

The Reception of Rashi's *Commentary on the Torah* in Spain: The Case of Adam's Mating with the Animals

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WHILE RASHI'S BIBLICAL COMMENTARY has profited from extensive and more or less uninterrupted scholarly inquiry,¹ considerably less attention has been devoted to the varied reactions over the ages to his scriptural exegesis.² The sorts of questions rightly posed with respect to Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* should also be asked about Rashi's *Commentary on the Torah*: "Where and when did the book penetrate first? Who were its sponsors and opponents? What were the initial steps, or stages, in its adoption everywhere?"³ This essay seeks to illumine an aspect of the

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1. For bibliographic orientation, see Avraham Grossman, "The School of Literal Jewish Exegesis in Northern France," *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament*, vol. 1, pt. 2, *From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages: The Middle Ages*, ed. M. Sæbø (Göttingen, 2000), 321–22. Despite the plenitude of "Rashi studies," there is still, as Israel Ta-Shma noted, "no comprehensive biography of this great medieval sage." See I. M. Ta-Shma, "Rabbinic Literature in the Middle Ages," *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, ed. M. Goodman (Oxford, 2002), 235.

2. There is no reason to restrict to medieval times the correct observation that "one of the important fields of Rashi studies is that of his mediaeval *fortuna*" (Eleazar Gutwirth, "Arragel on Ruth: Rashi in Fifteenth Century Castilian?" *Rashi 1040–1990: Hommage à Ephraïm E. Urbach*, ed. G. Sed-Rajna [Paris, 1993], 657).

3. I. M. Ta-Shma, "The Acceptance of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah* in Italy," *Italia* 13–15 (2001): 79.

reception of Rashi's biblical commentaries by focusing on the *Nachleben* of a single exegetical comment in four pre-expulsion Spanish supercommentaries. According to this comment, which Rashi cited from a rabbinic source, Adam experienced sexual intercourse "with every [species of] domesticated animal and wild animal." Had it not appeared in Rashi's *Commentary*, this startling idea might have gone the way of so many thousands of midrashic notions aired in rabbinic literature; that is, it would have been encountered fleetingly, if at all, and then, in most cases, soon been forgotten. Broadcast by the most influential Jewish biblical commentator of all time, however, the midrash entered the Jewish exegetical mainstream. What is more, in consequence of its inclusion in Rashi's *Commentary*, the midrash won ongoing, often protracted attention from a wide range of Jewish scholars over centuries. This study, which centers on the reception of Rashi's comment on Adam's relations with the animals in pre-expulsion Spain, illustrates how operations of interpretation performed by Rashi's Spanish glossators on his rabbinically based insight yielded a reading of it that, by comporting with longstanding Hispano-Jewish sensibilities, opened the way for this midrash's assimilation into the Spanish commentary tradition.⁴

As the biblical story in which Rashi's interpretation is embedded deals with Adam's attachments with the primordial beasts and first woman, the interpretive history which follows summons a number of evocative issues, among them: differing visions of the primeval human condition; the character of the prototypical human couple's union in the garden at a time when masculinity and femininity were first being defined; and the sometimes blurred boundaries separating humans from beasts.⁵ This case study also points to a number of larger issues, highlighting points of interaction between Sefarad and Ashkenaz,⁶ yielding another chapter in the

4. See my "Sefarad to Askenaz: A Case Study in the Rashi Supercommentary Tradition," *AJS Review* 30 (2006): 1–33, which traces the Spanish interpretation's fate in early modern Ashkenazic supercommentary literature and beyond.

5. Literature on Gn 2–3 is vast. Recent contributions with ample bibliography are *The Creation of Man and Woman: Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. G. P. Luttikhuisen (Leiden, 2000); Gary Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection: Adam and Eve in Jewish and Christian Imagination* (Louisville, Ky., 2001).

6. Surveys of the medieval terrain include Avraham Grossman, "Between Spain and France—Relations between Jewish Communities of Muslim Spain and France," *Exile and Diaspora*, ed. A. Mirsky, et al., 2 vols. (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1988), 2:75–101; idem, "Relations between Spanish and Ashkenazi Jewry in the Middle Ages," *Moreshet sefarad = The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. H. Beinart, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1992), 1:220–39.

venerable history of the interpretation of nonlegal rabbinic dicta (including the manner in which Christian criticism could influence medieval Jews as they interpreted classical rabbinic texts),⁷ and, by delving into the prolific fifteenth-century Spanish exegetical literature on Rashi's *Commentary*, contributing to a picture of Jewish religious and literary vibrancy in late medieval Spain.⁸

Most importantly, by focusing on a forgotten body of commentaries on Rashi's *Commentary*, the essay seeks to draw attention to a hitherto largely neglected literature: exegetical supercommentaries.⁹ The serious, searching supercommentary tradition that developed in Spain around Rashi's *Commentary* amply testifies to its stature beyond the Pyrenees. As will also be seen, however, the composition of prodigious glosses on the *Commentary* by Spanish writers by no means reflects their simple acceptance of Rashi's religious attitudes or stance toward rabbinic dicta. Rather, despite the exegetical supercommentary's outward appearance as a subordinate

7. See Marc Saperstein, *Decoding the Rabbi: A Thirteenth-Century Commentary on the Aggadab* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), 1–20; Eric Lawee, *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance toward Tradition: Defense, Dissent, and Dialogue* (Albany, N.Y., 2001), 83–92; I. M. Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary in Europe and North Africa: Literary History*, 2 vols. (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1999–2000), 2:190–201; Jacob Elbaum, *Medieval Perspectives on Aggadab and Midrash* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2000).

8. Recent historiography indicates that later medieval Spanish Jewry was not in ceaseless decline as the “lachrymose” presentation in the master narrative of Yitzhak Baer has it (see *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, 2 vols. [Philadelphia, 1978]). See, e.g., for the revisionist picture, Mark Meyerson, *A Jewish Renaissance in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Princeton, N.J., 2004). This picture is less filled out in the intellectual sphere. See, however, Eleazar Gutwirth, “Towards Expulsion: 1391–1492,” *Spain and the Jews*, ed. E. Kedourie (London, 1992), 51–73; idem, “Continuity and Change after 1492,” *Jews and Conversos at the Time of the Expulsion*, ed. Y. T. Assis and Y. Kaplan (English Section; Jerusalem, 1999), 93–108, and my “Changing Jewish Attitudes towards Christian Society: The Case of Spain in the Late Middle Ages,” *Facing In and Facing Out: Gentiles in the Eyes of Jewish Traditionalists*, ed. M. Brown, *York University Centre for Jewish Studies Annual* 3 (2001): 1–15.

9. Note a recent appeal “to develop the area of super-commentaries” (Michael Fishbane, “Bible Interpretation,” *Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*, 699) and see Uriel Simon's trail-blazing “Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra's Commentaries,” *Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra*, ed. I. Twersky and J. M. Harris (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 86–88. Rashi supercommentaries are barely researched. For orientation, see B. Barry Levy, “Rashi's Commentary on the Torah: A Survey of Recent Publications,” *Tradition* 23 (1988): 107–9. A cursory consideration of, arguably, the most important supercommentator is Jean-Christophe Attias, “Eliahu Mizrahi, sur-commentateur de Rashi (Constantinople, XV^e–XVI^e siècles): questions de méthode,” *Rashi 1040–1990*, 475–81.

literary form that defers both to a “sacred and obligatory” text (Scripture) and a “revered and indispensable” one (the work of scriptural commentary),¹⁰ this genre afforded Spanish exegetes a medium for interpreting Rashi in ways that reflected their individual religious allegiances as well as widely shared teachings of the Hispano-Jewish tradition.

I

Signs of Rashi’s growing presence in Iberia date from the inception of Hispano-Jewish scholarship’s second brilliant creative phase following the devastation and half-century of instability wrought by the mid-twelfth-century Almohad invasion of Muslim Spain.¹¹ Correspondence from an early thirteenth-century intracommunal dispute in Barcelona yields “perhaps the earliest Spanish document to reflect the image of Rashi as a towering figure”—a letter in which Rashi is cast as one “without whom Torah would have been forgotten from Israel.”¹² Meir Halevi Abulafia of Toldeo, the preeminent Spanish talmudist of the period, ushered Rashi’s talmudic commentaries into the precincts of Spanish rabbinic literature. As elsewhere in the Jewish world, they quickly achieved a central and lasting place there.¹³ Still, as Bernard Septimus has shown, Abulafia could dissent forcefully from Rashi’s commentaries, especially when they assumed a literal understanding of aggadah that he deemed unsettling or worse.¹⁴

With the rise of a vibrant tradition of biblical commentary in Christian Spain, Rashi’s *Commentary* was integrated into the world of Hispano-Jewish scholarship as well. In the second half of the thirteenth century, Nahmanides (Ramban), the most influential Jewish biblical interpreter to emerge from Christian Spain, cast Rashi as the “first-born” among commentators.¹⁵ He also engaged Rashi’s *Commentary* regularly, thereby

10. Simon, “Interpreting the Interpreter,” 86.

11. Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 1–38.

12. Bernard Septimus, “Piety and Power in Thirteenth-Century Catalonia,” *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 222, n. 18.

13. See, e.g., Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary*, 2:22, 40–41, 49–50, 84, 90. The earliest Iberian printed Talmuds included Rashi (idem, “Li-yedi’at matsav limud ha-Torah bi-Sefarad ba-me’ah ha-15,” *Jews and Conversos*, 52).

14. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, 78, notes that Abulafia at times found that Rashi’s literalism yielded results that were “nothing short of scandalous.”

15. *Perushe ha-Torah le-Rabenu Moshe ben Nahman (Ramban)*, ed. C. D. Chavel, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1959), 1:16.

doing much to enshrine it as a pivot of later Jewish Bible study.¹⁶ Still, Nahmanides could, for various reasons, view Rashi's commentaries with reserve.¹⁷ He certainly would have dissented from the view expressed by some of his northern French contemporaries who demanded, during the heated conflicts over rationalism in the 1230s, scriptural and aggadic exegesis in conformity with Rashi, or at least his more literalist approach.¹⁸

In the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, other Spanish exegetes took notice of Rashi, explicitly or otherwise. Bahya ben Asher (Sara-gossa, end of the thirteenth c.) cast Rashi as a "great luminary" who exemplified contextual biblical interpretation (*derekh ha-pesbat*) at its best.¹⁹ The Zohar's author drew on Rashi's exegetical patrimony²⁰ as, a few decades later, did the German transplant to Spain, Jacob ben Asher, author of the *Turim*. Jacob also engaged the commentaries of Abraham ibn Ezra and Nahmanides, reflecting, here as elsewhere, his transitional position "between Ashkenaz and Sefarad."²¹ Also emerging from the circle of Jacob's father was a compilatory commentary on the Torah composed by an Ashkenazic immigrant to Spain. Reflecting the habits of twelfth- and thirteenth-century northern French Bible study, this writer addressed Rashi's exegesis on almost every page, though his work was hardly a systematic supercommentary.²² By contrast, some indigenous

16. Isadore Twersky, "Introduction," *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides (Ramban): Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity*, ed. I. Twersky (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 4.

17. Bernard Septimus, "'Open Rebuke and Concealed Love': Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition," *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides*, 16–17.

18. Northern European scholarly insistence on allegiance to interpretation found in the *Commentary* is reported by an opponent (Joseph Shatzmiller, "Les tossafistes et la première controverse maïmonidienne," *Rashi et la culture juive en France du Nord au moyen âge*, ed. G. Dahan et. al. [Paris-Louvain, 1997], 79–80). Septimus conjectures that what was proscribed was deviation "not from the substance of particular interpretations but rather from Rashi's *method* of interpretation in accordance with the plain sense of the text" (*Hispano-Jewish Culture*, 78, emphasis in original).

19. *Be'ur 'al ha-Torah*, ed. C. D. Chavel, 3 vols. (Jerusalem, 1966), 1:5.

20. W. Bacher, "L'exégèse biblique dans le Zohar," *REJ* 22 (1891): 41–42; Elliot R. Wolfson, "Beautiful Maiden without Eyes: *Pesbat* and *Sod* in Zoharic Hermeneutics," *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. M. Fishbane (Albany, N.Y., 1993), 182.

21. I. M. Ta-Shma, "Rabbenu Asher and His Son R. Ya'akov Ba'al ha-Turim—Between Ashkenaz and Sepharad," *Pe'anim* 46/47 (1991): 75–91.

22. Victor Aptowitz, "Le commentaire du pentateuque attribué à R. Asher ben Yehiel," *REJ* 51 (1906): 59–86; S. Liber, "Le commentaire du pentateuque attribué à R. Asher ben Yehiel et le manuscrit hébreu No. 399 de Dresde," *REJ* 54 (1907): 64–101.

fourteenth-century Spanish Torah commentators paid Rashi little or no heed.²³

Asher ben Yehiel's arrival in Toledo marked a turning point in medieval Sephardic-Ashkenazic rabbinic interchange. It also seemingly nourished a growing prestige for Rashi's *Commentary* in Spain. In his legal code, Asher's son Jacob, building on an idea stated generically (that is, without explicit reference to Rashi) by his father, authorized Rashi's *Commentary* as a substitute for "targum" in meeting the requirement to review the weekly Torah-reading twice in Hebrew and once in interpretive paraphrase. Thus was the *Commentary* accorded unique status in a highly influential halakhic work.²⁴

Ebbs and flows in Rashi's reception within and across the subcommunities that composed Spanish Jewry remain to be researched but some trends can be discerned.²⁵ For instance, as the fortunes of Jewish communities in Catalonia and Aragon waned in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Rashi's standing in them waxed among scholars and ordinary Jews and, as we will see, at least one highly influential Christian. Rashi's exegesis was represented in the Torah commentary of the leading Aragonese rabbi of the mid-fourteenth century, Nissim ben Reuben Gerondi, and Nissim's prize student, Isaac bar Sheshet, occasionally even mentioned it in responsa.²⁶ Elsewhere, while reproving a Spanish colleague for his dismissive attitude toward the "stars" of earlier northern

23. For example, references to him are extremely rare in Joseph ibn Habib, *Perush 'al ha-Torah le-Rabenu Yosef ben David mi-Saragosah*, ed. L. A. Feldman (Jerusalem, 1973). (For ibn Habib as this work's author, see Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary*, 2:90–91.)

24. Jacob ben Asher, *'Arba'ab turim*, 'OH 285.1–2. For the formulation that apparently underlies Jacob's ruling, see Abraham Gross, "Spanish Jewry and Rashi's Commentary on the Pentateuch," *Rashi Studies*, ed. Z. A. Steinfeld (Ramat-Gan, 1993), 39, n. 55. For further Ashkenazic teachings along these lines, see Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages* (Detroit, 1992), 182, n. 112; Mordechai Breuer, "Ha-mikra' be-tokhnit ha-limudim shel ha-yeshivah," *Mefkarim be-mikra' uve-ḥinukh mugashim le-prof' Moshe 'Arend*, ed. D. Rappel (Jerusalem, 1996), 227–28. The *Commentary* was also singled out by Jacob's brother, Judah: "you should read Rashi's commentary and other commentaries on the *parashah* each week" (*Hebrew Ethical Wills*, ed. I. Abrahams, 2 vols. in 1 [1926; Philadelphia, 1954], 174).

25. Gross ("Rashi," 39, n. 53) is alert to possible regional differences.

26. On Nissim's use of Rashi, see the comment in Leon A. Feldman's edition of his *Perush 'al ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1968), 84. For Rivash, see *She'elot u-teshuvot R. Yitshak bar Sheshet*, ed. D. Metzger, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1993), #193 (1:230), #411 (2:626), #450 (2:666).

French rabbinic scholarship, bar Sheshet extolled “the great luminary, our [late] master Solomon . . . who uncovered the Talmud’s darkest depths.” Without Rashi’s commentary, the Talmud would be “as a sealed book.”²⁷ Such a heroic image of Rashi was not restricted to his role as a Talmud commentator.²⁸ In his supercommentary on Rashi’s *Commentary*, bar Sheshet’s colleague Moses ibn Gabbai extolled Rashi as one of Judaism’s great preceptors: a “master, eminence, father of Israel” — nay “angel of the Lord.”²⁹

Rashi’s increasingly lofty status in Catalonia and Aragon is further attested in accounts of the disputation of Tortosa/San Mateo (1413–1414) and in registers of Hebrew books confiscated from Jews living in the Pyrenean town of Jaca at the conclusion of this disputation. The Tortosa disputation, held under the aegis of the Avignonese pope Benedict XIII, saw leading representatives of the Catalo-Aragonese communities conscripted into a frequently interrupted two-year long *Catechesis* spearheaded by the apostate Jerònim de Santa Fe.³⁰ A later Hebrew report tells how these defenders of Judaism extolled Rashi’s “high standing and importance” while putting his name behind their interpretation of a rabbinic messianic saying. It also cites Jerònim ranking Rashi as “the greatest of commentators” while invoking Rashi to buttress his own christological reading of a classic polemical crux (“the scepter shall not depart from Judah”; Gn 49.10). Efforts to lay claim to Rashi’s prestige

27. *She’elot u-teshuvot*, #394 (2:574). By the fourteenth century, Rashi’s rescue of the Talmud from oblivion was something of a byword in Spain. See the comment of Menahem ben Zerah, in *Tsedab la-derekb* ([Warsaw, 1880], 6), that without Rashi “the ways of the Babylonian Talmud would have been forgotten from Israel.”

28. Benjamin R. Gampel, “A Letter to a Wayward Teacher: The Transformations of Sephardic Culture in Christian Iberia” (in *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. D. Biale [New York, 2002], 414), stresses only the influence of Rashi’s “talmudic glosses” in inspiring such an image. Meanwhile, Rashi’s “presence” in Spain goes wholly unregistered in Baer’s *History*, a magisterial study weak in its coverage of religious-literary developments.

29. *Eved shelomo*, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hunt. Don. 25 (film no. 16338 at the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem [hereinafter IMHM]), 1r–1v. For more on ibn Gabbai, see Baer, *History*, 2:121–22; Gross, “Rashi,” 41, n. 62.

30. Baer’s moving account (*History*, 2:170–243) remains the fullest. For Tortosa/San Mateo as *Catechesis*, see Moisés Orfali, “The Portuguese Edition (1565) of Hieronymous de Santa Fide’s *Contra Iudaeos*,” in *Contra Iudaeos*, ed. O. Limor and G. G. Stroumsa (Tübingen, 1996), 239. Jerònim’s biography frames Gampel’s “A Letter,” which supplies further bibliography on this figure.

appear in greater abundance in the event's Latin protocols.³¹ Meanwhile, in the "memorial" of twenty-six libraries confiscated in Jaca, ample evidence testifies to the prevalence of the "glosa de rabi Salamon de la Ley" on ordinary Jewish bookshelves.³²

The catalogue of libraries also mentions "declaraciones sobre rabi Salamon," possibly referring to a supercommentary on Rashi's *Commentary on the Torah*.³³ At any rate, this genre was just then emerging in Spain. Writing in 1422 in his *'Eved shelomo*, Moses ibn Gabbai, who fled Spain for North Africa after 1391, went so far as to speak of "many more estimable than myself who have preceded me in explaining his [Rashi's] commentary."³⁴ Among ibn Gabbai's predecessors was an anonymous writer with ties to the Catalanian exegete and grammarian Isaac ben Moses Halevi (Profet Duran), whose tome stands as the first readily datable, comprehensive Spanish supercommentary on Rashi's *Commentary*, predating ibn Gabbai's by at least a decade.³⁵ Spanish entries in the field would con-

31. Solomon ibn Verga, *Shevet yehudah*, ed. A. Shohat (Jerusalem, 1946), 99, 107. For the Latin protocols, see Moisés Orfali, "Alusiones polémicas a la exégesis de Rasi en la Controversia de Tortosa," *Helmantica* 36 (1985): 107–17.

32. Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Angel Motis Dolader, "Twenty-Six Jewish Libraries from Fifteenth-Century Spain," *The Library* 18 (1996): 27–53. (For the libraries' representative character, see p. 31.) In addition to specific references to the *Commentary* (35, 37, 40, 41 [x 2], 42, 45, 46 [x 2], 51, 52), there are general references to "glosa de rabi Salamon sobre la Biblia," "glosa de Rabi Salamon," and "glosas de las profecias" (34, 39, 44, 45 [x 3], 47 [x 2], 48 [x 2], 49 [x 2]). A possible allusion to the proscription on Hebrew writings during the period occurs in the Psalms commentary of Abraham Rimoch, who felt "constrained" to write due to "the lack of books." See Frank Talmage, "Trauma at Tortosa: The Testimony of Abraham Rimoch," *Mediaeval Studies* 47 (1985): 383.

33. Gutwirth and Motis Dolader, "Twenty-Six Jewish Libraries," 38.

34. *'Eved shelomo*, 1r. Even allowing for literature produced beyond Spain and a bit of conventional hyperbole, the reference to "many" is puzzling, all the more if by it is intended large commentaries on the scale of ibn Gabbai's.

35. The dating derives from references to Duran with a blessing for the living (New York, JTS MS Lutski 802 [= film no. 24033 at the IMHM], 4r, 5v, 16v, 23v, 146r, with thanks to the librarian and faculty of the Jewish Theological Seminary for permitting me the use of this manuscript). As *Ma'aseb efod* was completed in 1403, this is the supercommentary's *terminus a quo*. Since, however, Duran was alive at the time of the Tortosa/San Mateo disputation, the anonymous supercommentary may have been written as much as a decade or so after this date. The work's Spanish origins seem assured since the only copy that survives is in a Spanish hand and the author refers frequently to Spanish writers (privileging Nahmanides). Such Spanish glosses as stretch back to the fourteenth century are not comprehensive. Thus, Samuel ibn Shoshan's *Ḥazor ve-shoshan* (Gross, "Rashi," 40) runs less than twenty-five folio pages (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Opp. Add., 1r–23v) whereas the supercommentary of Duran's contem-

tinue through the “generation of expulsion,” emanating both from Iberia and newer Diaspora centers of Spanish learning.³⁶

This intense Sephardic participation in a program of commentary on the foremost work of Ashkenazic biblical commentary fits with larger trends, such as the general Sephardic devotion to the Bible and its interpretation in contrast to the more “talmudocentric” proclivities of Ashkenazic scholarship,³⁷ and the advent of a supercommentary tradition on Abraham ibn Ezra’s commentary on the Torah, a field in which Spanish writers excelled. This “ibn Ezra Renaissance” saw no less than thirteen supercommentaries produced by Spaniards in a fifty-year period.³⁸ In Joseph ben Eleazar’s *Tsafenat pa’neah*, which Uriel Simon regards as the best of these, ibn Ezra and Rashi were even occasionally brought into dialogue.³⁹

Efforts to chart the standing of Rashi’s *Commentary* in Spain during the closing period of professing Ibero-Jewish life lead to Castile. In the early fifteenth century, Rashi’s biblical scholarship seemingly served as a

porary even in its incomplete extant version (ending at Dt 14.21), runs 170 folio pages. Moses ibn Gabbai’s supercommentary is over 250 folio pages.

36. For Castilian supercommentaries written around the time of the expulsion, see below, n. 41. Other Spanish glossators from around the same time, like Moses Albelda and the anthologizing supercommentator Jacob Kenizal, are not easy to date precisely; see Moshe Filip, “Introduction,” *Sefer Rabi Ya’akov Kenizal ‘al perush Rashi* (Petah Tikvah, 1998), 5–13. Helpful in the case of the latter (if unknown to Filip) is the passing reference to Kenizal as a *rosh yeshiva* (in a locale dubbed “Avila de Campos”) at the time of the expulsion. See Alexander Marx, “The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain: Two New Accounts,” *JQR* 20 (o.s.) (1908): 250.

37. As Frank Talmage noted, “any treatment of medieval Bible study necessarily revolves around the issue of Ashkenazim vs. Sephardim.” See “Keep Your Sons from Scripture: The Bible in Medieval Jewish Scholarship and Spirituality,” *Understanding Scripture*, ed. C. Thoma and M. Wyschogrod (New York, 1987), 82.

38. For Sephardic dominance in this field, see the Hebrew version of Simon’s article cited above (n. 9): “Interpreting the Interpreter: Supercommentaries on Ibn Ezra’s Commentaries between 1275 and 1400,” *The Bible in the Light of its Interpreters: Sarab Kamin Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Japhet (Jerusalem, 1994), 406–8. For the coinage “ibn Ezra Renaissance,” see Alexander Altmann, “Moses Narboni’s ‘Epistle on *Shi’ur Qoma*,’” *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 241.

39. Simon, “Interpreting the Interpreter,” 121: “Joseph ben Eleazar the Spaniard excelled all his predecessors among Ibn Ezra’s commentators, and, it seems, all those who followed him.” For Joseph’s clarification of ibn Ezra’s critique of Rashi in one instance, see the Hebrew version of Simon’s article cited in the previous note, p. 394.

“major influence” on the translation and glosses composed by Moses Arragel for his vernacular Bible commissioned by Don Luys de Guzman, Grand Master of the Order of Calatrava.⁴⁰ From the mid-fifteenth century on Castilian occupation with Rashi’s *Commentary* intensifies. Isaac Canpanton counseled (without referring to particular works) study of Rashi on the assumption that nothing issued from his pen adventitiously. On the eve of the expulsion, the heads of Castile’s leading rabbinic academies, Canpanton’s students Isaac de Leon and Isaac Aboab, both composed (no longer extant) supercommentaries on Rashi’s *Commentary*. So did Judah Klatz, a Castilian scholar who wrote in North African exile. The methodological approaches to Rashi adopted by Klatz, the later Iberian-born supercommentator Abraham Bokhrat, and yet other anonymous supercommentators of the period reflect critical vocabulary and the hermeneutic outlook promoted by Canpanton in the study of classical Jewish texts.⁴¹ In fact, the first Hebrew book to appear in Spain was Rashi’s *Commentary on the Torah*, printed in 1476 in Guadalajara, the home of Aboab’s academy.⁴²

40. Gutwirth, “Arragel,” 662. Sonia Fellous, “Cultural Hybridity, Cultural Subversion: Text and Image in the *Alba Bible*, 1422–33,” *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 205–29 (and, with reference to Rashi, at 216, 218).

41. For Canpanton on Rashi, see *Darkhe ha-Talmud*, ed. Y. Lange (Jerusalem, 1981), 59–60. For his school and innovative approach to classical texts, see Daniel Boyarin, *Sephardi Speculation* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1989), where Rashi’s name often appears (see in the index, s.v. Shlomo Yitzhaki). For Aboab’s and de Leon’s supercommentaries, see Abraham Gross, “A Sketch of the History of Yeshivot in Castile in the Fifteenth Century,” *Pe’amin* 31 (1987): 6–8. It was, it would seem, students of Aboab who first applied the cognomen “Parshandata” to Rashi, suggesting his distinction as Judaism’s commentator par excellence (though in Spain the designation apparently reflected his indispensability as a talmudic guide rather than, as elsewhere in later periods, a biblical exegete). See Ephraim E. Urbach, “How Did Rashi Merit the Title *Parshandata*,” *Rashi 1040–1990*, 390–92. For Canpanton’s hermeneutic in relation to Klatz and Bokhrat, see Abraham Gross, “Pulmus ‘al shitat ha-‘shemirah’: le-toldot limud perush Rashi ‘al ha-Torah,” *AJS Review* 18 (1993): 1–19 (Hebrew section). Canpantonian terminology is rife in an as yet unstudied Spanish supercommentary seemingly written on the eve of the expulsion (Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute 204, 80v–105r).

42. Menahem H. Schmelzer, “Hebrew Manuscripts and Printed Books among the Sephardim before and after the Expulsion,” *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World, 1591–1648*, ed. B. R. Gampel (New York, 1997), 382, n. 17 (reprinted in Schmelzer, *Studies in Jewish Bibliography and Medieval Hebrew Poetry* [New York and Jerusalem, 2006]) For the distinctive Spanish version of Rashi’s *Commentary* reflected in the Guadalajara edition and a different version in the Lisbon 1491 edition and the *Nachleben* of each, see Isaiah Sonne, “Le-vikoret ha-

Though Klatz pronounced Rashi the “last of the *ge'onim* [chronologically] but the first in importance” and opined that Rashi’s *Commentary* was the “paradigm (*binyan av*)” for all others,⁴³ his image of Rashi was by no means the most exalted to be projected from the Middle Ages. It is, rather, the iconic vision of another Castilian scholar that claims that honor. In it, Rashi’s exegetical works appear as the last in a series of inspired writings produced by a string of illustrious authors stretching back to rabbinic times. Already in the fourteenth century, Menahem ben Zerah had spoken of the “holy spirit (*ruah ha-kodesh*)” resting on Rashi in connection with the Talmud commentaries. In the case of this Castilian halakhist, however, the allusion to inspiration is fleeting and, it would seem, “at least partly, if not totally, figurative,” in keeping with a topos found in literature of the period.⁴⁴ Not so the view of an anonymous Castilian kabbalist who, claiming communication from an angel, believed that prophetic status was “a precondition for writing authoritative commentaries.”⁴⁵ He admonished his readers not to entertain “for a moment” the idea that Rashi’s talmudic glosses or “scriptural plain-sense” interpretations were of his own devising (“composed from his head”). Rather, both the talmudic and biblical commentaries were to be seen as reflections of a revelation bestowed upon Rashi through the “secret of the garment,” a medium of illumination enjoyed by such earlier heroes of the rabbinic tradition as Simeon bar Yohai and the Mishnah’s traditional re-

tekst shel perush Rashi ‘al ha-Torah,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 15 (1940): 46–54. For Aboab’s likely assumption of the post of *rosh yeshivah* in Guadalajara prior to 1476, see Gross, “A Sketch,” 12. The Guadalajara edition was produced soon after the edition of Reggio Calabria of 1475, which stands as the first dated edition of a printed Hebrew book. See A. K. Offenberg, “The Earliest Printed Editions of Rashi’s Commentary on the Pentateuch: On Some Rare and Partly Unique Hebrew Incunabula,” *Rashi 1040–1990*, 493, in conjunction with Robert Bonfil, *Jewish Life in Renaissance Italy*, trans. A. Oldcorn (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), 148.

43. Moshe Filip, ed., *Mesiah ‘ilmim* (Petah Tikvah, 2001), 28. For the formula “last of the *ge'onim*” see S. Z. Havlin, “‘Al ‘ha-ḥatimah ha-sifrutit’ ki-yesod ha-ḥalukah li-tekufot ha-ḥalakhah,” *Mehkarim be-sifrut ha-talmudit* (Jerusalem, 1983), 153–54, n. 33.

44. *Tsedab la-derekb*, 6. See I. Twersky, *Rabad of Posquieres: A Twelfth-Century Talmudist* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 297. For a nonfigurative Ashkenazic ascription of inspiration to Rashi’s Talmud commentary roughly contemporary with Menahem, see I. M. Ta-Shma, “New Material on ‘Tosafot Gornish’” (Hebrew), *‘Alef sefer* 2 (1976): 85–86.

45. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, Conn., 1988), 238.

dactor, Judah the Prince.⁴⁶ Awareness of this truth explained why “all the sages of Israel believed in Rashi.” In at least one Hispano-Jewish scholar’s mind, then, Rashi’s *Commentary* recommended itself not on the basis of its judicious admixture of contextual and homiletical interpretation or rootedness in rabbinic tradition but by virtue of its revealed origins, which conferred upon it a near-canonical status.

II

Although over time Rashi came to be viewed by some Spanish writers as a scholar without peer, aspects of his biblical scholarship were bound to confound Spanish exegetes. For one thing, such exegetes assumed knowledge of the grammatical and lexicographical findings of the Andalusian linguistic school, which, though written prior to Rashi’s day, remained mostly unknown to him.⁴⁷ When Moses ibn Gabbai mentioned scholars who “impugned” Rashi’s grammar, he added that the detractors took their linguistic bearings from such “latter-day” offshoots of that school as David Kimhi.⁴⁸

As Rashi’s grammar could distress Spanish exegetes, so could many of his interpretations that seemed farfetched or scientifically untenable. Reservations on this score often reflected the Greco-Arabic scientific precepts that informed much of Sephardic thought. Condemning “little foxes” who maligned Rashi’s philosophic innocence, Moses ibn Gabbai stressed these critics’ immersion in the “evil waters . . . of foreign sciences.”⁴⁹

As often as not, concerns over the grammar or rationality of Rashi’s exegeses converged with vexation over his preponderant reliance on midrash. The problem (setting aside issues surrounding midrash halakhah) was twofold. Exegetically, many of Rashi’s midrashic interpretations and enhancements, though substantively unobjectionable, stood at a far remove from what Spanish interpreters took to be Scripture’s “contextual sense” (*pešhat*). These midrashic elements could flout findings of philology, elements of syntax, or even elementary rules of grammar. On a more theological plane, while Rashi was never “incredulous” of anything in

46. Cited from Moshe Idel, “Inquiries into the Doctrine of *Sefer ha-meshiv*” (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 17 (1983): 240–41. On the “secret of the garment,” see Elliot Wolfson, “The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanides,” *Daat* 24 (1990): xxv–xlix.

47. For Rashi’s “considerable use” of an earlier stratum of Andalusian grammatical learning available in Hebrew, see Avraham Grossman, *The Early Sages of France* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1995), 472.

48. *Eved shelomo*, 2r.

49. *Ibid.*, 1r–2v.

the rabbinic record,⁵⁰ Spanish scholars, like other Mediterranean Jewish thinkers touched by rationalism, found many midrashim there that ignored laws of nature or basic precepts of decency.⁵¹ Even Spanish opponents of rationalism like Nahmanides and his disciple Solomon ibn Adret—the first writer to devote a separate treatise to aggadic interpretation⁵²—sometimes cultivated nonliteral (and at times mystical) interpretation of midrashim in order to escape this problem.⁵³ Yet such problematic rabbinic homilies made more than a passing appearance in Rashi's glosses without any explanatory elaboration. In short, notwithstanding its stated aim to relay Scripture's contextual sense (*pesbuto shel mikra'*) and such rabbinic interpretations as explained the divine word in "a fitting manner,"⁵⁴ and notwithstanding the sense of some Spanish exegetes that it had succeeded brilliantly in this aim, Rashi's *Commentary* offered a surfeit of midrash that could disenchant Spanish readers.

Such disenchantment was stoked from without as midrash assumed an increasingly prominent role in Christian missionizing and anti-Jewish polemic, especially as practiced by high-profile Jewish apostates. Such was the twelfth-century Petrus Alfonsi, "the first medieval Christian writer to employ rabbinic texts in his anti-Jewish polemic in any extensive or systematic fashion."⁵⁵ Pablo de Santa Maria, archbishop of Burgos from 1415 and a favorite of Benedict XIII and Castile's King Henry III, also invoked midrash in his anti-Jewish campaign.⁵⁶ The rising attack on

50. Ta-Shma, *Talmudic Commentary*, 2:193.

51. For other features of aggadah that non-Ashkenazic readers could find problematic, see *ibid.*, 192.

52. Carmi Horowitz, "Rashba's Commentary on the Aggadot: Philosophic and Kabbalistic Influences" (Hebrew), *Daat* 18 (1987): 15–27.

53. Elliot R. Wolfson, "By Way of Truth: Aspects of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Hermeneutic," *AJS Review* 14 (1989): 175–77; Horowitz, "Rashba's Commentary"; L. A. Segal, *Historical Consciousness and Religious Tradition in Azariah De' Rossi's Me'or 'Enayim* (Philadelphia, 1989), 92–93, 107–8, nn. 25–26.

54. For Rashi's statements of exegetical intent, see Benjamin Gelles, *Pesbat and Deraash in the Exegesis of Rashi* (Leiden, 1981), 9–27. For analysis and a case study, see Eleazar Touitou, "Darko shel Rashi be-shimusho be-midrash hazal: 'iyyun be-ferush Rashi le-Shemot 1:8–22," *Talele 'orot: shenaton mikblelet 'orot Yisra'el* 9 (2000): 51–78.

55. Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law: Ideas of the Jew in Medieval Christianity* (Berkeley, Calif., 1999), 210–17 (at 210 for the cited formulation). A fuller treatment is Ch. Merchavia, *The Church versus Talmudic and Midrashic Literature (500–1248)* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1970), 93–124.

56. Pablo had absorbed his earliest lessons in midrash as Solomon Halevi prior to his conversion to Christianity in 1390. For Pablo's life and writings, see Baer, *History*, 2:141–50, and Judith Gaile Kriegere, "Pablo de Santa Maria: His

the Talmud took an especially consequential turn when, in 1236, Nicholas Donin submitted a list of thirty-five reprehensible dicta contained therein to Pope Gregory IX. In compiling his litany, he found it pertinent to cite a statement of R. Eleazar that, prior to consummating his relationship with Eve, Adam had mounted every domesticated and wild animal in Eden. For good measure, Donin also cited Rashi's elaboration (*glosa Salomonis*) of this statement, which in his mind only confirmed the dictum's repellent content.⁵⁷ In a subsequent condemnation, the pope spoke of "many abusive and wicked" talmudic dicta that were "a horror for those who hear them."⁵⁸

Donin cited R. Eleazar's statement again in the "Talmud trial" at Paris in 1240. A Latin "confession" ascribed to the Jewish participant of greatest stature, Yehiel ben Joseph, had the rabbi ruefully admitting Adam's "coitus with all the beasts."⁵⁹ In the Hebrew version of the disputation, however, Yehiel defended the midrash as a "correct inference" drawn from Scripture which should be understood in terms of the absence of any prohibition on bestiality at the time.⁶⁰ The defense fell on deaf ears and R. Eleazar's utterance went up in flames with cartloads of Talmud codices burned in Paris two years later.

While missionaries like Donin maligned rabbinic tradition, others harnessed it to a christological end. Using an unexpected ploy, these latter cited midrashim alongside, or in tandem with, scriptural *testimonia* to support Christian claims. The tactic reached its zenith with *Pugio fidei*, a massive thirteenth-century compendium of christologically interpreted midrash edited by the Catalan friar Ramon Martini, which often cited

Epoch, *Life and Hebrew and Spanish Literary Production*" (Ph. D. dissertation, UCLA, 1988). For his stance toward rabbinic sayings, see Ch. Merchavia, "The Talmud in the Additions of Paul of Burgos," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 16 (1965): 115–34.

57. Isidore Loeb, "La controverse de 1240 sur le Talmud," *REJ* 3 (1881): 54 (no. 34 in Donin's brief against the Talmud). Cf. *bYevamot* 63a. For Rashi's comment, see below at n. 69. Gilbert Dahan suggests that it was the 1240 controversy that "revealed the importance of Rashi to the Christian world." ("Un dossier latin de textes de Rashi autour de la controverse de 1240," *Rashi Studies*, xvii.)

58. Cohen, *Living Letters*, 322.

59. Merchavia, *The Church*, 453: "Item [Yehiel] concessit quod adam coit cum omnibus bestiis et hoc in paradiso."

60. *Vikuaḥ Rabenu Yehi'el mi-Pariz*, ed. R. Margoliot (Lvov, n.d.), 26. Cf. Joel E. Rembaum's observation ("The Talmud and the Popes: Reflections on the Talmud Trials of the 1240s," *Viator* 13 [1982]: 212) that Yehiel sensed that the papal concern over the Talmud "centered around the misuse and improper interpretation of the Bible." For later discussion of the existence of a prohibition on bestiality prior to Eve's creation, see below at nn. 115–116.

Rashi's Talmud *Commentary* alongside its invocations of rabbinic texts.⁶¹ In another work, this same Dominican priest asserted that the ancient rabbis had acknowledged some of Scripture's christological testimonies whereas "modern" Jews failed to do the same because of the obfuscation in which they had been enshrouded through the exegetical exertions of "Rabbi Solomon [Rashi] and all of his successors."⁶² A little over a century later, the aforementioned convert Jerònim de Santa Fe combined christological aggadic interpretation⁶³ with censure of "lying, foul, foolish, and abominable" rabbinic sayings deemed *contra legem Dei, contra legem naturae, contra legem scriptam*.⁶⁴ Whereas rabbinic passages buttressed his eschatological claims in the first sixty-two sessions of the Tortosa and San Mateo disputation, anti-talmudic scorn dominated the concluding sessions.⁶⁵ In Jerònim's hands, the Talmud was a witness "for both the devil and Christ."⁶⁶

Like Donin, Jerònim summoned R. Eleazar's homily on Adam and the animals to illustrate the Talmud's odious contents: "What does the text mean to say when it states . . . 'And Adam said: "This time at last—bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'" (Gn 2.23)? It teaches us that Adam had intercourse with all the domesticated animals and wild animals but his ardor was never cooled (*numquam fuit refrigerata voluntas eius*) until he had intercourse with Eve."⁶⁷ Here was a blasphemous ascription of iniquity to prelapsarian Adam that flagrantly contradicted Scripture's attesta-

61. See generally Cohen, *Living Letters*, 317–63 (and, with reference to *Pugio fidei*, 342–58, and the bibliography cited there). For *Pugio's* citations of texts from the Babylonian Talmud with Rashi's commentaries, see Ch. Merchavia, "Pugio Fidei—An Index of Citations" (Hebrew), in *Exile and Diaspora*, 224–31. Baer (*History*, 1:185) writes of the *Pugio* (with considerable exaggeration) that the "instruments which brought masses of Jews to apostasy at a later period were prepared in the second half of the thirteenth century."

62. Cohen, *Living Letters*, 351.

63. Orfali, "Portuguese Edition, 240–43.

64. *Ibid.*, 245. For the full work whence the citation is drawn, see Moisés Orfali, ed., *El Tratado "De Iudaicis Erroribus Ex Talmud" de Jerònimo de Santa Fe* (Madrid, 1987).

65. For the more extreme assault on the Talmud in the period after the disputation, see Ch. Merchavia, "A Spanish-Latin MS Concerning the Opposition to the Talmud," *Kiryat sefer* 45 (1970): 271–86.

66. Frank Talmage, "To Sabbatize in Peace: Jews and New Christians in Sixteenth-Century Portuguese Polemics," *Harvard Theological Review* 74 (1981): 268.

67. Antonio Pacios Lopez, *La disputa de Tortosa*, 2 vols. (Madrid/Barcelona, 1957), 2:564. The Latin versions of R. Eleazar's midrash and Rashi's gloss in the protocols differ from those given by Donin, suggesting their independence from Donin's reproof.

tion that “God saw all the things he had made and found them very good” (Gn 1.31)—nay, a rabbinic aspersion on the Deity’s perfection.⁶⁸ Lest his understanding of R. Eleazar be doubted, Jerònim invoked “rabi Salomon,” who had clarified R. Eleazar’s exegetical point of departure: “*quia inquit textus ‘hoc nunc,’ ostenditur quod alias habuerat copulam.*”⁶⁹ Like Donin, Jerònim believed that invoking Rashi would clinch the case with his Jewish adversaries.⁷⁰

What of Judaism’s defenders at San Mateo on that day in June 1414? Presumably they would have identified with the sentiments toward which R. Eleazar’s midrash was originally pitched, as part of a celebration of the complementarity of human males and females and a concomitant assertion of man’s acute need for a wife. At the same time, as products of the Hispano-Jewish tradition, they would probably have been pained by R. Eleazar’s exposition as understood in its plain sense. The Latin account of the disputation has these champions of Judaism acknowledging their inability to explain both this and the other apparently scandalous rabbinic dicta adduced by Jerònim, while asserting that the “learned and good” men who first uttered such sayings would surely have been able to justify them.⁷¹ But impotent resignation was not the only Spanish response to R. Eleazar’s midrash. Another one emerges from Spanish supercommentaries on Rashi’s *Commentary*, wherein R. Eleazar’s comment is the sole gloss on the opening words of Gn 2.23. While these works confirm Hispano-Jewish rejection of (or studied obliviousness to) the plain sense of R. Eleazar’s exposition, they indicate how the rabbis at San Mateo might have tried to accommodate it to their Sephardic sensibilities.

III

Before assembling the evidence of the Spanish supercommentaries, it is necessary to recapture the larger scriptural context out of which R. Eleazar’s exposition emerged, and to appreciate why Rashi might have

68. At least at Tortosa, then, R. Eleazar’s dictum was condemned not so much for its “inmoralidad” (Moisés Orfali, *Talmud y Christianismo* [Barcelona, 1998], 86) as for its blasphemy.

69. *La disputa de Tortosa*, 2:564; cf. Rashi to bYev 63a, s.v. “*zot ba-pa’am*”: *mikh-lal di-fe’amim ‘aḥerim shimesh ve-lo’ ‘alu be-da’ato*.

70. Donin had utilized the same tack in Paris, buttressing his complaint that Jews pray for the destruction of Christians with an appeal to Rashi. By way of rejoinder, Yehiel denied Rashi’s abiding interpretive dependability (Merchavia, *The Church*, 279).

71. *La disputa de Tortosa*, 2:566–67.

seen fit to incorporate this midrash into his commentary on the story of the garden of Eden. We will also see how Rashi's comment is refracted in writings of non-Spanish exegetes. Against this background, distinctive features of the Spanish handling of Rashi's gloss appear in sharper relief.

After relating God's recognition that "it is not good for man to be alone" and his resolution to provide him with a "a fitting helper," the biblical account reports the creation of beasts of the field and birds of the sky; God's presentation of these animalia to the first human being "to see what he would call them"; and the discovery that "for Adam no fitting helper was found." Then Adam is placed in a deep sleep and God creates another from his side, whereupon Adam exclaims: "*zot ha-pa'am*—bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called woman, for from man was she taken" (Gn 2.15–23).

Adam's exclamation—"the first speech of any human being directly quoted in the [biblical] text"⁷²—raised many questions for premodern biblical interpreters. First, its main referent was unclear: did *zot* refer to the woman ("this one"), occasion ("this time"), or something else? More broadly, the reason for Adam's outpouring required clarification. The key, it seemed, lay in his allusion to an unstated prior event or series of events—"this time," unlike those previous occasions, or "this one," unlike those previous ones. But was that unstated referent a "first unsuccessful fashioning of a man and a woman"⁷³ Or perhaps a prolonged search for a helper? And if the latter, did the sequencing of verses not then suggest that earlier candidates had been "drawn from the ranks of the animal kingdom"⁷⁴ But would this not imply that God's creation of beasts and birds prior to "the woman" reflected a failed divine effort to find Adam a proper partner?

Other questions imposed themselves. Did Adam initially sense the inferiority of his aloneness, as his cry of "*zot ha-pa'am*" suggested, or, as one lacking knowledge of good and evil, was he, as opposed to God, at first

72. Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York, 2003), 77.

73. Cyrus H. Gordon, "'This Time' (Genesis 2:23)," *"Sba'are Talmon": Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, ed. M. Fishbane and E. Tov (Winona Lake, Ind., 1992), 47.

74. James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998), 114. Cf. Leo Strauss, "On the Interpretation of Genesis," *L'homme* 21 (1981): 18: whereas in the first creation account man "is created as the ruler of the beasts," in the second "the beasts come to sight rather as helpers or companions of man."

unaware that “it is not good for man to be alone”?⁷⁵ What was involved in Adam’s naming of animals and how, if at all, did it relate to his search for a mate? Did human life involve sexual coupling from the outset or did Scripture’s first human pair live “without sexual experience” until their expulsion from their first abode, thereby suggesting “sexual knowledge to be a result of human sin”?⁷⁶

If such quandaries exercised exegetes pondering Adam’s exultant cry,⁷⁷ Rashi handsomely allayed several of them by reformulating R. Eleazar’s exposition on Adam and the animals: “‘this time’—it teaches that Adam mated with (*she-ba’ adam*) every [species of] domesticated animal (*be-bemab*) and wild animal (*ḥayab*) but his appetite was not assuaged (*lo’ nitkarerab da’ato*) by them.”⁷⁸ Here much was made plain in a few words: *zot ba-pa’am* was a single linguistic unit involving the unusual appearance of a demonstrative pronoun before the noun, with the former modifying the latter to yield the expression “this time.” Adam’s exclamatory cry was indeed linked to the immediately preceding verses, which related the genesis of subhuman creatures. Perhaps most importantly, not only had the first human couple experienced “carnal knowledge” in the garden; they had done so at their very first encounter.

Apart from offering such immediate clarification, R. Eleazar’s homily fit with Rashi’s effort to interpret the garden of Eden story contextually

75. In “Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections” (*Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* [Chicago, 1983], 155), Leo Strauss argues that man, lacking knowledge of good and evil, “was content with his condition and in particular with his loneliness.”

76. Gary Anderson, “Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden Story,” *Harvard Theological Review* 82 (1989): 123. See *ibid.*, 125–27, for discussion of exegetical problems presented by this pericope.

77. On the “first Eve,” in rabbinic literature, see L. Teugels, “The Creation of the Human in Rabbinic Interpretation,” *The Creation of Man and Woman*, 114–16.

78. *Ḥamishab ḥumsbe Torab: Rashi ba-shalem*, 6 vols. at present (Jerusalem, 1986–), Bereshit 1:34. Rashi’s reworking of the midrash concludes with the idea that Adam was left unsatisfied “by them (*ba-bem*) [i.e., the beasts and animals]” while omitting R. Eleazar’s further observation that Adam’s sexual impulse was not cooled “until he had intercourse with Eve.” The idiom “*nitkarerab da’ato*” takes Adam as its subject in another talmudic passage (bPes 118a). Elsewhere (e.g., bSan 93a) God is its subject. The common thread is release from distress, agitation, anger, etc., though writers occasionally picked up on the idiom’s sexual valence as (presumably) made known to them through R. Eleazar’s dictum. An example is the discussion of the “beautiful captive woman” (Dt. 21.10–14) in *Ḥidushe Ramban*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem, 1962), vol. 1, *Kiddushin* 22a (“*lefi she-khevar nitkarerab da’ato ve-en yituro mitgaber alav kol kakh*”).

as a flowing narrative. For example, relying on rabbinic authority, Rashi had indicated earlier that if previously unaware of (or unperturbed by) his loneliness, upon having the animals paraded before him Adam had awakened to it and complained: “all these have a mate, but I have no mate.”⁷⁹ (Or, as Rashi explained further on in his commentary, “through the giving of names Eve became his mate.”)⁸⁰ The exposition on *zot ha-pa’am* filled out this picture, describing Adam’s efforts to banish his sense of solitariness by finding a mate among the beasts. Similarly, R. Eleazar’s exposition dovetailed with Rashi’s explicit claim—repeated at least thrice in his *Commentary*, again on rabbinic authority (though he attempted to fortify it grammatically in one place)—that Adam “knew” Eve prior to their ejection from the garden, evidence from the sequence of the verses notwithstanding.⁸¹ This exposition on Gn 2.23 also dovetailed with the testimony in the following verse that “a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh”—a text that suggested “coital union” as the end to which the story of the primordial pair was pitched.⁸² Finally, by opting for R. Eleazar’s exposition, Rashi banished to exegetical limbo several noncontextual and lexically wobbly midrashim which linked “*ha-pa’am*” either with a “bell” (*pa’amon*) or a related verb meaning “to beat” or “perturb.”⁸³

Beyond positing the first couple’s sexual congress prior to their expulsion from the garden, R. Eleazar’s midrash did additional theological duty. By alluding to elements of commonality and incommensurability between God’s human and subhuman creations, it could provide a rationale for the creation of animals prior to “the woman” which did not call God’s perfection into question. Far from being a misdirected attempt to

79. Gloss on Gn 2.20–21 (*Rashi ha-shalem*, 1:32–33). In his eighteenth-century supercommentary, David Pardo yoked R. Eleazar’s midrash to this comment as proof that Rashi did not interpret Adam’s mounting of animals “literally, heaven forefend” (*Maskil le-David*, 2 vols. [Jerusalem, 1986], 1:20).

80. Gloss on Gn 3.20 (*Rashi ha-shalem*, 1:45).

81. Glosses on Gn 3.1 and 3.20 (*Rashi ha-shalem*, 1:35, 45). According to the first, the snake saw Adam and Eve naked and engaged in coitus “for all to see” and desired Eve. According to the second, when the serpent saw Eve’s nakedness and saw Adam and Eve “engaged in coitus, he desired her.” In the gloss on Gn 4.1 (*Rashi ha-shalem*, 1:47–48), Rashi argued that subject followed by perfect verb yields pluperfect meaning: “the man *had* known his wife Eve.”

82. Anderson, *The Genesis of Perfection*, 43; *Rashi ha-shalem*, Bereshit 1:34.

83. Teugels, “Creation,” 114–15. Despite Rashi’s tacit rejection of the *pa’am*—*pa’amon* connection, it was endorsed by one of his sixteenth-century supercommentators. See Hayyim ben Bezalel, *Be’er mayim hayim*, ed. F. Schneebalg, 3 vols. (London, 1964), 1:9.

find Adam a partner, this order of creation now suggested itself as an important stage in Adam's mental and emotional preparation for recognizing his true partner.⁸⁴ Closer to Rashi's purpose, perhaps, by broaching the idea that Adam had "known" Eve prior to their expulsion from the garden, R. Eleazar's exposition subverted Christian constructions of the paradise story as proof of the preferability of celibacy or of the rootedness of human sexuality in Adam's "fall from grace."⁸⁵

Yet despite its virtues, Rashi's account of Adam's sexual relations with animals raised eyebrows among some successors. Hezekiah ben Manoah, French author of a thirteenth-century "compilatory" commentary on the Torah that often reflected (or reflected on) Rashi's exegesis, was a case in point.⁸⁶ Hezekiah was struck by a problematic implication of Rashi's gloss when merged with a principle of talmudic theriogenological science:

Rashi explained "it teaches that Adam mated with every domesticated animal and wild animal but he was not assuaged." [According to this] one is forced to say that they [the other creatures] conceived prior to Adam's having intercourse with them, for if one does not say thus [then there arises the difficulty that according to the Talmud ('Avodah zarah

84. In the formulation of Kass (*Beginning of Wisdom*, 73): "[f]or some reason, encountering the animals activates or creates the mental and emotional powers that permit man to recognize and receive his fitting counterpart." Commenting on Gn 8.19, an anonymous Rabbanite Byzantine writer who may predate Rashi prolonged the period of human-animal sexual interaction until after the flood: "they [the animals] left the ark 'in their families'—indicating that until then humans mated with beasts." See Nicholas de Lange, *Greek Jewish Texts from the Cairo Genizah* (Tübingen, 1996), 86. This same writer also posited an element of coercion in the primordial human-animal relationship ("humans mated with beasts and made the beasts mate with them"), thereby raising moral issues (like lack of consent on the part of the animals) that figure in modern discussions of bestiality's moral status.

85. Whether an anti-Christian aim informs Rashi's insistence on the first couple's immediate sexual consummation is not clear. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Does Rashi's Torah Commentary Respond to Christianity? A Comparison of Rashi with Rashbam and Bekhor Shor," *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. H. Najman and J. H. Newman (Leiden, 2004), 467, n. 58. Anderson, "Celibacy," 128–48; Philip C. Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge, 1999), 167.

86. Sara Japhet, "The Nature and Distribution of Medieval Compilatory Commentaries in the Light of Rabbi Joseph Kara's Commentary on the Book of Job," *Midrashic Imagination*, 111–12. For this work's relationship to Rashi's exegesis, see *ibid.*, 126, n. 38.

22b)], they would have been rendered sterile by virtue of [such] human intercourse.⁸⁷

Taken together, two midrashim implied that the primordial animalia should have become extinct while yet in the garden. It was left to Hezekiah to reconcile them in such a way as to remain true to biblical (not to mention empirical) evidence to the contrary. With such a reconciliation achieved, however, Hezekiah's anxiety abated. If Rashi, on the best of rabbinic authority, reported sexual intercourse between humanity's first model and beasts, Hezekiah took it to be so without qualm.⁸⁸

It was natural for Hezekiah to adopt a literal understanding of his rabbinic materials: literalism in midrashic interpretation was a longstanding feature of northern European scholarship.⁸⁹ Things were otherwise for Mediterranean Jewish writers. They had long shown a willingness to divest rabbinic sayings of their plain sense where straightforward interpretation yielded theological difficulty, to say nothing of scandal⁹⁰—hence, the geographical fault line in the rationalism controversies of the 1230s, with many in southern Europe adopting Maimonides' view that midrashim that “departed from the intelligible” were to be understood as parables and interpreted nonliterally.⁹¹

A Maimonidean approach toward R. Eleazar's midrash is evident in

87. *Ḥizkuni: Perushe ha-Torah le-Rabenu Ḥizkiyah b"R. Manoah*, ed. C. D. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1981), 17–18. Before analyzing Rashi's gloss, Hezekiah supplied a contextual interpretation of targumic and rabbinic provenance (Anderson, “Celibacy,” 125–26), seeing in the phrase “this time” an allusion to a one-time inversion of the natural order to be: “on this occasion a female issued from a male whereas henceforth it will not be thus but rather the male will issue from the female.”

88. Note that in the early twentieth century Barukh Halevi Epstein (1860–1941) would invoke the midrash adduced by Hezekiah for an entirely different purpose: to prove that a literal understanding of R. Eleazar midrashic statement was “impossible.” See *Torah temimah*, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv, 1981), 1:26v.

89. Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture*, 58, cites Samson ben Abraham of Sens asking incredulously: “how could anyone possibly think that we ought not take aggadah literally?” An especially fervent literalist was Moses ben Hasdai of Taku; see Elbaum, *Medieval Perspectives*, 225–34. On later medieval Ashkenazic literalism in midrashic interpretation, see Joseph M. Davis, “Philosophy, Dogma, and Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenazic Judaism: The Evidence of *Sefer Hadrat Qodesh*,” *AJS Review* 18 (1993): 212–13, 216–19.

90. See, e.g., Joseph ibn Kaspi, *Yoreh de'ab*, in *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, 155.

91. *Guide*, I, introduction (*The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. S. Pines, 2 vols. [Chicago, 1963], 1:9).

the case of an anonymous late medieval author of possibly eastern Mediterranean origin who found in Rashi's gloss on Gn 2.23 a parade example of all that was wrongheaded in the biblical scholarship of "Solomon the Frenchman."⁹² First, he believed that R. Eleazar's midrash lacked textual mooring (*en ha-mikra' mokbiab*)" and, as such, belonged to a long list of rabbinically grounded "narrative expansions"⁹³ of the biblical text adopted unjustifiably by Rashi.⁹⁴ Second, Rashi's handling of the verse, or midrash, or both, clarified his obliviousness of the awareness of "the philosophers" that it harbored "an esoteric profundity (*soḏ*),"⁹⁵ though just what the secret was the anonymous critic did not say. He may have had Maimonides' allegorical understanding of the garden story in general, and of Adam and Eve in particular, in mind.⁹⁶ He presumably did not have in mind the "*soḏ*" discerned by Nahmanides and later kabbalists, who saw in "*zot ha-pa'am*" an allusion to the emanation of the feminine *Shekhinah* out of the masculine *Tif'eret*.⁹⁷ At any rate, Rashi's invocation of R. Eleazar stood as one more bit of wrongheaded exegesis produced by a scholar "devoid of all wisdom save for [facility in] navigating the [talmudic] pericope alone."⁹⁸

92. *Sefer hasagot she-bisig ha-rav 'Avraham ben David zal 'al Rabenu Shelomo ha-tarfati zal be-ferush ha-Torah*, in Cambridge, MS Add. 377.3 (film no. 15872 at the IMHM), 1v. On this work, see Ephraim E. Urbach, "Critical Notes to Rashi's Commentary on the Torah ascribed to R. Abraham b. David" (Hebrew), *Qiryat Sefer* 34 (1958/59): 101–8 (reprinted in *Collected Writings in Jewish Studies*, ed. M. D. Herr and Y. Fraenkel, 2 vols. [Jerusalem, 1999], 1:377–84). For images of Maimonides and Rashi in eastern Mediterranean Jewish literature, see my "Maimonides in the Eastern Mediterranean: The Case of Rashi's Resisting Readers," *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maimonides and his influence*, ed. J. M. Harris (Cambridge, Mass., forthcoming).

93. For this coinage, see James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House* (San Francisco, 1990), 4–5.

94. See, e.g., *Sefer hasagot*, 2v. For discussion of this aspect of the work, see my "Words Unfitly Spoken: Late Medieval Criticism of the Role of Midrash in Rashi's Commentary on the Torah," to appear in *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Law, Thought and Culture*, ed. E. Kanarfogel, forthcoming.

95. *Sefer hasagot*, 2r–3v.

96. For Maimonides' allegorical reading of the paradise story, see Sara Klein-Braslavy, *Maimonides' Interpretation of the Adam Stories in Genesis* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1986). (For Adam and Eve as form and matter, see pp. 193–208.) Like Pseudo-Rabad, Maimonides was reticent to clarify the garden story, not wishing to be "one who divulges a secret" (*Guide*, II, 30 [trans. Pines, 2:355]).

97. *Perush ha-Torah*, 1:39. For discussion, see Wolfson, "By Way of Truth," 115–16. Cf. Menahem Recanati's commentary to Gn 2.23 in his *Perush ha-Torah* (as in *Sefer levush ha-Torah* [Jerusalem, 1960], 12r).

98. *Sefer hasagot*, 1v.

Turning to Rashi's Spanish supercommentators, though none read Rashi's gloss on *zot ba-pa'am* esoterically, all, in one degree or another, transmuted its substance from the carnal plane to the cerebral. The aforementioned anonymous contemporary of Profet Duran⁹⁹ was thoroughgoing on this score:

Rashi explained: "it teaches that Adam had intercourse with every domesticated animal, and so forth. [Its] explanation [is]: he [Adam] engaged in intense and ongoing investigation (*hakirah*) and careful study (*derishah*) into each and every species and discerned its nature (*tiv'o*) and temperament (*mizego*) and the nature of all the species but failed to find a nature fitting and disposed to (*mukhan*) his nature. For this reason he said [upon discerning Eve's nature]: "this time, bone of my bone."¹⁰⁰

As here reinscribed, Rashi spoke not of Adam's search for a biological mate but of his quest for a rational *soulmate*. Toward this end, Adam engaged in a series of speculative inquiries in which all acts of intercourse were noetic.

In understanding R. Eleazar's midrash thus, Duran's contemporary followed in the path of the fourteenth-century Navarrese scholar Shem Tov ben Shaprut, one of the first Spanish writers to devote a separate treatise to midrashic interpretation. In his *Pardees rimonim*,¹⁰¹ Shem Tov suggested that Adam's cohabitation with animals occurred in his "intellect." Unlike Duran's contemporary, however, he allowed that the goal of Adam's acts of intellection was to find a mate through whom to sire offspring.¹⁰² In explaining thus, Shem Tov followed the premises of aggadic interpretation set forth in his work's introduction: the sages spoke in "riddles and metaphors"; "the more bizarre the riddle, the more impossible its plain sense"; strange rabbinic sayings should be interpreted so as to "allow us to speak of them before the nations."¹⁰³ Shem Tov believed that the best way to achieve this latter goal was to explain midrash ac-

99. See above, n. 35.

100. MS Lutski 802, 4r.

101. On which, see N. E. Frimer and Dov Schwartz, *Hagut betsel ha-'emah* (Jerusalem, 1992), 57–78; Lester A. Segal, "Late Fourteenth-Century Perception of Classical Jewish Lore: Shem Tob Ben Isaac Shaprut's Aggadic Exegesis," *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism*, ed. J. Neusner et al., 4 vols. (Atlanta, 1989), 4:207–28.

102. *Pardees rimonim* (Sabbioneta, 1554), 36r.

103. *Ibid.*, 2r.

ording to the “traditional teachings of the Torah” as propounded by Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra, which were “close to philosophy.”¹⁰⁴ Little wonder, then, that his interpretation of R. Eleazar transmuted Adam’s acts of bestial intercourse into engagement in “the philosophers’ single most characteristic activity: investigation (*ḥakirah*).”¹⁰⁵

Duran’s contemporary offered a considerably more elaborate version of the cognitive approach to Adam’s relations with the animals based on ideas propounded by Duran in his *Ma’aseh efoḏ*. Following Judah Halevi and Maimonides, Duran had seen in the account of Adam’s naming of the animals a compressed disquisition on the origins of language.¹⁰⁶ In arguing for language’s divine origins, and Hebrew’s divine character in particular, Duran was forced to contend with this ostensibly decisive bit of counterevidence, since it was Adam and not God who had named the animals. Indeed, Maimonides had made it the scriptural cornerstone of his teaching that all languages, Hebrew included, were “conventional.”¹⁰⁷ To deflect this claim, Duran cast Adam’s naming of the animals as a divine test to determine whether Adam would utilize his intellectual powers to designate animals in accordance with their true natures, matching the names *preassigned* to them by God. Buttressing this novel understanding was the deft observation that according to Scripture God had brought the animals to Adam not for naming but “to see what he would call them” (Gn 2.19). To Halevi’s teaching, found in Christian literature as well,¹⁰⁸ that Adam bestowed names on the animals reflecting their nature,¹⁰⁹ Duran added that in so doing, Adam had come to appreciate that none of

104. Ibid.

105. Ralph Lerner, *Maimonides’ Empire of Light: Popular Enlightenment in an Age of Belief* (Chicago, 2000), 92.

106. Bernard Septimus, “Maimonides on Language,” *The Culture of Spanish Jewry*, ed. A. Doron (Tel Aviv, 1994), 48–50.

107. *Guide*, II, 30 (Pines, 2:357–58). For discussion, see Menachem Kellner, “Maimonides on the ‘Normality’ of Hebrew,” *Judaism and Modernity: The Religious Philosophy of David Hartman*, ed. J. W. Malino (Jerusalem, 2001), 435–69. Note Duran’s studied silence on this Maimonidean pronouncement in his commentary on the *Guide*; see *Moreh nevukhim le-ha-rav Moshe ben Maimon . . .* (Jerusalem, 1961), pt. 2, 63r.

108. See J. E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1994), 6.

109. *The Book of Refutation and Proof on the Despised Faith*, ed. David H. Baneth, prepared for publication by Haggai Ben-Shammai (Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic; Jerusalem, 1977), 175. See Barry Kogan’s translation in Kellner, “Maimonides,” 442.

the subhuman beings were “compatible with and fitting for his nature.”¹¹⁰ It was this formulation, and the wider set of ideas that it summoned, that Duran’s contemporary used in turning Rashi’s homily on Adam’s intercourse with beasts into a portrait of the human archetype in which such Sephardic philosophical ideals as metaphysical discovery, speculative introspection, and self-knowledge held sway.

Though endorsing the cognitive interpretation of Rashi’s gloss on Gn 2.23, other Spanish supercommentators did not completely ignore its carnal element. Stressing this most was Samuel Almosnino, a glossator about whom little is known beyond his great influence upon later Spanish supercommentaries on Rashi.¹¹¹ Like Duran’s contemporary, Almosnino insisted that Rashi’s account of Adam’s attachments with the animals be understood cerebrally and he interpreted Rashi’s language accordingly. The phrase “had intercourse with every animal” was, he insisted, “a figurative expression for his [Adam’s] examining the temperaments of the females among all the species.”¹¹² Still, Almosnino did not reconfigure Adam’s essentially biological concerns. He merely insisted on their purely procreative character. In his decidedly unerotic formulation, Adam pondered the natures of the female beasts and animals in order to find “a receptacle for his seed so that he might procreate through them.” Upon determining that no subhuman female was suitable for breeding purposes and discovering that Eve was, Adam “had intercourse with her” premised on his understanding that “from her he would obtain fruit of the womb.” Almosnino ended on a sermonic note, imparting a lesson that his postlapsarian (male) readers should take from the first man’s sexual quest: “this cautions us not to have intercourse with a woman merely in order to

110. *Ma’aseh ’efod*, 30. The anonymous commentator’s familiarity with this passage is assured as he refers to another passage from the same chapter of Duran’s work on the same page where he interprets Rashi’s gloss on Gn 2.23. The association of Adam’s activity of naming animals with his search for a mate goes back to Saadya Gaon; see *Perush rav Sa’adya Ga’on li-Vereshit*, ed. M. Zucker (New York, 1988), 279.

111. *Perush le-ferush Rashi me-ha-rav ha-gadol Rabi Shemu’el ’Almosnino*, ed. M. Filip [Petah Tikvah, 1998], 9, where it is conjectured that Judah Klatz relied on Almosnino for as many as a fifth of his glosses. For Jacob Kenizal on this score, see Filip’s edition of Kenizal’s commentary, pp. 12–13 (above n. 36).

112. *Perush ’Almosnino*, 23. Almosnino stressed Adam’s interest in female animals alone. In the sixteenth century, Sixtus of Siena highlighted the presumably odious homosexual implications of R. Eleazar’s midrash. See Ch. Merchavia, “An Anti-Talmudic Pamphlet from the Period of the Burning of the Talmud in Italy” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 37 (1967–68): 198

relieve our animalistic lust but rather with the intention of producing noble progeny.”¹¹⁵

If both Duran’s contemporary and Samuel Almosnino refused to recognize the possibility of an actual sexual encounter between Adam and animals, Rashi’s aforementioned reverent supercommentator, Moses ibn Gabbai, broached the possibility, only to dispatch it on halakhic grounds. Depicting Adam as a “son of Noah” *avant la lettre* aware of the “Noahide laws” that would eventually bind all humankind, ibn Gabbai denied that Adam could have embraced the beasts carnally:

If this aggadah is understood according to its prima facie meaning (*kifshutab*), there is cause to marvel (*yesh litmo’ab*); for behold, he [Adam] had already been enjoined concerning illicit sexual relations, as the rabbinic sages said on the verse “And he [the Lord God] commanded [the man . . .]” (Gn 2.16)—the basis in rabbinic interpretation for the Noahide laws].¹¹⁴ [This point was further clarified in the verse “hence a man leaves his father and mother] and clings to his wife” (Gn 2.24) [whence the rabbis derive]—and not to another [including animals].¹¹⁵

Some later talmudists doubted ibn Gabbai’s halakhic argumentation¹¹⁶ and one wonders if ibn Gabbai himself found it cogent. Minimally, it provided a basis upon which to deny Adam’s intimacy with animals “*kifshutab*.”

Having put to rest the plain sense of Rashi’s gloss, ibn Gabbai put himself in step with the cognitive construal. More than earlier glossators, however, he interwove it into the language of Scripture and words of Rashi:

Therefore it may be inferred that this aggadah is not meant according to its plain sense but is to be explained (*yesh lefareshab*) by saying that

113. *Perush ’Almosnino*, 23.

114. bSan 56b. For discussion, see David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (New York, 1983), 4–6.

115. *’Eved shelomo*, 12v. For Gn 2.24 as warrant for the interdiction on bestiality, see bSan 58a.

116. For Judah Loew ben Bezalel (Maharal) versus Mordechai Jaffe, see my “From Sefarad to Ashkenaz,” 409–12. It is worth noting that Rashi refrained from registering a prohibition on bestiality, or the existence of Noahide laws at all, in his commentary on Gn 2.16, ibn Gabbai’s main proof-text. By contrast, Rashi did locate a general prohibition on sexual immorality for Noahides in Gn 2.24 (*Rashi ba-shalem*, 1:34).

he came with his intellect and investigated the nature (*toledet*)¹¹⁷ and temperament of every domesticated animal and wild animal. He did not find one of them fitting for his temperament until God brought (Gn 2.22) Eve, who was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (Gn 2.23).¹¹⁸

Remaining faithful to his vocation as an exegete of Rashi, ibn Gabbai included a final increment in his clarification of him when, like Almosnino, he indicated that Adam's quest for a mate was driven by his wish to find an instrument "through whom to beget children."¹¹⁹

In contrast to the exegetes studied thus far, Moses ibn Gabbai's son-in-law, Aaron Aboulrabi,¹²⁰ forthrightly decried the plain sense of Rashi's gloss on Adam and the animals. In his combined Torah commentary and supercommentary on Rashi,¹²¹ Aboulrabi stated his intention to focus on Rashi's exegesis since it was "mostly hewn from the eminent [rabbinic] oaks of old."¹²² Clarifying Gn 2.23, Aboulrabi trained his sights on Rashi's gloss on *zot ha-pa'am*. His first interpretive act was to identify the scriptural "surface irregularity"¹²³ that had generated it, just as Rashi had done in his own commentary on the Talmud: "[Rashi wrote:] 'it teaches that he had intercourse with every domesticated animal, and so forth.' He [Rashi] derived (*diyek*) this [antecedent engagement with the animals] from its saying 'this time.'" Next, and again in contrast to his predecessors, Aboulrabi expressed revulsion at the gloss's plain sense: "heaven

117. For *toledet* as a coinage rooted in Abraham ibn Ezra's exegetical-philosophic lexicon, see Shlomo Sela, *Abraham ibn Ezra and the Rise of Medieval Hebrew Science* (Leiden, 2003), 130–37. On a possible significance of ibn Gabbai's use of this term, see below at n. 130.

118. *Eved shelomo*, 12v. Ibn Gabbai adroitly remolds the key terms from R. Eleazar's midrash and Rashi's reproduction thereof into the Sephardic reinterpretation: *ba' be-sikblo ve-ḥiker 'al toledet u-mezeq kol behemah ve-ḥayab ve-lo' nit-karerah da'ato bahem*.

119. *Ibid*.

120. On whom, see my "Graven Images, Astromagical Cherubs, Mosaic Miracles: A Fifteenth-Century Curial-Rabbinic Exchange," *Speculum* 81 (2006): 754–95.

121. The hybrid character of Aboulrabi's work remains to be explored. Though it contains ample supercommentary—and has, accordingly, been classified as such—Aboulrabi's work offers more independent biblical interpretation than commentary on Rashi. This combination of exegetical commentary and supercommentary, though not unprecedented (see Simon, "Interpreting the Interpreter," 89–90), is innovative in the sphere of Rashi supercommentaries.

122. *Perushim le-Rashi* (Constantinople, [1525?]), 13v.

123. For this term, see James L. Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 144.

forefend that a person (*adam*) as perfect as he should cohabit outside of his species.”

Aboulrabi urged two considerations, one theological and one practical. First, Adam would not have cohabited with animals because he “as yet had no evil inclination.”¹²⁴ Second, even should one ascribe Adam’s ostensible plan to embrace brutes to a felt imperative to propagate his newly created species, this goal patently could not have been accomplished through a union with creatures “not of his species.” Having rejected a literal interpretation of Rashi’s gloss, Aboulrabi availed himself of the familiar Spanish reading of it, couching it in especially philosophic terms: Adam “investigated with his intellect the dispositions (*bakhanot*) of all living things and did not find among them one fittingly disposed to receive the human form through intercourse except Eve.”¹²⁵ For Aboulrabi’s father-in-law, Moses ibn Gabbai, it was the revelational clarity provided by a prior divine interdict that preempted Adam’s transgressive sexual congress with animals and spurred the cognitive interpretation of Rashi’s gloss. For Aboulrabi, it was not divine law but man’s superior nature prior to the fall and the practical impossibility of propagating the species through human-animal coupling that ruled out a literal reading and required its cognitive substitute. Whatever their differences, though, both Aaron Aboulrabi and his father-in-law shared sensibilities that required modulation of Rashi’s assertion of carnal encounters between Adam and beasts into a cognitive register.

With this inventory of four pre-1492 Spanish readings of Rashi’s gloss on *zot ha-pa’am* in hand, a consolidation of interim findings is in order. Clearly Rashi’s pre-expulsion Spanish supercommentators wrestled with a rabbinic exposition that left them “incredulous” even though Rashi had reported it without any elaboration or apparent qualm. What is more, all of these commentators related to this interpretation as if it were Rashi’s own. Though none of Rashi’s supercommentators shows awareness of Christian attacks on R. Eleazar’s exposition, there is reason to believe that Judaism’s defenders at San Mateo—some allied with Spanish rationalism’s “conservative wing” (such as Mattityahu Yitzhari and Joseph

124. *Perushim le-Rashi*, 16v. In making his claim regarding the absence of the *yetser ha-ra’* in Adam at this point, Aboulrabi tacitly contradicted a midrashically based holding according to which Adam received both bad and good inclinations at the time of his creation. See *Genesis Rabbah* 14, on Gn 2.7. For the rabbinic *yetser ha-ra’* as being associated with sexual passion especially, see David Biale, *Eros and the Jews* (New York, 1992), 40.

125. *Perushim le-Rashi*, 16v.

Albo)¹²⁶ and some with a more radically Maimonidean outlook (e.g., Abraham Rimoch)¹²⁷—would have parried Jerònim de Santa Fe’s comments against R. Eleazar’s ostensibly impious dictum with an interpretation of it along lines seen in the four Rashi supercommentaries discussed above.

Though sharing much in common, these four re-presentations of Rashi’s gloss were not simply copies of one another. Duran’s contemporary alone relayed the meaning of Rashi’s gloss without any reference to matters sexual. He alone implied that Eve initially served as Adam’s helpmate in a manner that wholly transcended the procreative—a view that may have been rooted in a conviction that so carnal an activity as sex had no place in paradise. The other Spanish glossators granted Adam’s sexual intent while depicting it (like Augustine before them) in “Edenesque purity . . . free from all the pernicious tensions of passion.”¹²⁸ Aboulrabi alone articulated his full-throated objection to the notion that primordial man engaged in sexual intercourse with beasts. The others curbed any distaste they felt at this idea while, like Aboulrabi, reading it out of Rashi’s *Commentary*. Duran’s contemporary and Aboulrabi reformulated Rashi’s interpretation by turning to the lexicon of medieval Jewish rationalism (*ḥakirah, derishah, mukhan, tiv’o*)¹²⁹ to expound their clarifications. This critical vocabulary and larger thought-world that it represented were almost surely familiar to Samuel Almosnino and Moses ibn Gabbai even if they shunned them.¹³⁰ They were, of course, quite alien to Rashi and such Ashkenazic successors as Hezekiah ben Manoah.

That the four Spanish re-presentations of Rashi’s gloss shared much in common owes a great deal, one suspects, to their shared origins in the

126. For Albo as one who “defended the value of philosophical speculation while guarding against more radical tendencies,” see Ari Ackerman, “Jewish Philosophy and the Jewish-Christian Philosophical Dialogue in Fifteenth-Century Spain,” *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. D. H. Frank and O. Leaman (Cambridge, 2003), 376.

127. Talmage, “Trauma at Tortosa,” 386.

128. Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, N.J., 1993), 46.

129. While some of the terms in question long predate the advent of Hebrew philosophic literature, as used by Duran’s contemporary and Aboulrabi they carry a distinctively rationalist valence; see, e.g., the glossary in Steven Harvey, *Falaquera’s Epistle of the Debate* (Cambridge, Mass., 1987), 133–36.

130. Ibn Gabbai’s distance from the most current scientific literature is suggested by his rendering of “nature” by “*toledet*” rather than “*teva*,” the locution generally adopted by post-Tibbonite Hebrew philosophic writers. On the former term, see above at n. 117.

interpretation of Genesis 2 propounded by Nahmanides. Though he did not relate to R. Eleazar's dictum directly, Nahmanides did give his imprimatur ("he explained well") to Rashi's midrashic observation that Adam had been awakened to his loneliness by his encounter with the animals. Most notably, Nahmanides had taught that Adam's naming of the animals reflected his recognition of their "nature" (*ti'ām*) and of their inappropriateness as the specifically procreative "helpmate" whom he sought.¹³¹ Nahmanides had also asserted what the four formal supercommentators reprised: the first couple's dispassionate approach to sexual liaison while yet in paradise.¹³²

Of course, the main thing uniting the Spanish readings of Rashi's gloss was their view that Adam's intercourse with animals occurred cerebrally rather than carnally. Rashi had spoken of Adam "cohabiting with" (*ba' al*) these animals. For the Spanish interpreters, this formulation contained just enough semantic elasticity to infuse it with a cognitive understanding of this act of conjunction. By contrast, glossing R. Eleazar in his Talmud commentary, Rashi had spoken of Adam's having "copulated with" (*shimesh*) the animals.¹³³ All four Spanish supercommentators averted their gaze from this countertestimony to their reading of Rashi's gloss on Gn 2.23. It is improbable that halakhists of the competence of Moses ibn Gabbai were oblivious to the talmudic gloss.¹³⁴ Eventually, other leading supercommentators on Rashi's *Commentary on the Torah* would enter it into their discussions of Rashi's interpretation of Gn 2.23 quite naturally,¹³⁵ on one occasion in support of their view that a literal

131. *Perushe ha-Torah*, 1:39.

132. *Ibid.*, 1:36, on Gn 2.9 ("sexual activity between the man and woman did not occur to gratify desire; rather, at the time for procreation they would conjoin with one another and would procreate"). Glossing Gn 2.24 Aboulrabi did speak—in addition to "service"—of the "love and delight (*ta'anug*)" derived by a man from his wife, while still positing procreation as "the end (*takblit*) of bonding with a woman" (*Perushim le-Rashi*, 16v).

133. See above, n. 69.

134. Jerònim de Sante Fe claimed that Jews paid little heed to *aggadot* ("narrations") and *midrashot* ("sermocinationes") when studying the Talmud (Orfali, "Portuguese Edition," 244), all the more, might he have said, to Rashi's commentaries on such texts. Still, as this apostate was able to summon Rashi's gloss on R. Eleazar, one might assume that seasoned talmudists had also encountered it. For ibn Gabbai's credentials as a talmudist, see Isidore Epstein, *The Responsa of Rabbi Simon b. Zemah Duran as a Source of the History of the Jews in North Africa* (London, 1930), 98–99.

135. E.g., Elijah Mizrahi in the sixteenth century; see *Humash ha-re'em*, ed. M. Filip (Petah Tikvah, 1994), 7:63.

understanding of Rashi's comment on Gn 2.23 was compulsory.¹³⁶ That Moses ibn Gabbai and other rabbinically adept commentators on Rashi ignored the unambiguous talmudic gloss while divesting the more or less equally unambiguous biblical gloss of its literal meaning indicates their great determination to void Rashi's comment on *zot ha-pa'am* of its plain carnal sense.

IV

By virtue of its inclusion in Rashi's *Torah Commentary*, R. Eleazar's midrash won a permanent—and prominent—place in Jewish exegetical tradition. Its incorporation into his popular commentary ensured that it would win the attention both of ordinary Jews and acclaimed scholars, including such leading Rashi supercommentators as Elijah Mizrahi, Judah Loew, and Mordechai Jaffe.¹³⁷ Yet to receive Rashi's imprimatur was not necessarily to be appreciated by future generations. Rashi's late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Spanish supercommentators (Judah Klatz, Moses Albelda, Jacob Kenizal, Abraham Bokhrat) dealt with their unease one way: they eschewed comment on Rashi's gloss on *zot ha-pa'am*.¹³⁸ Other supercommentators, however, quelled their misgivings by interpreting Adam's relations with the animals in a semi-midrashic fashion that departed from the plain sense of its source while largely preserving that source's syntactic and semantic components.¹³⁹ This "Spanish solution" to the problem of R. Eleazar's midrash eventually migrated to Ashkenazic lands, there to be championed or contested by supercommentators on Rashi's *Commentary* who, newly alert to long-standing Mediterranean approaches to nonlegal rabbinic dicta, engaged in a broad-ranging and at times fierce debate over the question of their literal interpretation.¹⁴⁰

In composing the most comprehensive medieval glosses on Rashi's *Commentary*, Spanish supercommentators established a field that would subsequently attract contributors from every corner of the Jewish world,

136. David ben Samuel, *Divre David*, ed. C. D. Chavel (Jerusalem, 1978), 16.

137. Their readings of Rashi's gloss are discussed in my "From Sefarad to Ashkenaz."

138. Acts of studied unawareness with respect to R. Eleazar's midrash as it appears in Rashi's *Commentary* are easily found. A censored version of Rashi's gloss was abroad in early modern Ashkenazic lands. It and modern euphemistic renderings are discussed in my "From Sefarad to Ashkenaz."

139. See Moshe Idel, "Midrashic versus Other Forms of Jewish Hermeneutics: Some Comparative Reflections," *The Midrashic Imagination*, 50.

140. See my "From Sefarad to Ashkenaz."

most notably among early modern Ashkenazic writers.¹⁴¹ The field would come to boast dozens of offerings by the most conservative estimates and hundreds by the most elastic ones.¹⁴² It grows still, and has even seen a recent resurgence in new forms.¹⁴³ Here, then, is a significant unstudied “mode of transmission”¹⁴⁴ within Jewish tradition that accentuates the central role that commentaries—or, in this case, supercommentaries—play in “canonizing” certain post-rabbinic Jewish texts.¹⁴⁵

On Abraham Gross’s reading of the evidence, Rashi’s “Ashkenazic attitude” towards aggadah “barely engendered reservations” in Spain; Spanish writers “ignored” this aspect of the *Commentary*, judging Rashi’s work “as a commentary alone” on its exegetical merits; such sharp criticism of Rashi’s exegesis as was aired in Spain (as recorded by, say, Moses ibn Gabbai) was exceptional and offset “a thousand times over” by acceptance there of the *Commentary* as a “classic” of Jewish biblical commentary. The status granted to the *Commentary* in Jacob ben Asher’s code¹⁴⁶ and the advent of a substantial Spanish supercommentary tradition on Rashi’s work are said to prove these points.¹⁴⁷ Though caution is in order

141. Spanish supercommentaries certainly surpass, in scope and amplitude, their only formal late medieval Ashkenazic counterpart, Israel Isserlein’s *Be’urim ‘al Rashi* (on which, see Jacob Elbaum, *Openness and Insularity: Late Sixteenth Century Literature in Poland and Ashkenaz* [Hebrew; Jerusalem, 1990], 86). Elbaum depicts the Ashkenazic commentary tradition as beginning with the tosafists, suggesting that the early modern works of scholars like Solomon Luria, Judah Loew, and Mordechai Jaffe form a link in an “ongoing tradition” going back to tosafistic literature through Hezekiah ben Manoah and others (*Openness*, 86). While true in a general sense, this formulation obscures significant distinctions between systematic, large-scale early modern supercommentaries and earlier Ashkenazic interest in Rashi, which, though considerable, was more informal and episodic.

142. Israel Shapira, “Parshane Rashi ‘al ha-Torah,” *Bizaron* 2 (1940): 426–37, lists 143 printed supercommentaries. Aron Freimann, “Manuscript Supercommentaries on Rashi’s Commentary on the Pentateuch,” *Rashi Anniversary Volume* (New York, 1941), 73–114, lists 134 manuscript volumes.

143. Notable among the new trends are the growing number of English-language offerings in this area, e.g., Avigdor Bonchek, *What’s Bothering Rashi?*, 5 vols. (Jerusalem, 1997–2002).

144. See Yaakov Elman and Israel Gershoni, eds., *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion* (New Haven, Conn., 2000).

145. In a monograph in progress (*Canon and Commentary: Rashi’s Resisting Readers*), I address the appropriateness of treating Rashi’s *Commentary* in terms of the hermeneutics of canonicity.

146. See at n. 24.

147. Gross, “Rashi,” 53.

in a study based on a single example, the foregoing exploration suggests the need to revisit and probably revise these generalizations. Let it be noted first, however, that Jacob ben Asher's juristic leanings were heavily influenced by his family's northern European roots—especially in the first section of his code where the ruling on Rashi's *Commentary* as a possible substitute for targum appears. It therefore remains a moot question how much, if at all, the ruling on Rashi's *Commentary* as a possible substitute for targum reflects Spanish realities, let alone the *Commentary's* place in daily Sephardic life.¹⁴⁸

What, then, of the testimony of the supercommentaries? In the case of Rashi's assertion of Adam's sexual congress with beasts, these, on the surface, do seem simply to go about the business of explicating one of Rashi's midrashic sources. Indeed, for all their substantive differences, all four treatments of Rashi's gloss sampled above share formal characteristics marking them as entries in the supercommentarial genre, the most distinctive of these being incipits drawn from Rashi's text.¹⁴⁹ Here then, it would seem, is good evidence that Rashi's "Ashkenazic attitude" toward aggadah "barely engendered reservations" in Spain.

And yet, closer inspection of Spanish glosses on Rashi's exposition of Gn 2.23 has shown us that outward appearances are deceiving. While, in general, the format of incipit and gloss suggests subservience to, or at least deference before, an earlier human mediator of the divine word, in the case of the Spanish supercommentaries this format only highlights their authors' estrangement from the literal sense of Rashi's interpretation while camouflaging their subversion of it. The cognitive "interpretation" of Rashi's gloss on *zot ba-pa'am* was as much a protest as explanation—albeit a protest embedded in an outwardly "obsequious" literary format. Through the medium of supercommentary, Spanish challenges to Rashi's

148. On the basis of this one-line ruling, Gross (*ibid.*, 37–38) infers Rashi's "special place" among Spanish Jews and pronounces as "clear" the "reality of the spread of the custom of reading the weekly pericope along with Rashi in Spain." Given, however, Jacob's and his father's rootedness in Ashkenazic halak-hah (this was, especially in the father's case, retained even after arrival in Spain; Ta-Shma, "Rabbenu Asher," n. 21 above), such generalizations require corroboration from indigenous sources.

149. Simon, "Interpreting the Interpreter," 87: "the supercommentary's focus on the commentary has a conspicuous formal sign—the incipit it taken from the text of the commentary and not from the Scriptural text." Simon goes too far, however, in implying that the incipit must only be from the work of commentary. The Sephardic supercommentators sampled herein all cite scriptural lemma (i.e., *zot ba-pa'am*) and Rashi's gloss before speaking in their own voice.

interpretation were read back into his work and Rashi's understanding of Adam's intercourse with the animals was supplanted by a noetic one.¹⁵⁰

Rashi's assertion of Adam's intercourse with animals certainly engendered reservations among his Spanish supercommentators, *but* reservations can be expressed in many ways, of which overt criticism is one and transformation under cover of supercommentary another. The degree to which Rashi's biblical interpretations were "Hispanized" as his *Commentary* was ushered into the precincts of the Sephardic exegetical tradition remains to be researched.¹⁵¹ What seems likely, however, is that if the *Commentary* was, in its own way, as "victorious" in Spain as Rashi's talmudic commentaries,¹⁵² the victory occurred in large measure by way of acts of "exegetical ingenuity"¹⁵³ that brought Rashi's characteristically Ashkenazic interpretive modes and theological proclivities into conformity with Sephardic sensibilities and religious teachings.

150. Adapting ideas in Bernard M. Levenson, "You Must Not Add Anything to What I Command You: Paradoxes of Canon and Authorship in Ancient Israel," *Numen* 50 (2003): 1–51, especially 47–48.

151. Consider the reading in terms of divine providence given to Rashi's gloss on Gn 28.12 ("Ascending and descending": "the angels who accompanied him [Jacob] in the land of Israel were not permitted to leave the land") by Duran's contemporary (MS Lutski 802, 29r) or Moses ibn Gabbai's unpacking, in terms of the soul clinging to its Maker, of Rashi's vivid but obscure one-word gloss on Nm 33.38, according to which Aaron died "with a kiss," (*Eved shelomo*, 225v).

152. Gross, "Rashi," 54.

153. See Jonathan Z. Smith, "Sacred Persistence: Toward a Redescription of Canon," in his *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago, 1982), 52.