensuing disunity and powerlessness,[13] is clearly specified as one of the most difficult aspects of exile.

(Lev. 26:33) "And I will scatter you among the nations."

(Rashi) "This was a harsh measure: because when the inhabitants of a country go into exile in one and the same place they (have the opportunity) to see one another and so find consolation (for their bad lot). Israel, however, was scattered as though by a winnowing fan... when not even one (grain) of them adhered to the other."

So upset is Rashi about the problem of population dispersal that a few lines later (Lev. 26:38) he equates it with "perishing among the nations." Any feeling of threat among those living

in exile (mentioned in the Scriptural text and strongly concurred with by Rashi) results not from the physical reality of a pogrom, but appears to be more of a premonition of insecurity by our French commentator.

(Lev. 26:37) "And they shall stumble upon one another..."

(Rashi) "...ie as though they were fleeing from before murderers. (It means) that in their heart there will be timidity and at every moment they will think that somebody is pursuing them."

The above comment is Rashi's own interpretation but, in significant support of this paper's hypothesis, he continues the explanation of this Galut - context with the classic defensive midrash:

> "One will stumble by reason of the sin of the other, for all Israelites are held responsible one for another."

At the time of writing his Pentatechal commentary scholars assume Christian preparations for the Crusades were mounting progressively throughout France and Germany. It is altogether inconceivable that so keen an observer of the contemporary scene, as was Rabbi Shlomo, should not have been aware of these developments as well as the concurrent, increasing polemics justifying Christian claims to the Holy land at the expense of traditional Jewish yearnings.[14] (Especially clear, firm but expectedly non-direct refutations of

such Christian arguments appear in Rashi's Torah commentary at Gen. 1:1 and Lev. 18:28)

With the above background we are in a better position to appreciate Rashi's general reaction to the possibility of an increasingly tenuous, exilic environment.

(Gen. 27:29) "They that curse thee shall be cursed; they that bless thee shall be blessed."

(Rashi) "..the righteous have sufferings first and happiness afterwards, so that (in point of time) those who curse and afflict them come before those who bless them."

A further clue that Rashi was really encouraging his own community with the above words is its Bible context wherein Isaac unwittingly blessed Jacob rather than Esau (the paradigm of the gentile -see page 3; as well as "the captivity of Jacob" -see page 5).

Rashi uses his own words (and not a midrashic quote) to emphasize his specific advice to the people in exile. It is God who has purposely brought about Israel's diaspora (Deut. 33:3) and therefore, the righteous duty of all Jews is to willingly accept their fate and rely on Divine power. An especially beautiful midrash illustrating Rashi's espousal of resignation to Divine fate -- certainly reflecting a cardinal principle of his Feudal society[15] -- is the commentary on Gen. 8:11 of the talking dove which returns to Noah's ark.

(Rashi) "...she said: 'Rather that my food be bitter as an olive, but from the hand of God, than as sweet as honey and from the hand of mortal men'."

Perhaps the best summary of Rabbi Shlomo's assessment and recommendations for prospering in Christian-dominated exile are contained in Deuteronomy's version of why God chose Israel.

(Deut. 7:7-8) "The Eternal did not delight in you, nor choose you, because you were more numerous than any people; for you were the fewest of all the peoples: but because the Lord loved you...."

(Rashi) "(This is to be understood) according to its plain sense."

The very fact that our laconic commentator begins his explanation of the verse with this seemingly superfluous preface is supporting evidence of much concern over their powerless and dispersed circumstances in exile (See above, p. 10). Humility must, therefore, become their constant watchword (equivalent to the fatalistic attitude mentioned previously-- p. 12).

"But its midrashic explanation is: Because you do not regard yourselves as great...but small; as, for example, Abraham, who said: 'For I am dust and ashes'."

How can the Jews be certain that such a resigned humility will redound to their benefit, through Divine protection?

"Not because you were more numerous...did God delight in you...but because of the Lord's love to you."

IV. Peace

Virtually the whole of Feudal society was instituted for the fundamental purpose of providing protection from barbaric enemies, both within and without local areas of habitation and jurisdiction.[16] It has been noted (See "Introduction"), furthermore, that Rashi's century (the eleventh) was an expecially stressful period of germination and Medieval institutional transition in the all-important areas of religion, politics and economics.

Therefore, despite the widely-acknowledged view that the French Jews of this era were by and large prospering comfortably in the small but developing urban centers,[17] whose French society and civilization had been readily adopted,[18] a perceptible sense of insecurity is extractable throughout Rabbi Shlomo's Torah commentary. Principal evidence for this observation is the high frequency and continual sense of urgency displayed toward his remarks on the subject of peace. Thus, the Parshandata categorically states that of all mortally attainable desiderata, the achieval of concord reigns supreme.

(Lev. 26:6) "And I will give peace (in the land)."

(Rashi) "...Perhaps you will say: 'Well, there is food and there is drink'; but if there is no peace, (then all this) is nothing.....hence, (we may learn) that peace counterbalances everything."

Special attention should be drawn to Rashi's use of the Torah verse's context in which increased material prosperity is unfavorably contrasted in comparison to the value of maintaining peace; certainly analagous to the situation at Troyes.

Additional significant evidence, that Rashi's demand for peace-at-all-costs was defensively motivated, is obtained by the commentator's correlary concern for what we would label today as "public image." One classic example occurs in Gen. 38:25, the sparing of Tamar, Judah's illicitly pregnant daughter-in-law.

(Rashi) "She did not wish to put him to shame by saying, publically, 'It is by thee, that I am with child'. ...From this passage (our rabbis) derived the teaching: Far better that a man should let himself be cast into the fiery furnace (even as Tamar was ready to be burnt to death), but let him not publicly put his fellow to shame."

The pressure of religious pride (a powerful argument usually reserved for vital issues in that Age of Faith) is brought to bear in several other references to public image. One such example is Ex. 20:23: "just as stones (of the altar) are not to be embarassed by the nakedness of an ascending priest, how much less should one treat his sensitive fellow-man disrespectfully." Or in Ex. 11:5, where it is implied that the harsh consequences of open hostilities, for the Jews, might reflect unfavorably on the God of the Chosen People

(perhaps more among Jews than Gentiles).

But Rashi is by no means content to leave so vital a topic rest on generalized caveats. In his anxiety to prevent, or at least greatly reduce, the possibility of friction and disharmony within the Jewish community, his commentary spells out in practical detail just <u>how</u> to keep the peace within a wide-sweeping variety of specific areas and situations.

We find a good example in his recommendations for adjudicating monetary disputes. In order to forfend against smoldering, dangerous discontent between the rich and poor classes of Jews, his normally moderate approach - dictated by an eminently realistic orientation - is abandoned in favor of an almost artificial, absolutistic fairness.

(Deut. 1:17) "Ye shall hear the small as well as the great."

(Rashi) "i.e. that a law suit regarding a peruta shall be as dear to you (shall be as of equal importance) as a lawsuit regarding a hundred maneh."

Further on, indicating how Rashi bent backwards to harmonize contending interests among Jewish classes, is another instance where the one-dinar case is legally against the wealthy litigant.

"I will for the moment decide in his (rich man's) favor, and when he goes outside (leaves the court) I will say to him: 'Give it to him (the poor man) because (in fact) you owe it to him."

Contiguous to pacificatory legal judgments, a plea for moderation in display of individual temperament, is repeatedly counseled. So apt was the midrashic illustration of God's behaviour toward Miriam and Aaron, for gossiping against Moses, that Rashi makes use of it despite the evident anthropromorphism displayed therein.

(Num. 12:9) "And the wrath of the Lord glowed against them; and He went away."

(Rashi) "(Only) after He had informed them of their offense did He decree excommunication against them. How much less should a human being display anger against his fellow before he informs him of his offense."

Not only will talking over grievances before taking aggressive action reduce the problem of fractious and inner-communal hostilities, it would lessen the danger of escalating feuds. In fact a very probable reason for this stress on moderate temperament is stated in Deut. 19:11 as: "hating one's fellow (a light sin) leads to heavier sins (injurious crimes). Furthermore, keeping in mind the raucous and unstable atmosphere fostered by such representatives of Feudal society as the quick-tempered knights and nobles, our commentator cautions his people in no uncertain terms that "anger causes mistakes" (Num. 31:21), too many of which would jeporadize Jewish public image and position.

A specific corollary to the plea for a temperamental golden

mean is Rashi's condemnation of quarrels among Jews. That, such altercations can only lead one astray to the harm of both himself and community, is his categoric, summary viewpoint in Deut. 25:1. More than once,[19] our commentator reiterated the rule that their principle reliance must be on unobtrusive diplomacy --the power of the word over the sword. A classic example is Balaam's attempt to curse Israel and his smiting of the talking she-ass.

(Num. 22:23) "...and his sword drawn in his hand."

(Rashi) "He (God) said: This wicked man has abandoned the tools of his own craft -- for the offensive weapons of the (gentile) nations of the world (consist) in the sword -- and he is attacking them (the Israelites) with his mouth, which is <u>their</u> (the Israelites') metier."

That Rashi attached the gravest import to maintenance of this academic gap is readily supported by recalling his awareness of Crusade preparations (see page 4), the acknowledged educational superiority of even commoner Jews at this period --documented by modern Christian Bible scholars[20]-- as well as Rabbi Shlomo's constant efforts to raise the intellectual standards of his people in the face of new learning and increasing Scriptural polemics, particularly among Christian clergy.[21]

The absence of discord within the home is made a sina qua non of family life in a comment on Ex. 20:22 (certainly equivalent to

the "sholom bayis" tradition of the Eastern-European shtetl with its defensive yiddish maxim: "Don't yell. What will the neighbors think!?")[22] We can also note an unusually harsh attitude in disapproval of divorce (Num. 12:1) which, while contrasting sharply with the Talmud's relative ease of separation, is certainly in concord with the strict prohibition and severe religious and social stigma of his Catholic environs.

Another vital reason for family concord and unity is alluded to by the exaggerated importance made of parents and teachers regarding their role in bringing up the new generation. (See Gen. 18:19 and Num. 3:1). In order to keep the children and students "hewing the prudent line", there must be unimpaired understanding and communication between them and the teachers. Furthermore, this education must be commenced at an early, intense level, thus engendering distinctiveness as well as abiding loyalty to one's traditions.

(Deut. 11:19) "(And ye shall teach them unto your children) to speak of them."

(Rashi) "...as soon as an infant begins to speak, the father should converse with him in the holy tongue and should instruct him in the Torah. If he does not do this, it is as if he buried him."

Since the daily language of all French Jewry was French (with a corresponding, widespread lack of mass facility with the Hebrew

language),[23] the Parshandata's vigorous attempts to revive and increase Hebrew-speaking prowess among the Jewish masses is also indicative of a desire to deliberately strengthen Jewish identity (see section six, below, on the threat of excessive acculturation).

In addition to maintaining a united front through absence of destructive, internal quarrels, the Jewish community is evidently expected to avoid strife with the outside world by moral conduct clearly exemplary, in fact, superior to that of their neighbors. In Deut. 14:1&2, therefore, Rashi explains the Scriptural phrase "holy people, chosen by God" to be a proof text for remaining aloof from the pagan ways of the surrounding peoples. Stated succinctly:

(Rashi) "..because you are the children of the Lord and it is therefore becoming of you to be refined."

Little wonder that the piety and righteousness of the Jewish community in Rashi's day drew acknowledgment and special praise from impressed Christian bishops.[24]

A host of examples could be cited in regard to the necessarily strict level of morality that the Parshandata expected of his people. For instance, Num. 24:14 is one of several[25] references to the admirable chastity among Israelites (a cardinal but oft neglected virtue of Feudal Christendom).[26] Playing on the prestige of important Biblical figures, Ex. 1:5 shows Joseph's lack of pride (the most heinous of sins among Medieval Christians)[27] as

well as consistently righteous conduct despite his elevation to high office. In similar vein the great Moses' humility (Lev. 10:20) is also portrayed with dramatic flair, no doubt intended by Rashi as an object lesson for contemporary French adherents of the Mosaic persuasion.

Incidentally, the obvious effort to present the Biblical "fathers of Israel" in the most favorable light is indicative of Rashi's reliance on the environment's hierarchal mentality to: one) polemically defend the Jewish faith; two) be sure the Jewish classes continue to "know their place" (Lev. 6:4); three) yet maintain the confident conviction of his people that they are the righteous, suffering servants, chosen by the Almighty Creator. (Gen. 15:18). (See page 12 above, as well as the section on "hierarchy" in Part II).

Likewise, in attempting to salvage the character of Joseph's brothers (progenitors of the Israelite tribes) an eloquent plea for unity and concord is directed toward his Hebrew-French brethren on the grounds that they are all in the same spiritual boat, i.e. ethnic heritage and common destiny. The analogy is based on the suit to Joseph for compassion, after the death of Jacob.

(Gen. 50:17) "Now, pray, forgive the trespasses of the servants of the God of thy father."

(Rashi) "(Implying) even though your father be dead, his God still lives and they are his servants."

In the Age of Faith there was certainty that though individual

men may mortally die, their beliefs, if based on the eternal, unchanging truth of the Bible, must continue to exist.[28] It is upon such presumedly irrefutable evidence that the Parshandata creates the above, original midrash, reminding his people that despite any personal differences they all have a prior responsibility to one common Creator.

Thus, the final, undeniably successful way to keep the peace, thereby securing both material protection and Divine providence, was for the community as an undivided whole to follow a life of Torah regulation. To do otherwise was to invite vicissitude on their earthly scene as well as in the heavenly abode (Deut. 11:13). Further proof of the above philosophy is provided in the next section, exploring Rashi's emphasis on the doctrine of group responsibility. In part II of this paper, the above axiom becomes the foundation stone justifying rabbinical assumption of leadership in Northern Europe.

V. Group Responsibility

We have already propounded the view that lack of sufficient psychological security, materially the result of living in Christian dominated exile, (in addition to Feudal society's normal instabilities) resulted in a careful assessment and supervision of individual Jewish behavior, especially dedicated to maintaining the peace at all costs. The resulting internal unity had as its principal aim the creation of a united front to face a potentially hostile environment. "All Israel are responsible for each other" (Lev. 26:37) is the classic forumulation of this doctrine (See page 11). Likewise, Rashi heartily supports Akiba's dictum that the fundamental principle in the Torah is "for man to love his neighbor as himself" (Lev. 19:18).

Despite the obvious importance our commentator attached to harmonious group relations, and the individual Jew's responsibility to do his fair share in achieving this aim, only by holding to a concomitant belief in at least nominal self-determination could the community then make each member culpable for any personal behavior affecting the group's status. In his comment on the angel allowing Balaam to continue on his evil mission of cursing Israel (Num. 22:35), we thus see how Rashi dovetails the virtual determinism of necessary group mores with a simultaneous support of free will.

(Rashi) "On that road which a man is resolved to go, he is allowed to go."

This syncretism is also evident in the case of a trouble-making son, (Deut. 21:18) who is defined as a group threat just as much as an individual wrong-doer.

(Rashi) "Stubborn: One who deviates from the (proper) path. Rebellious: One who disobeys the words of his father."

Rabbi Shlomo explicitly states the doctrine of group responsibility, acknowledging the imperative of a good public image for France's insecure minority, by repetition of the dire consequences a sinner brings to himself, his family and community (Lev. 24:11). Even the great Moses, as representative of his people, is rebuked for their disobedience to God's instructions on how to gather manna.

(Ex. 16:28) "How long will <u>you</u> refuse (to keep my laws)?"

(Rashi) "(When weeding) one destroys the thorns together with the cabbages - because of the wicked, the good are brought into disgrace."

The prominent concern that Rashi attached to engendering a feeling of accountability toward the community is not only reflected in the frequency[29] with which he restated the above message, but also by the grave penalty (Deut. 23:9) awaiting one who would flaunt this admonition, i.e. loss of salvation and immortality, the supreme goal of Medieval man (both Christian and Jew).[30]

(Rashi) "..he who causes a man to sin does him greater harm than if he kills him, for..he kills him (only) as regards this world; while he who causes him to sin puts him out of this world and the world to come."

VI. Acculturation

Except for scattered instances of deliberately planned persecutions, expulsions and property confiscations,[31] up to the time of the Crusades the Jews were generally regarded by their Christian neighbors as an integral though iconoclastic group within the social and economic life of Feudal, northwestern Europe.[32] We have purposely refrained, however, from using the phrase "socially assimilated" since it connotes too absolute an integration into the surrounding Medieval society. It should be recalled that the two fundamental wellsprings of the Medieval power structure, politics and religion, were both denied to Jews who, therefore, at best, were regarded as valuable wards rather than full-fledged citizens of Western-Christianity's church-state empire.[33] On the other hand, the term "acculturation", in its more fluid sense of transfering only cultural elements from one social group or people to another, more adequately describes the changing, less secure status of the Jews in 11th century Northern France.

It is not surprising therefore, that Rashi takes such consistent pains to justify both the absolute value and distinctiveness of Judaism, throughout his Torah commentary. In so doing he not only provided a careful and unmistakable rebuttal to denigratory Christian polemics, but also the ideology to block the easy route "out" for those Jews who might be inclined to apostasy. His brethren were thus

admonished (Deut. 6:7) to make the Torah their prime, not secondary, interest. This doctrine is more explicitly detailed in Lev. 18:14.

(Rashi) "..You must not say, I have acquired Jewish wisdom, now I will go and acquire the wisdom of the other peoples of the world (in order to walk in their ways)."

For Rabbi Shlomo there could only be two alternatives: either committed Torah-life, or apostasy (Deut. 11:16). The economically comfortable Jews of France are thus warned not to expose and prostitute themselves by serving "strange gods" in exchange for nominal social acceptance.

(Rashi) "..no man rebels against the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He except out of satiety...and so soon as a man departs from the Torah he goes and clings to idol worship."

Moreover, a total election of Judaism was required, going beyond the intellectual realm and occupying <u>all</u> of one's faculties and loyalties (Deut. 32:46). Custom and ceremony, the most distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish Frenchman, therefore, received Shlomo Yitzhaki's supreme (and polemical) praise. The immortality of the Jewish people (in contrast to its transitory, gentile, neighboring nationalities) must depend on serving the yoke of commandment--"kashrut" for example (Lev. 11:2)--an accurate, sociological insight into Medieval Jewish life.

Rashi's admonition against excessive acculturation not only was to be accomplished by submergence within an intensively Jewish milieu,

but also by observing the caution of not becoming too friendly with non-Jews or ascribing significant merit to them (Deut. 7:2).

(Rashi) "It is forbidden for a person to say: 'How beautiful is this gentile."

We have already seen[34] that many Christian religious leaders recorded their admiration for the morality and learning among its Jewish populace. Rashi no doubt held theological dialogues with the higher clergy[35] yet his reference to the gentile prophet Balaam (Num. 22:12) indicates concern over entangling alliances from gentile clerical "favors" that might compromise the increasingly tenuous position of the French Jewish community.

(Rashi) "..they do not need your blessing... A parable: People say to the hornet - 'neither any of your honey, nor any of your sting'."

Conversely, Rashi not only prohibits praise of the Gentile, but, using the argument of guilt by association, elaborates on the danger of contagion from the wickedness of non-Jews. Though we cannot know with certainty that the material to follow was a direct accusation of Christians at the very moment of its composition (see pgs. 3-4 above, equating wicked Esau with Christendom), our main hypothesis is that the tenor of the times engendered sufficient concern in Rabbi Shlomo so as to induce his selecting materials which could easily serve as anti-Christian indoctrination in case of future need. (This student has extracted a considerable body of apparently direct, anti-Christian

polemics within Rashi's Torah commentary--see "Introduction"-- but an adequate treatment of this material certainly justifies a complete, separate presentation.

Such a discourse on Christian wickedness, though scattered throughout the book of Genesis (wherein occur the most transparent and vigorous polemics of Rabbi Shlomo's Pentateuchal work), can be rearranged into an almost syllogistic argument. In elaboration of the above theme on Balaam (p. 27), a repeated warning is that good deeds of the wicked (both Jews and expecially Gentile) are no doubt inauthentic and therefore suspect (Gen. 41:12). This message is especially clear in the comment on God's rebuke of Laban.

(Gen. 31:24) "..take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or evil."

(Rashi) "(Why should he not speak good?) Because all the good that the wicked do (to the righteous) is evil in the opinion of the righteous."

In his comment on the second Passover (Num. 9:7), Rashi succinctly summarizes this doctrine.

"Meritorious deeds are brought about (only) by good men." Not only was the goodness of Christians suspect, but they were, by definition, theologically in error - a matter of no mean import in the Age of Faith. Thus in a reference to the warring Gentile kings (Gen. 14:2) the Parshandata draws an analogy which indicates that "he who is wicked toward Heaven (i.e. the gentile) must be wicked

toward mandind." Punishment of evildoers provides the logical conclusion in his argument for maintaining a cultural "distance" (Gen. 11:32).

(Rashi) "The wicked are dead even why they are alive."

The above comment is in reference to Abraham's father, Terah-- whose story is the epitomy of Jewish disdain for the religious practices of the gentile. When Jacob reguses to be consoled for the presumed death of Joseph (Gen. 37:55) the final link is forged in this reconstructed polemic against excessive Christian-dominated acculturation.

(Rashi) "For with regard to the dead (the wicked i.e. Christian) it is decreed that he be forgotten from the heart, but it is not (so decreed) with regard to the living."

But though the Jews were encouraged to maintain their religious and cultural integrity both manners and diplomatic prudence dictated that any non-Jewish "stranger" be treated with utmost respect should he show an inclination to learn more about Judaism. Under no conditions was he to be verbally insulted (Lev. 19:33-34). For mindful of their own position as a tiny, "strange" minority in Christian France, Rashi was painfully aware of the ease with which powerless classes could be subject to oppression.

(Ex. 22:21) "You shall not afflict any widow or orphan."

(Rashi) "..for they are feeble in (defensive) power and it is a frequent occurrence for people to afflict them."

Similarly, in the following section, centering around business ethics, Rashi expresses his sympathy for the hard lot of Christian serfs as well as concern for the just treatment of gentile employees of Jews.

VII. Commerce

The transitional tendencies of the 11th century are nowhere more evident than in the sphere of economics. Rapid growth of new and old towns, greater political stability and a consequent increasing demand for goods had produced a Christian merchant class that began to seriously rival the entrenched and prosperous Jewish traders. Lacking both numbers and political power the French Jew was in a distressingly precarious position in regard to such increasing competition.[36]

Eminent historians have long observed that anti-semitism inevitably reveals an economic base.[37] It is hardly surprising therefore, that Rashi, a critical observer of the contemporary scene, (see "Introduction") should reveal, by his consistently cautious advice toward the operation and effect of Jewish commerce, an acute sensitivity for the dangerous social and political consequences of such economic rivalry. In an observation on the seven pairs of kine in Pharoah's dream (Gen. 41:2-3) the Jews' comfortable economic and social positions are accounted for.

(Rashi) "...a period of plenty is when people show themselves well-disposed to one another, for no-one (then) envies another's (prosperity)."

Why then the unmistakable message of his commentary pleading for unity, peace at all costs, and moderation in temperament and behavior? -- an awareness of storm clouds on the horizon. He continues:

"...all joy occasioned by the (years) of plenty will be

forgotten in the days of famine."

Thus in the midst of plenty, we gind Rabbi Shlomo admonishing his people to heed their behavior, note the poor serfs all about them, and not let current financial success go to their heads.

(Deut. 15:4) "However, there shall be no needy among you."

(Rashi) "..the needy will be amongst others, and not among you; if, however, you do not do the will of the Omnipresent, the needy will be among you."

Seeing that it was within the purview of the contemporary rabbinate to decide what was God's will, continued economic prosperity is here predicated on obedience to rabbinic leadership (Deut. 33:25 and part "II" below).

Possible Christian violation of the tenth commandment (i.e. covetousness of Jewish wealth) was an expecially disconcerting threat in the view of Rashi. Particularly in the presence of the "non-Jewish stranger who dwells among you" (ger toshab) (Deut. 14:2), his people are admonished not to over-indulge in their prosperity.

(Rashi) "Show yourself holy (i.e. abstineent) in respect to things which are permitted you."

It is difficult to believe that our anti-mystical, practical commentator is here advocating a morality of denial similar to the essential asceticism so ostensibly advocated by the majority Christian culture.[38] The more plausible hypothesis is that an underlying economic concern (i.e. Christian jealousy of Jewish commercial prowess) is being cloaked in religious imperativ

whose rationalizations are, in turn, re-inforced by their Medieval environment.

For instance, Rabbi Shlomo asks his community to refrain from including large quantities of meat in their daily diet (Lev. 17:13), a sign of great luxury, even in agrarian France, and indulged in by the profligate nobility.[39] Such an admonition was equally meant as a directive to avoid extravagance and live within your means.[40] For excessively high expenditures increased the chance of borrowing and bad feeling, bankruptcy and poverty -- all factors in community disharmony. For this reason Rashi consistently[41] held that group prosperity must override individual success, and one Jew is expressly forbidden to purposely give another bad financial advice, even though it is highly advantageous to the adviser (Lev. 25:17). No matter how anonymous the transaction remained, a God of justice would certainly know and exact appropriate punishment. (In the Age of Faith such an all-encompassing and literally credible threat becomes a foundation stone for rabbinic power in Europe -- see Part II, below.)

In regard to employee-employer relations, Rabbi Shlomo is again anxious to maintain unity and fellowship among the Jews, despite any loss in profit (Lev. 6:2). Whether he be a rich noble or a smaller merchant, if he is a co-religionist he is not to be given useless work that might irritate feelings and cause dissension. A familiar contemporary example is then used, i.e. hoeing aimlessly under a vine tree (Lev. 25:43,46). Even more significant, however, is the

interpretation of the Shavuot festival (Deut. 16:11) invoking Divine sanction for exemplary treatment of one's non-Jewish workers in family and business. If jealousy among Christians regarding Jewish fiscal success is to be avoided, then all the more so employee hostility due to deliberate inequity.

For this reason Rashi specifically enumerates various "shady" business practices, which would jeporadize the trust and acceptance of their Gentile customers, making them into feared opponents.

(Deut. 25:17) "Remember what he (gentiles) did to you."

(Rashi) "If you use false weights and measures then you must apprehend the provocation of the enemy.. if intentional sin comes, shame comes."

Desire to maintain good public relations (among non-Jews, according to the Torah context, i.e. Israel attempting to pass through the land of Edom-- Numb. 20:17) shows up in the advice to also patronize gentile merchants, at least in token fashion even if one has no direct need.

The above background will allow one to appreciate Shlomo Yitzhaki's inflexible stridtures against money-lending and usury. This critical observer of human nature and contemporary events was no doubt suspectful (and prophetically so) of the baneful risks to individual and community-- the hatred, violence and expulsion --that were soon to overtake the hapless practicioners of an occupation so universally despised during the Middle Ages.

Toward virtually no other subject of human endeavor does the Parshandata so clearly reveal his defensive attitude, thereby substantiating his intuition of environmental insecurity. So strongly did he hold to this position that even the sacred Talmudic tradition advocating a compromise position, i.e. the taking of usury only if absolutely necessary for a moderate living (Makkot, 24a), is bluntly rejected by the normally "liberal" Rashi with the curt ultimatum: "who ever lends money to a foreigner on interest will be destroyed."[42]

(Ex. 22:24) "If thou lend money to any of My people."

(Rashi) "...If you lend money, lend it to My people and not to a gentile. Another explanation: Thou shalt not treat him disrespectfully when lending him (a Jew) money, for he is (one of) My people."

The clear implication here is that interest-taking, even among Jews, is to be discouraged, expecially due to its insidious tendency for bringing about rancor and disunity within the community.

> "Interest resembles the bite of a snake; (inflicting) a small wound in a person's foot which he does not feel at first, but all at once it swells and distends (the whole body) up to the head."

If then, loans were to be discouraged due to such formidable difficulties associated with monetary interest, what necessary substitute was there to keep the economy going? Within the Jewish community the compromise answer to this difficult problem is considered

the lesser of two evils, i.e. repeated charity with less consequent group danger by encouraging slothfulness rather than allowing envious hostility to build.

(Deut. 15:10) "Thou shalt surely give him."

(Rashi) "-even 100 times. 'him' (implies) between you and him (i.e. privately)."

The latter appeal for charitable anonymity is further evidence that poverty bore a culture-wide onus which served as a protective community weapon against its exploitation by habitual shirkers. When God tells Moses to return to Egypt and deliver his people (Ex. 4:19) both the cause and disgrace of poverty are clearly delineated.

(Rashi) "..they (the poor) had come down (in the world), having lost their property; and a poverty-stricken man may well be regarded as dead."

There is little doubt that the model for the above comment was the familiar, hapless serf used as a very real, threatening model of the animal-like existance at which the greater society could force one to live. Parenthetically, our commentator could empathize in some degree with those whom ill fortune had impoverished, since there is ample evidence that Rashi suffered financial distress while a student in Germany, not being able to tend his prosperous vineyards.[43]

In harmony with their feudalistic society and the imperative need for the scattered, politically powerless Jews of France to hold down or halt "brush fire" resentment at its local source, if at all

feasible, each separate community was deemed most effective, and therefore, responsible, for dealing with financial distress or inequity. (Ex. 22:24).

(Rashi) "..(if the choice is between caring) for the poor of thine own city and the poor of another city, thine own city comes first."

Such a ruling was obviously intended to encourage and support the local autonomy of individual communities--one of the principal institutional pillars in Rashi's conception and formation of the European rabbinate.[44] In the second part of this paper, we shall analyze how the Parshandata's Pentateuchal commentary justified and re-inforced a shift in civil leadership from secular to religious authorities, i.e. to the scholars who composed the new institutional rabbinate.[45]

Part II

Themes on Leadership in Rashi's Pentateuchal Commentary

I. Torah's Relevancy

We have already made mention of the various reasons why Rashi's Torah interpretations, by his own admission, hewed closely to the literal meaning of the text, despite their heavy reliance on midrashic illustration (see p. 6, above). These two characteristics of Shlomo Yitzhaki's commentary; namely, accuracy and imagination; are especially good evidence that --unlike his academically oriented labors in Talmud and halacha --the Torah work was deliberately intended to reach and therefore sway French-German Jewry enmasse.

As an historically authenticated pedagogue par excellence,[46] the Parshandata was well aware of that universal aversion to brain work particularly prominent among his commonfolk target and, conversely, the hypnotic power of the artist who could skillfully manipulate their collective heartstrings. The use of midrash was thus an ideal medium for both simplifying and making concrete any important proposition whose direct, widespread propogation among the people might be desirable or necessary.

A classic example of the beauty (and consequently powerful emotional appeal), with which Rashi was able to clothe essential arguments intended for popular consumption, occurs in the account of Jacob's request to be buried in Canaan, (Gen. 48:7). This episode is another instance of a clearly evident pattern which deliberately sought to eradicate any possible character blemishes among the

Hebrew patriarchs. Its probable dual motive has previously been alluded to as that of external polemics and internal strengthening of hierarchal authority.

(See pgs. 12, 21 above; "Hierarchy" section below).

(Rashi) "And although I trouble you to take me into the land of Canaan for burial and I did not do this for your mother - which I might easily have done since she died quite close to Bethlehem ... (and) I know that in your heart you feel some resentment against me; know, however, that I buried her there by the command of God. (This was in order) that she might help her children when Nebuzaradan would (in the future) take them into captivity. For when they were passing along that road Rachel came forth (from her grave and stood) by her tomb weeping and beseeching mercy for them. As it is said (Jer. 31: 14-17): 'A voice is heard in Rama' (Rachel weeping for her children) and the Holy-One-Blessed-Be-He replied to her: 'There is a reward for thy works, says the Lord...for thy children will return to their own border'..."

Since the Pentateuch, through the vehicle of Talmudic law, functioned as the supreme law among French-German Jewry;[47] it was only natural for the Parshandata to want to revise his interpretations, thereby keeping them current and applicable to changing conditions

in the environment. In addition to the Torah's Divine sanction, Rashi's famed educative intuition fully appreciated that his commentary could only make the desired impact on his people if its material were relevant for solving problems in their daily existence. Rabbi Shlomo's grandson makes this explicit in a remark on Gen. 37:2.

(Rashbam) "And R. Solomon, my maternal grandfather, the Torch of the Captivity, devoted himself to the natural meaning of the text; and I, Samuel son of Meir, discussed his explanations with him and before him, and he confessed to me that if he had the leisure, he would have deemed it necessary to do his work all over again by availing himself of the explanations that suggest themselves day after day."

This paper would submit, however, that such a revision was not contemplated primarily to correct "imperfections" of interpretation along more literally-rational (pshat) lines,[48] nor was it indicative of an alleged, natural flexibility and anti-dogmatic nature which purports Rashi to have been an enlightened opponent of his authoritarian age.[49] On the contrary, rather than abstract academic accuracy, a far more pressing need was for relevant applicability in order to underwrite the practical rabbinic leadership of European Jewry.

II. Religious Environment

At the very basis of the religious leader's bid for and possession of civil authority was the culture-wide conviction that no person could secretly thwart God's will and still escape Divine punishment. The total religious environment, Christian and Jewish, mutually enforced belief in an all-powerful, omniscient, judging deity.[50]

In one representative[51] and revealing comment, both defensive and leadership concerns are united by a confident expectation that, relying on Theistic Absolutism, religiously inspired civil enactments cannot be thwarted by Jewish "trouble-makers."

(Lev. 19:14) "But thou shalt be afraid of thy God."

(Rashi) "Who is cognisant of thy (secret) thoughts. Similarly, in all actions where it is given only to the heart of him who does it (to know the motive that prompts him) and where other people have no insight into it, Scripture states: 'But be afraid of thy God'."

We have already noted the unmistakable dictum (Gen. 14:2) that those who flout accepted religious regulations, and by implication the expressed word of God, are not to be trusted in their relations with other people. (See analogy to this effect, p. 28, above). Such a punishment approaches the social ostracism comparable to excommunication —a power the scholar or "rav" first obtained in Rashi's

time.[52] Not only could the transgressor suffer a personal social and political exile for defying the religious authorities; he might very well be condemned to the eternal loss of the Middle Age's most supreme reward --individual salvation. For if the wicked were considered as dead during their mortal life (Gen. 11:32, p. 28, above) how much the more so might one presume their end to be "final" when natural human death occured.

The prevailing theological climate once again reinforced Rabbi Shlomo when he admonishes his exiled people to accept willingly their present unavoidable state and rely on a providential God for their protection (Deut. 33:3; Gen. 8:11, p. 12, above). At the same time both Saadia Gaon and Rashi firmly maintained that the Jews were first and foremost a religious community. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, was for community leadership to be guided by a recognized spiritual (rather than secular) authority who could authentically interpret this Divine will.[53] Furthermore, unless conflicting leadership ambitions were subordinated in a statesman-like fashion, the Jewish community would be dangerously divided and led astray from its righteous, saving "shepherds" (Deut. 25:1).

(Rashi) "What was it that caused Lot to leave the righteous man (Abraham)? You must admit it was a quarrel."

In working out the theoretical groundwork whereby the rabbi alone could forecast Heavenly blessing or punishment, we note an

expecially striking parallel between the spiritual ideas of Rashi and his Feudal environment. For he formulates the working relationship between the Creator and His chosen people (Deut. 11:14) as an obligation whose terms nearly duplicate those of a Feudal oath.[54]

(Rashi) "(When) you will have done that which devolves upon you, (then) I, too, will do that which devolves on me."

This parallel is carried further by an implicit simile, making the Jews into serfs of God, by equating (i.e. binding) His people with their (promised) land (Deut. 32:43, page 5, above).

III. Hierarchy

Despite any personal proclivities toward gentle and liberal tendencies,[55] there is ample evidence that Rashi felt the need to give his unqualified support to the prevailing pattern of hierarchy, so characteristic of Feudal France, in order to foster the leadership ambitions of the scholar class. We read of Rabbi Shlomo's insistance that French Jewry could only achieve ultimate salvation by remaining faithful subjects to their heavenly King (p. 41, etc., above). A more earthly parallel in (Gen. 15:18) perhaps explains how the Jews had been theoretically prepared to accept the classification of collective royal serfs of the Holy Roman Emperor when (one year before Rashi's death)[56] political visicitudes rendered them classless, non-citizens of Feudal Europe.

(Rashi) "..a king's servant is a king; attach yourself to a captain and they will bow down before you."

Similarly, in a remark which accounts for the changing of Levitical garments in deference to one's rank and assigned task (Lev. 6:4), our commentator again reveals his support of a hierarchy adhering to social stratification and local custom - the exact basis of Feudalism's political consolidation in 11th century France and Germany.[57]

Rashi specifically justifies promotion of the religious leader into his contemporary hierarchal set-up by noting that Moses rebuked the Israelites for not "approaching" him through the orderly channels

of heads of tribes, elders, young men, etc (Deut. 1:22). Similarly, the rebellion of the Israelites at Marah (Ex. 15:25) is explained as due to lack of proper deference of the people toward their appointed superior - the religious leader, Moses.

(Rashi) "..He (God) saw their stubborness: that they did not consult with Moses in a respectful fashion...."

Furthermore, the parshandata leaves little doubt as to what rank the religious authority should occupy in this hierarchy. Thus when Joshua, as a prophet, receives the mantle of Israelite leadership, it combines both supreme secular and spiritual (though not ritual) power. Despite Moses' counsel to his successor to act only with the advice and permission of the elders (secular heads), he is overruled by God himself (Deut. 31:7).

(Rashi) "...Everything depends on you (alone): (if necessary) take a stick and beat them over the head. There can be but one leader for a generation, and not two leaders for a generation."

The above observation, combined with the impressive victory of Pope Gregory VII over the greatest ruler of his day, Henry IV, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (Rashi being 37 years old),[58] lends credence to the supposition that Rabbi Shlomo's eventual hope was for the rabbinate to supplant rather than co-exist with lay leadership in the community.

On several occasions[59] Rashi cites an unbroken chain of traditional

Jewish authority to buttress the honor and civil jurisdiction of contemporary religious leaders.

(Deut. 19:17) "(And they shall stand before the judges) who shall be in those days."

(Rashi) "Jepthah in his generation (despite being a comparatively minor leader, must still be regarded) as was Samuel in his generation."

The above citation corroborates those scholars who maintain that Rashi was able to grant religious power (and thus community leadership) to the scholars of the Bet Din by virtue of binding Talmudic tradition derived, via Rabbenu Gershom, in an unbroken chain of authority from Hai Gaon of the Babylonian academy and thence, ultimately to Moses himself.[60]

IV. Torah Life

A continuous mandate, extending the full length of Rabbi Shlomo's commentary, is for his fellow Jews to immerse themselves totally within a Torah-oriented existance. It seems, however, that the consequent exclusion of most non-Jewish intellectual influences was not only intended as a preventative against excessive Christian acculturation (See section VI, p. 25 above).

Ever since Saadia Gaon's struggle with the Babylonian exilarch, one century earlier, a precedent had been set for the religious leader to progressively gain more influence and power over the Jewish people at the expense of secular leadership. There is little doubt that the Parshandata also espoused Saadia's doctrine that the Jews' maintained their peoplehood only by adherence to the Torah, and leadership should therefore be vested in a man who had the authority to interpret the Torah.[61]

By urging his fellow religionists not to acquire the "wisdom" of their gentile environment (Lev. 18:4, see p. 26) Rashi is really advocating an intellectual distinctiveness rather than a practically unachievable academic isolation. Neither the Talmudic sages nor the geonim discouraged secular or "scientific" knowledge per se. In fact the primitive notions of biology, botany, astronomy, etc. of the Talmud compared very favorably with the general, secular science of educationally backward Northern France of the eleventh century.[62]

And the repeated French glosses, liberally sprinkled throughout the Pentateuchal commentary, reveal an unmistakably keen interest in and appreciation of detailed secular (i.e."non-Jewish") knowledge.

Nevertheless, we have seen that our French commentator was anxious to reduce the penetrative influence of the outside culture to the necessary minimum, and thus appealed to his brethren to place their prime interest and total loyalty in the teachings of the Torah (Deut. 6:7; 32:46). Significant evidence to this effect, and one of the most effective means of achieving such separation, was Rashi's explicit prohibition against seeking recourse to non-Jewish courts (Ex. 21:1).

(Rashi) "...for he who brings Israel's lawcases before the Gentiles defames the name of the Lord and pays honor to the name of the idol, for...when our enemies are judges over us it is a testimony to the superiority of that which they reverence."

Moreover, the local Bet Din, who equally shared the critical power of excommunication with secular community authorities, thus became a most potent instrument in Rashi's institution of the European rabbinate.[63]

A terse and significantly defiant summary of Shlomo Yitzhaki's above position on Moses' law is recorded in Deut. 33:4. The defensive tone and content (his own words) hint at a forboding of future distress for the Israelite community in France and Germany.

(Rashi) "We have taken it and we will not abandon it."

V. Oral Law

Rashi's repeated expressions in favor of the oral law,[64] as well as the renewed importance of teachers and scholars, are both a vital link in the chain of argument elevating the rabbinate to practical community leadership. In fact the primary rationalization for the assumption of civil powers by the rabbi was his recognized expertise as an interpreter of Divine Will (Gen. 26:5). Since the written scripture represented only partial revelation of the road to eternal salvation (the ultimate goal of all mankind in the Age of Faith), we can appreciate how Jewish scholars held the keys-to-the-kingdom (to use the Christological phrasing no doubt familiar to Rabbi Shlomo's more educated co-religionists) through knowledge of the vast and complex unwritten but revealed tradition.

(Ex. 21:1) "Now these are the ordinances which thou shalt set before them."

(Rashi) "God said to Moses:...I shall not take the trouble to make them (the common people) understand the reason of (each) thing and its significance; therefore Scripture says: 'which thou (religious teacher) shalt set before them' -- like a table fully laid (Shulchan Aruch) before a person with everything ready for eating."

Furthermore, (as in the "relevancy" section above, pp. 37-39) this teaching and corollary leadership role could only be accomplished

via a Torah tradition that responded to the problems of the Parshan data's own age, (Ex. 19:1).

(Rashi) "...The words of the Torah should ever appear as new to you, as if they had been given today."

For scriptural injunctions to remain eternally binding and yet continuously germane to current events, a broad interpretation of their contents was imperative. The oral law thus provided a built in flexibility of formulation --an opportunity which Rashi took ample advantage of, in justifying what were often environmentally imposed leniencies toward Halacha (See p. 3 on Christian employees of Jews; and Gen. 3:3).

Two significant illustrations of this established rabbinic privilge to innovate occur in the administration of justice. The first is a legal and psychological principle which could be used by scholar-judges as a powerful theoretical vehicle for political maneuver, (or also serve as a polemical retort to the unfavorable comparison of Christian charitable love versus stern Jewish legalism).[65]

(Lev. 18:4) "Ye shall do My judgments."

(Rashi) "(These are) matters which are (in conformity with the human feeling) of justice such as (one feels) ought to be ordained, if they had not (already) been prescribed by the Torah."

Likewise, (Ex. 21:1) Jewish law courts were completely autonomous and maintained supreme sovereignty within their individual communities, thus bolstering enormously the civil authority of local religious

leaders. Such an arrangement was equally effective as both a future counter-weight and present deterent to the possible establishment of any centralized secular authority such as the exilarchate of Babylonia, then only recently defunct.[66]

Despite its flexibility in formulation, however, once the oral legislation had been officially promulgated and sanctioned by the religious authorities, strict adherence to its applicable tenets was automatically presumed and required. To this end Rabbi Shlomo urges unequivocal study שמיעה and obedience עשיה to the "unwritten" rabbinical codes for the specifically defensive purpose of maintaining French-German Jewry's current reputation as educational exemplars (and, thus, discouragingly capable polemicists) among their non-Jewish neighbors (Deut. 4:6; see p. 18, above). Rashi explicates this same doctrine a few verses later (Deut. 4:9).

> "(Only) when you do not forget them (the commandments) but do them in their <u>correct</u> <u>manner</u> will you be accounted wise and understanding men in the eyes of the peoples; if not...you will be accounted as fools."

The not infrequent equation of religious ordinance with royal decree again reveals (see "Hierarchy" section, above, p. 43f) Rashi's use of a rigidly hierarchal external environment to reinforce unquestioning, precise, (and "internal") implementation of rabbinical regulations.

(Ex. 15:26) "Thou shalt incline the ear (to keep) all His statutes."

(Rashi) "To be punctilious in the practice of the details (as in) matters which are the decree of the king, i.e. which appear to have no reason, (and at which) the evil inclination cavils (saying): 'What sense is there in prohibiting these (matters)'."

Moreover, not only would stringent observation of Scriptural interpretations by the local rabbis cement the leadership role of the scholar class, it also served the vital function of promoting harmonious unity within each autonomous community (see sections on "Peace" and "Group Responsibility"— Part I, above). An explanatory analogy to Rashi's remarks on Deut. 11:13 aptly summarizes this point. "If two people part from each other, one going direct East, the other direct West, at the end of one day they will be two days distance from each other."[67]

A profitable conclusion to this section should again recall Rabbi Shlomo's repeated efforts to interpret away any character blemish among Israelite heroes, especially in the Pentateuch (see pp. 21-22; also Gen. 49:4).

(Gen. 31:19) "And Rachel stole the teraphim."

(Rashi) "Her intention was to wean her father from idol worship."

Ibn Ezra, on the other hand, contemporary product of a more sophisticated, liberal Spanish culture, apparently feels no compulsion to impute such solely pristine motives to Mother Rachel. He, therefore,

realistically opines that this womanly bit of chicanery was to prevent Laban from divining her escape with Jacob. In Rashi's espousal of the oral tradition, however, not only was there an external environmental need to polemically defend the honor of the patriarchs, but, in the Feudal hierarchy of Northern Europe, the merit and authority of Israel's religious fathers was the infallible inherited source of internal contemporary rabbinic power and consequent, civil-leadership aspirations.

VI. Image of Scholar

If Shlomo Yitzhaki's consistent stress on the value and import of oral tradition makes of it the theoretical bedrock for his institutional rabbinate,[68] then the evident aggrandizement of the scholars' status in the Torah commentary clearly points up his political pretensions for the European rabbinate.

We have already observed the major theme, throughout Part I of this paper, that the needs of the community necessarily took precedence over individual preferences or requirements. But even loyalty to the family unit (as represented by the father) was subordinate in hierarchal obligation to manifold religious formulations (central focus of group life in the Age of Faith), determined principally by the local Bet Din.[69] A case in point is community Sabbath regulations (Lev. 19:3).

(Rashi) "...both you and your father are equally bound to honor Me. Do not, therefore, obey him if it results in nullifying My words."

In fact, trading on the traditional respect and obedience proferred on the head of the household, our commentator urges his people to think of the scholar (in 11th century France this could only be a clergyman[70]) as they would their father.

(Deut. 6:7) "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

(Rashi) "Even as disciples are termed 'children', so the

teacher is termed 'father'."

Moreover, it is probably not mere coincidence that high ranking clergy, with whom Rashi was no doubt conversant,[71] were also accorded the honorific title of "father."[72]

The crucial question, of course, is what motivated the Parshandata to accord such unprecendented prestige to the role of teacher (i.e. religious scholar or rabbi). In this paper an answer has been suggested through detailed documentation of apparent defensive and leadership themes in Shlomo Yitzhaki's Torah commentary. This inductive, factual evidence has then been syncretized in the structural, historical hypothesis that only Divinely inspired (i.e. religious) authorities were deemed capable by Rashi of guiding the vulnerable Israelite community through a recognizably perilous future in Northern Europe. A partial, independent endorsement of the above view, espoused by an eminent Jewish historian, also considers Rashi's positive re-emphasis of the teacher and oral law as a defensive maneuver against Christian polemics.[73]

Jacob's negative prophecy regarding the fortunes of Simeon's descendants (Gen. 49:7) provides a striking example of the traditionally low social and economic status occupied by the Jewish teacher.[74]

(Rashi) "...for you will find that the (very) poor, the scribes and elementary teachers, were all of the tribe of Simeon."

That such a description correctly portrays the religious teacher's inferior position, both during and after Rashi's lifetime, is attested to by competent scholarship.[75] It is therefore evident that a most significant need was apprehended by the shrewdly pragmatic Rashi, to compel his undertaking the nearly impossible task of eradicating such a durable and very-accurate, popular social image.

We have noted, moreover, how vigorously the Parshandata pursued this desired objective (see p. 19, above). The supreme reward of the Middle Ages, salvation and immortality, is promised to those parents whose teaching would keep their children in the straight and narrow path approved by rabbinic leaders (Gen. 18:19).

(Rashi) "We may infer that he who trains up a righteous son is as one who never dies."

Similarly, in another father-image observation (Num. 3:1), the factually low level of esteem for a teacher does not dissuade our normally, precise observer from his obviously intentional exaggeration of the religious pedagogue's import.

(Rashi) "This tells (us) that whoever teaches the Torah to the son of his fellow man, Scripture regards it to him as though he had begotten him."

There can be little doubt that in a pre-Gutenberg age the scarcity of books as well as competent scholars to write and teach their contents gave rise to some distress over the danger of forgetting the oral tradition (Deut. 11:22). In his explication of

"forgetting", (Deut. 11:13), however, the French commentator is evidently more concerned with rabbinic-scholar "enhancement" than recruitment. Given French-German Jewry's precarious, external vulnerability, the central worry was not gradual forgetting but outright forsaking of Torah tradition and the consequent extermination of this Israelite community.

(Rashi) "If you have begurn to <u>forget</u> (שכח) your end will be that you will forget (כלה) all of it (the oral and written commandment). For so it is written in a (certain) scroll: 'If thou <u>forsake</u> me (עזבתני) one day, I will forsake thee (אעזבך) two days'."

Probably the most clear-cut illustration of the scholar's right to lofty and powerful position is an incidental illusion to the "rav" (traditional title for a Jew with both recognized scholarship and authorization - "semicha" - within a community)[76] in an interpretation of the crucially important "Shma" declaration (Deut. 11:13). The position of "rabbi" is viewed here as a coveted honor, within the context of an apparent polemic against the Christian view of Jewish behavior as being motivated by sterile, non-loving legalism.

(Rashi) "..You should not say: 'Well, I will study, but in order that I may become <u>rich</u>, in order that I may obtain the <u>title</u> <u>rabbi</u>, in order that I may receive a <u>prize</u> - rather, whatever you do, do it out of love (for God)..."

VII. Qualifications and Reward of Rabbinic Leader

Further structural evidence of Rashi's efforts to obtain civil authority for the rabbinate stems from his Pentateuchal accolade regarding the scholar's necessary qualities. One can extract a veritable manual of superior virtues and traits (somewhat analogous to the philosopher-king).

Unlike the Babylonian Geonate, aristocratic background or political connections[77] were by no means a necessity to these democratically-elected, locally autonomous religious authorities.[78] The preoper amount and kind of scholarly Jewish education was, however, a sina qua non. Thus a rote knowledge of accumulated Jewish heritage was insufficient without a thorough comprehension, as well, that enabled the teacher to also transmit the reason and significance underlying each precept (Ex. 21:1). Such a well-grounded background would be especially necessary at this period of church reform, and pre-Crusade enthusiasm which no doubt generated increasingly sophisticated, vociferous Christian polemics.[79] Further evidence of this strong concern was the requirement of every scholar to be equally well versed in <u>all</u> twenty-four books of the Bible, such as the prophets (Isaiah is specifically mentioned) and Psalms, from which Christian arguments were extracted in particular abundance (Ex. 31:18).

Of almost equal importance for the prospective, rabbinic leader was the development and manifestation of scrupulous personality

traits. For instance, perhaps in righteous reaction against the proclivity to drunkeness among Christian clergy of Rashi's time,[80] the authority of Jewish religious functionaries was to be revoked whenever they operated in a state of intoxication (Lev. 10:11). Moderation in temperament was also a characteristic of paramount import since even the greatest Jewish leader, Moses, blundered in his administration of law by allowing passions to cloud his better judgement (Num. 31:21). By the same token if a religious authority was unintentionally mistaken he should forthrightly admit it as in the additional case of Moses and Aaron (Lev. 10:20), and not compound a mistake through prideful silence that might endanger the community.

Perhaps the most descriptive summary of an ideal scholar-leader is one whose behavior and teachings are imitated (Deut. 3:26) out of sincere love by his followers (Deut. 6:5), convinced that his wisdom and authority are a divinely inspired blessing capable of bringing about their salvation.

(Deut. 11:22) "If ye shall diligently observe to do all these commandments...and to cleave unto Him (God)."

(Rashi) "Is it possible to say this? Is He not a 'consuming fire?' But (it means): Cleave to the scholars and sages and I will account it unto you as though you cleave to Him."

In the above regard, by an analogy to a candlestick comparing Moses and the seventy elders (Num. 11:17), Rabbi Shlomo stresses the

responsibility of such an especially outstanding leader to inspire other religious authorities. Incidentally, the possibility of polemics cannot be ruled out in this illustration since a Medieval Christian tradition speaks of Jesus and the apostles in an almost identically worded simile.[81]

By no means an unworldly idealist (so often preached but so rarely practiced among Feudal, non-Jewish clergy) the parshandata realized that in the process of displacing secular leadership the rabbinic-scholar would also be exposing himself to more than a fair share of "outrageous fortune's slings and arrows." Shlomo Yitzhaki therefore promulgates a series of both earthly and spiritual rewards no doubt designed to induce the rabbi to conjoin holy study's comfortable security with the turmoil of community politics.

Thus the scholars who make up the Jewish law courts are to be (אנשי חיל) usually translated as "men of ability" from Scripture context, but deliberately rendered by Rashi's interpretation as "men of wealth." (Ex. 18:21). The stated reason is to prevent flattery and corruption by wealthy litigants, by no means ruling out the additional motive of building a competitive position in order to challenge the local authority of rich, powerful "parnassim" (lay leaders). We may also derive the argument that an acquaintance with abundant material wealth would make the rabbi a more empathic judge since Rashi counseled obedience to recognized religious

strictures even where a monetary loss was involved, (Lev. 6:2). On the other hand, he greatly strengthened the rabbi's bargaining power by an encouraging assurance to his co-religionists that through obedience to God's will (as interpreted by the proper religious authorities) much profit and material bounty would be assured to the "land" (i.e. people, Deut. 32:43) of Israel (Deut. 33:25), (see section on "Commerce", p. 32ff, above).

In the final analysis, however, the ultimate motivation for undertaking the difficult task of community leadership is a promise of Divine reward to that wise individual who will promote the peace and prosperity of Jewish households under his supervision (Ex. 20:22). Despite the unavoidable visicitudes and heavy responsibilities thereby thrust on the rabbi, he could draw strength and inspiration from sacred tradition stretching all the way back to Moses at Sinai, warranting his salvation (Num. 27:22).

(Rashi) "The reward of Jewish leaders is in the world to come."

Summary Conclusion

The eleventh century in France has been recognized as a crucial era of political, social and economic change and germination in the cultural development of Feudalism. Its institutions have now begun to solidify, primarily based on Christian oath and military service (Jews excluded de jure -- if not yet defacto). There is a noticeable upsurge in Christian art and architecture; and an increasing population results in new and larger towns; a new, Christian merchant and burgher class is rising with its associated guilds (again Jews are officially ineligible).

It has been the contention of this paper that Shlomo Yitzhaki, an eminently worldly scholar situated in vital Troyes -- a most important commercial center of Northen Europe, was thereby "in position" to become fully aware of all the above mentioned developments. That he also sensed their potentially adverse implications for French Jewry (in which local community he was unofficially the recognized leader) is indicated through at least three consistent themes of reaction to the Medieval Christian environment, as reflected in his Torah commentary.

In the first place, it has been possible to extract a considerable, though partial, list of passages which are a probable direct retort to Christian propagandists. Increasingly vociferous polemics against Muslim and Jew stemmed from the heightened militancy of a reformed Christian Church -- then engaged in a bitter Church-State conflict while simultaneously laying the groundwork for fanatic crusades to the Holy Land.

The second theme (Part I of this paper) is a series of remarks cautioning his economically well-situated co-religionists lest they place too much confidence in the continuing beneficence of their predominantly Christian environment. Such allusions include: a suggested attitude of appeasement toward the Gentile; reemphasis of the traditional woe at being scattered in unholy, exilic lands; necessity to maintain, at all costs, personal, family and community tranquility; group responsibility to enforce peaceful, organized solidarity; caution against excessive non-Jewish acculturation; and strictures against excessive material indulgence or exploitative business practices which might engender jealousy and hostility among less fortunate Gentile or Jew.

A virtual manual for rabbinic leadership, compiled from the commentary, is the third theme of environmental influence. Existence of a religious power vacuum due to decay of the Babylonian genoate (particularly in an Age of Faith, with difficult times ahead) apparently convinced the Parshandata that God-inspired rabbinic scholars could more effectively lead the Jewish community than the secular parnassim. Evidence for such an assertion, taken from Rashi's Pentateuchal work, includes: Strong reliance on the God-fearing and hierarchal mentality of the Feudal environment to enforce rabbinic control; stress on the oral law's flexibility of formulation but strictness in operation; exaggeration of the scholar-teacher's importance and prestige; an abundance of accolade and promised reward for rabbinic leaders.

Until a thorough comparative analysis of Rashi's midrashic sources is undertaken, the conclusions of this paper must necessarily remain "preliminary." We would submit, however, that our survey of the structural historical data of Rabbi Shlomo's era provocatively coincides with the exegesis this paper has labeled as polemical, precautionary and leadership themes in his Pentateuchal commentary.

Footnotes: Introduction

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[4]Solomon Grayzel, "Rashi, His Time and Ours," The Reconstructionist, VI (April 12, 1940), 7-8.

[5]Maurice Liber, Rashi, trans. Adele Szold (Philadelphia, 1906), pp. 21-23.

[6]James Parkes, The Jew in the Medieval Community (London, 1938), pp. 35-38.

[7]Glenn, op. cit., pp. 131-133.

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[17]Taylor, op. cit., pp. 303-305.

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[19]
Gen. 1:1; 1:2; 1:4; 1:26; 4:17; 5:21; 6:6; 8:11; 15:15; 24:27; 25:22; 25:23; 27; 21:17; 25:34; 26:5; 31:19; 31:24; 41:12.
Ex. 11:5; 22:24.
Lev. 10:11; 11:2; 16:4; 18:28; 19:30; 25:38; 26:41.
Num. 11:17; 13:27; 22:25.
Deut. 6:4-6; 11:12; 14:21; 20:9; 32:10; 33:19; 33:4

[20]Liber, op. cit., 164-166.

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[23]Zeitlin, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

[24]Durant, op. cit., p. 389.

[25]Cf. Num. 22:5; Gen. 34:7; Gen. 39:9.

[26]Randall, op. cit., p. 66.

[27]Ibid., p. 53.

[28]Ibid., p. 537.

[29]Cf. Num. 3:29; Num. 3:38.

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[34]Cf. p. 20, n. 24.

[35]Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 123.

[36]Grayzel, op. cit., p. 8.

[37]Durant, op. cit., p. 385.

[38]Randall, op. cit., pp. 47-52.

[39]Anne Fremantle, Age of Faith in Great Ages of Man: Series of Time-Life Books, ed. Harold C. Field (New York, 1965), pp. 26-28.

[40]M. Rosenbaum and A. Silberman, Leviticus, in Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary (New York, 1929), p. 178, n. 1.

[41]Cf. Lev. 19:14; Lev. 25:14.

[42]Parkes, op. cit., p. 341.

[43]Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 45.

[44]Solomon Zeitlin, Religious and Secular Leadership (Philadelphia, 1943), pp. 36-37.

[45]Ibid., pp. 36-46.

[46]Samuel Blumenfield, Master of Troyes (New York, 1946), part III.

[47]Liber, loc. cit., pp. 121-122.

[48]Ibid., p. 125.

[49]Blumenfield, op. cit., p. 98.

[50]H. O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind (London, 1914), I. 273. Randall, op. cit., pp. 34-36.

[51]Cf. p. 32, Lev. 25:17.

[52]Zeitlin, op. cit., (Rel. and Sec. Ldrshp.), p. 41.

[53]Ibid., pp. 41, XV.

[54]"Feudalism," Universal Standard Encyclopedia, 1957 ed., IX, 3156.

[55]Liber, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

[56]Grayzel, op. cit., p.8.

[57]Ibid., p. 7.

[58]Ibid., p. 9.

[59]Cf. Deut. 17:9; Deut. 26:3.

[60]Zeitlin, op. cit. (Rel. and Sec. Ldrshp), pp. 42-43.

[61]Ibid., p. 104.

[62]Rabinowitz, op. cit., pp. 221-224.

[63]Zeitlin, op. cit., (Rel. and Sec. Ldrshp.), p. 44.

[64]Cf. Deut. 4:14; Lev. 26:45.

[65]Randall, op. cit., pp. 38-44.

[66]Zeitlin, op. cit. (Amer. Jew. Yr. Bk.), p. 113.

[67]Rosenbaum and Silberman, op. cit. (Deut.), p. 196, n. 6.

[68]Blumenfield, op. cit., p. 91.

[69]Zeitlin, loc. cit. (Rel. and Sec. Ldrshp.), pp. 43-44.

[70]Randall, op. cit., pp. 20-22.

[71]See p. 27, n. 35.

[72]"Fathers of the Church," The Catholic Encyclopedia, VI, 1-2.

[73]Blumenfield, loc. cit.,p. 91 quoting S. Grayzel, The Church and the Jews, p. 251.

[74]Ibid., p. 53.

[75]Rabinowitz, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

[76]Zeitlin, op. cit., p. 45.

[77]Ibid., pp. 20-22.

[78]Ibid., pp. 43-45.

[79]Grayzel, op. cit., pp. 9-11.

[80]Fremantle, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

[81]T. H. Gaster, The Holy and the Profane (New York, 1955), p. 61.

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