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Ashkenazic Talmudic Interpretation and The Jewish–Christian Encounter

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Abstract

This study looks anew at the interactions and possible influences between the monastic and cathedral school masters in Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the leading contemporary scholars of the Talmud in northern France and Germany known as the Tosafists. By focusing on significant commonalities in interpretational methods and institutional structures, as well as on the formulations of various critics, the contours of these interactions can be more precisely charted and assessed.

Keywords

Tosafists – Rashi – Jewish–Christian contact – dialectic – Cathedral Schools – Sefer Hasidim

Introduction

The leading rabbinic scholars in northern France and Germany during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, known as the Tosafists, revolutionized the study of the Talmud through their close literary and conceptual readings, and their far-reaching dialectical comparisons and resolutions. These efforts were undertaken in the wake of the remarkably successful efforts of their progenitor and master, R. Solomon b. Isaac of Troyes (Rashi, 1040–1105), who produced

a terse, running commentary on virtually all of the tractates of the Babylonian Talmud.¹

In the expanded edition of his monumental study on the Tosafist *oeuvre* that appeared in 1980, E.E. Urbach concludes that despite the presence of similar methods and even terminologies, the Tosafists did not have especially meaningful contacts with those Christian legists or scholars who utilized theological dialectic.² Urbach was focused, however, on locating only one dimension or manifestation of such possible influence—were Jews familiar with or aware of written texts and formulations by Christians that employed dialectic? Although Urbach was perhaps justified in pursuing this narrow criterion—since influence is most easily demonstrated if an awareness of central, written texts can be shown—such a high level of awareness was not necessary in the case of the Tosafists,³ since a form of dialectic was already being practiced within a (limited) circle of rabbinic scholars at the academy of Worms during the late eleventh century.⁴

As such, a more precise formulation of this question is whether contact with Christian dialectic was a contributing factor in the remarkable expansion and efflorescence of this approach in Jewish learning and Talmudic scholarship during the twelfth century, which quickly and forcefully became the hallmark of all of the leading Tosafist study halls in northern France, if not in Germany.⁵ In this regard, there are a number of significant points of contact between Jews and Christians not discussed by Urbach.

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- 1 On the extent and method of Rashi's Talmudic commentaries, see Avraham Grossman, *The Early Sages of France* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1995), 215–236 (in Hebrew); and the more technical study of Rashi's method in Jonah Fraenkel, *Rashi's Methodology in his Exegesis of the Babylonian Talmud* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980) (in Hebrew).
 - 2 See Ephraim Urbach, *The Tosafists: Their History, Writings and Methods* 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980), 2:744–752 (in Hebrew). On Rashi's awareness of Christian teachings, see Daniel Lasker, "Rashi and Maimonides on Christianity," *Between Rashi and Maimonides: Themes in Medieval Jewish Thought, Literature and Exegesis*, ed. E. Kanarfogel and M. Sokolow (New York, NY: Ktav, 2010), 3–21; and the extensive literature cited in n. 1.
 - 3 See the review by Kenneth Stow of my *Peering through the Lattices: Dimensions of Mysticism, Magic and Pietistic Dimensions during the Tosafist Period* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000), in *Jewish History* 16 (2002): 213–216.
 - 4 See A. Grossman, *The Early Sages of France*, 439–454; and see also below, n. 15.
 - 5 Grossman, *The Early Sages of France*, 439–454, points out that the earliest German Tosafist, R. Isaac b. Asher (Riba) *ha-Levi* (*ha-Zaqen*, ca. 1060–1133)—who is most often associated with Speyer—studied at Worms as well, where he encountered the nascent dialectic being utilized

Modes of Contact

That Jews learned dialectic in a formal way from the Christians is rather doubtful. Even if there were Talmudists who could read Latin to a significant degree—which does not appear to have been the case—there is scant evidence that mainstream Talmudic scholars were actually familiar with the texts of any Christian works of theology or jurisprudence that employed the dialectical method.⁶ Only some truly exceptional figures within the Ashkenazic orbit, such as the mystic, R. Elhanan b. Yaqar of London and R. Berekhyah *ha-Naqdan* (the punctuator), who spent time in both Rouen and London, were able to effectively read Latin.⁷

At the same time, Jewish and Christian scholars certainly held discussions—in the vernacular—about the nature of *peshat* and other aspects of biblical interpretation,⁸ and the literature of Jewish-Christian polemic presumes and demonstrates that small-scale disputations, dialogues, and other interactions

there. Similarly, R. Meir b. Samuel, father of the early northern French Tosafists Rashbam and Rabbenu Tam, also studied in Worms.

- 6 See Yizhak Baer, “Rashi and the Historical Realia of his Time,” *Tarbiz* 20 (1949–1950): 320–332 (in Hebrew); Ezra Shereshevsky, “Rashi and Christian Interpretation,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 61 (1970–71): 76–87; Menahem Banitt, *Rashi: Interpreter of the Bible* (Tel Aviv: University of Tel Aviv, 1985), 6–7; Jeremy Cohen, “Scholarship and Intolerance in the Medieval Academy: The Study and Evaluation of Judaism in European Christendom,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 592–613, at 596–600; David Berger, “Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times,” *Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures*, ed. J. J. Schacter (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), 119–121; Kirsten Fudeman, “The Linguistic Significance of the Le’azim in Joseph Kara’s Job Commentary,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 93 (2003): 397–414; Sara Japhet, *Biblical Exegeses through the Generations* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2008), 294–309 (in Hebrew); and Hanna Liss, *Creating Fictional Worlds* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 19–22.
- 7 See Georges Vajda, “De quelques infiltrations chrétiennes dans l’oeuvre d’un auteur anglo juif du XIII^e siècle,” *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale et Littérature du Moyen Âge* 28 (1961): 15–34; D. Berger, “Judaism and General Culture,” 121, n. 10; and Norman Golb, *The History of the Jews of Rouen in the Middle Ages* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1977), 134–136 (in Hebrew).
- 8 See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 148–172, 175–176, 197–199, 234–235; Elazar Touitou, *Exegesis in Perpetual Motion* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2003), 11–45, 164–176, 177–188 (in Hebrew); Ora Limor and Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, *Jews and Christians in Western Europe: Encounters Between Cultures in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, 5 vols. (Tel Aviv: Open University Press, 1993–1998), Vol. 4, Unit 6: 36–60; (in Hebrew); D. L. Goodwin, *Take Hold of the Robe of a Jew: Herbert of Bosham’s Christian Hebraism* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1–8, 135–147, 163–167; and David Malkiel, *Reconstructing Ashkenaz: The Human Face of Franco-German Jewry, 1000–1250* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

were fairly common between Jewish and Christian spokesmen and scholars of varying levels.⁹ Indeed, according to one such account, Count Henri Rozenne of Champagne posed three challenges about scriptural interpretation to the leading northern French Tosafist and grandson of Rashi, Rabbenu Jacob Tam (d. 1171). The first of these concerned the status of the biblical figure Ḥanokh. Henri assumed that the verse in Genesis 5:24, “And Ḥanokh walked with the Almighty, but he ceased to exist since God took him,” refers to the death of Ḥanokh. Henri wondered why Ḥanokh died at such a relatively young age for his day (a mere 365 years), when many in those generations lived to around nine hundred years, especially since Ḥanokh had “walked in the way of the Almighty,” to a larger extent than others.

Rabbenu Tam’s response was that Ḥanokh did not simply die as all other men do. Rather, he was literally “taken by God” to some Heavenly locale, in a special and unique way, in recognition of the fact that he was the seventh (successful) generation of mankind, just as the Almighty assigned an enhanced status to the seventh day of the week and to the seventh year in the cycle of years. It is perhaps suggestive that Rabbenu Tam proposed this approach to Henri (which is based on passages in *Pesiqta Rabbati* and *Va-Yiqra Rabbah*) rather than taking the approach favored by Rashi in his Torah commentary (which followed *Bereshit Rabbah*), that Ḥanokh was taken away early from his earthly existence because he sinned, and that this was some form of punishment or at least a means of preventing his commission of future sins. Nonetheless, this exchange between the Count of Champagne and Rabbenu Tam bespeaks a fairly open kind of interaction and dialogue between these figures, and should perhaps be seen as a model in this regard.¹⁰

9 See, e.g., Aryeh Grabois, “The Hebraica Veritas and Jewish-Christian Intellectual Relations in the Twelfth Century,” *Speculum* 50 (1975): 620–633; David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages,” *American Historical Review* 91 (1986): 576–591; W. C. Jordan, *The French Monarchy and the Jews: From Philip Augustus to the Last Capetians* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 3–16; M. Signer and J. Van Engen, “Introduction,” *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. M. Signer and J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 1–8; Jonathan Elukin, *Living Together, Living Apart* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 64–88, 152–183.

10 See *Tosafot ha-Shalem*, ed. J. Gellis (Jerusalem Mif’al Tosafot ha-shalem, 1982–), 1:178, sec. 8 (in Hebrew). See also *Perushei R. Hayyim Palt’iel ‘al ha-Torah*, ed. Y. S. Lange (Jerusalem: Karen Wurzweller, 1981), 108 (in Hebrew). For an analysis of the larger cultural contexts of these consultations, see Rami Reiner, “Rabbenu Tam and Henri Rozen of Champagne,” *An Evening of Study in Memory of Professor Israel Ta-Shma*, ed. The Institute for Jewish Studies at Hebrew University (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 2005), 29–36 (in Hebrew).

Although there were a number of Christian Bible scholars who could read Hebrew, a development that is quite understandable given the significance of the Hebrew Bible for these scholars as well, the Christians typically reported that they learned about Jewish exegetical techniques and conclusions through listening; they did not learn of these techniques from written Hebrew sources or treatises of Jewish biblical exegesis. Thus, Abelard, who was among those Christian scholars who could read Hebrew to some degree, tells Heloise that he “listened to a Jew,” who had been teaching or explaining verses in the Book of Kings.¹¹

Eleazar Tuitou and Sara Kamin similarly have suggested that Jewish scholars absorbed techniques of Christian exegetes mainly from conversations with these exegetes.¹² Gad Freudenthal has noted that a manuscript, which preserves a commentary (probably) by Abelard, “seems to record verbatim what happened in the lectures: not only comments and jokes in the vernacular, but lengthy argumentative exchanges.” Freudenthal concludes that “if indeed some of the instruction given by Abelard and others in that period was in the vernacular, it is possible that some Jews could have understood at least snippets of it . . . If some teaching took place in the vernacular, the assumption that developments within Scholastic philosophy [in northern France] directly influenced Jews becomes more plausible.”¹³

See also Norman Golb, “Jacob Tam’s Service on Behalf of the King of France at Reims and the Question of Remois Hebraic Scholarship in the Twelfth Century,” available online at http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/scr/jacob_tam_2007.pdf, 1–13. On Rabbenu Tam’s (similar) use of *midrashim* such as *Pesiqta* to establish the nature and role of Metatron, see Daniel Abrams, “The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Metatron in the Godhead,” *Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994): 298–305.

- 11 On Abelard’s knowledge of Hebrew, see A. Grabois, “The Hebraica Veritas,” 617 (n. 20), and 628. See also *A Dialogue of a Philosopher with a Jew and a Christian*, trans. P. Payer (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), 9; and D. Berger, “Mission to the Jews,” 584. Abelard’s report to Heloise is found in *Patrologia Latina cursus completa serie latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1844–1864), 178:718. According to Gilbert Dahan, this situation began to change from the Christian standpoint with the passage of time, as Latin translations of portions of Rashi’s Torah commentary started to appear following the trial of the Talmud in 1240. See *La brûlement du Talmud à Paris, 1242–44*, ed. G. Dahan (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 7–20, 95–120.
- 12 See Eleazar Tuitou, *Exegesis in Perpetual Motion* (above, n. 8); Sara Kamin, *Jews and Christians Interpret the Bible* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1991), 13–61, and 12*–68* (in Hebrew); and see also Michael Signer, “King/Messiah in Rashi’s Exegesis of Psalms 2,” *Prooftexts* 3 (1983): 273–278.
- 13 See the review by Gad Freudenthal of *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard* in *Aleph* 7 (2007): 353–354.

There is every reason to believe that this kind of process could have occurred with regard to dialectic, whereby Jewish scholars heard from their Christian counterparts about the different forms and general methodologies of dialectic as they were applied in Christian literature. Indeed, if a circle with a radius of eighty miles or so is drawn around the leading cathedral schools in northern France during the twelfth century (such as Laon, Chartres, Orleans and Paris), the most important Tosafist study halls in northern France can also be found within the limits of that circle. Abelard, for example, reached Paris after having taught at Melun and Corbeil, which are both located not far to the south of Paris. He also spent some time (after he was condemned in 1221) in the monastery at Saint Denis, and with the Bishop of Troyes. The Paraclete in Champagne, where Abelard taught students prior to returning to Paris, was less than ten miles from Troyes, and Abelard was supposed to debate Bernard of Clairvaux at one point in Sens.¹⁴ Virtually all of these locales had significant Tosafist study halls within them during the twelfth century.¹⁵

It is certainly possible to grasp the basic concepts, ideas, and definitions of dialectic in the course of direct conversation. Talmudists could absorb these ideas and utilize them based on their conversations with Christians, just as the Christians learned about and activated the principles of *peshat* methodology as they received them from the Jews through hearing about them. To be sure, Jewish and Christian biblical exegetes were working with the same basic text, which created a closer connection between them. This was not the case,

14 See J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1993), 35–36, 41–45; M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life* (Oxford: Wiley, 1997), 245; R. W. Southern, “The Schools of Paris and the School of Chartres,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. R. L. Benson and G. Constable (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 121–123; G. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000), 115–123. See also Jean Leclerc, “Renewal of Theology,” in *Renaissance and Renewal*, 78: “For Champagne in particular, it is necessary to keep in mind the personal and cultural relationships that may have existed between the cathedral school of Troyes, the abbeys of Clairvaux and the Paraclete, the court of Marie de France, and the yeshiva or rabbinical academy of Troyes.”

15 For additional comparative perspective, Stephan Kuttner notes that canonistic treatises were produced in the last third of the twelfth century in and around Paris, Rouen, Oxford, Northampton, Cologne and Mainz, perhaps Troyes and Rheims. See Kuttner, “The Revival of Jurisprudence,” in *Renaissance and Renewal*, 316–319. See also C. S. Jaeger, *The Emy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950–1200* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 15, 46–48, 53–75, who traces the founding of ten cathedral schools in German urban centers between 950 and 1015, including Wurzburg, Cologne, Worms, Mainz, Speyer, Trier, Hildesheim, Regensburg, Magdeburg and Bamberg.

of course, with regard to Christian canonists or legists and Talmudic scholars. But since the dialectical method as such was not foreign to Talmudic scholars (since a form of it was to be found already within Talmudic literature), they could easily adjust to and assimilate the developments in this realm that were being put forward by the Christians.

Related Contexts and Conceptions

There are examples of other Christian educational methods or fundamental principles of Christian learning that medieval European rabbinic scholars heard about and ultimately adopted. The Italian rabbinic scholar, R. Isaiah b. Mali di Trani (d. ca. 1240), studied in Germany with the Tosafist R. Simḥah of Speyer at the end of the twelfth century and also absorbed teachings of Rabbenu Tam, via a group of his Tosafist students who subsequently returned to the Rhineland and to Regensburg.¹⁶ In one of his halakhic responsa (in which he responds to a charge that his interpretation of the underlying Talmudic matter under discussion was against the interpretation of leading predecessors), R. Isaiah presents (and adopts) the parable, which he reports that he heard “from the philosophers,” of a dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant, who can see further (and understand more) than the giant himself can.

R. Isaiah employs this parable to justify his view, that all qualified halakhic decisors in his day (including himself) could question and disagree with all of their post-Talmudic predecessors based on precise textual proofs and well-based logical arguments that they could put forward in interpreting the relevant Talmudic passages, even as these predecessors are indeed considered to be much greater as individual scholars and spiritual figures than their successors.¹⁷ Indeed, northern French Tosafists including Ri of Dampierre

16 See I. Ta-Shma, *Knesset Mehqarim: Iyunim be-sifrut ha-rabanit be-yamei ha-beinayim*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2005), 3:20–30, 40–48 (in Hebrew).

17 See *Teshuvot ha-Rid le-Rabbenu Yeshayah di-Trani ha-Zaqen*, ed. A. Y. Wetherimer (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisre’eli ha-shalem, 1972), 302–303 (responsum 62) (in Hebrew). See also, *Teshuvot ha-Rid*, 6–7 (responsum 1); and my “Progress and Tradition in Medieval Ashkenaz,” *Jewish History* 14 (2000): 288–290. It should also be noted that the cathedral school at Chartres (as renovated in the thirteenth century) had a stained glass window scene of dwarfs who were perched on the shoulders of giants; see Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 13.

(d. 1189),¹⁸ his student R. Samson of Sens (d. 1214),¹⁹ and the brothers of Evreux (d. ca. 1250) also put forward formulations that were fully in accordance with this larger theory or approach on the prerogatives of later scholars to disagree with their predecessors.²⁰

As is well known, the parable reproduced by Isaiah di Trani was first put forward by Bernard of Chartres (d. 1126) and his student, William of Conches, and later by John Salisbury (d. 1180) and Peter of Blois (d. 1212), in order to explain how thinkers and philosophers in their day could argue with the founding fathers of philosophy and religious thought.²¹ This then was another “big idea” that had wide support within Christian scholarship, which Ashkenazic rabbinic scholars could easily have heard about and adopted, without any particular grounding in Christian texts (or the ability to read Latin). R. Isaiah’s (literary) student in Italy, Zedekiah b. Abraham *ha-Rofe min ha-anavim* (Anau) cites this parable in R. Isaiah’s name in the introduction to his own halakhic compendium, *Shibbolei ha-Leqet* (composed in the mid-thirteenth century), making explicit that the scholars (or philosophers) from whom R. Isaiah di Trani heard this parable were non-Jews.²²

Shortly before the appearance of the first edition of Urbach’s seminal work on the Tosafists in 1955, Shalom Albeck theorized that a basic premise of medieval scholasticism, which held that any new (and thereby speculative) legal teaching or ratification of custom had to be harmonized with existing collections and accepted sources of law, must have reached Rabbenu Tam via his

18 See *Sefer ha-semaq mi-šurikh*, ed. Y. Har-Shoshanim, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: Y. Y. Har-Shoshanim, 1973), 1:275 (as corrected by MS Moscow-Guenzberg 187, fol. 49v, and MS Berlin 37, fols. 149r–v) (in Hebrew); and my “Rabbinic Authority and the Right to Open an Academy in Medieval Ashkenaz,” *Michael* 12 (1991): 233–250, at 242.

19 See R. Meir b. Todros *ha-Levi* Abulafia (Ramah), *Kit’ab al-Rasa’il [kitāb rasā’il]*, ed. Jehiel Brill (Paris: J. Brill, 1871), 131–132: “For there are times that later scholars can see what was hidden to their predecessors. A student can see something in his teacher’s interpretation [of the Talmud] that the teacher did not see. The student can thereby enlighten the teacher, and focus his interpretation more effectively.” See also Yohanan Silman, *Kol Gadol ve-lo Yasaf* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999), 145–146; and E. E. Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 2:679.

20 See *Sefer Orhot Hayyim le-R. Aharon ha-Kohen mi-Lunel* (ed. Florence; repr. Jerusalem: Yahadut, 1986), laws of Torah study, sec. 21 (fols. 29a–b) (in Hebrew); E. E. Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:479–480; and Menachem Elon, “The Law, Books and Libraries,” *National Jewish Law Review* 2 (1987): 16–18.

21 See Robert Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 37–41, 209–223. See also Umberto Eco’s forward, xiv–xv, for additional bibliography.

22 See *Shibbolei ha-Leqet*, ed. S. Buber (Vilna: Romm, 1889), fol. 18r (in the introduction, =ed. S. K. Mirsky (New York, NY, 1966), 107–108) (in Hebrew).

(personal) contacts with Christian scholars.²³ In a much more recent study, Talya Fishman pointed to some suggestive parallels between the written penitential treatises and tracts of the Christians, and various penitential theories and practices (*tiqqunei teshuvah*) of the German Pietists. Fishman maintains that if indeed the German Pietists formulated their *tiqqunei teshuvah* under some measure of Christian influence, this influence did not necessarily reach them via the written texts of the Christians, but rather through conversations in the marketplace (or in other economic contexts), or even when the Jews observed Christians fulfilling these penances in public (outdoor) venues.

Fishman further suggests that the manual of penitential regimens compiled by Burchard of Worms in the early eleventh century impacted Eleazar of Worms (d. ca. 1230), a leading figure among *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (as well as an important German halakhist during the Tosafist period), who wrote his penitential treatises some two hundred years after Burchard did. However, Burchard's widely copied work (which was very influential within Christian society) had an impact on Jewish society not in its written form, but rather because Jews (including Eleazar) learned about it from the observed practices of the Christians around them, which were in accordance with this text.²⁴

The Evidence from Sefer Hasidim

Given the presence of dialectic within the Talmud itself, and the developments at the academy of Worms by the late eleventh century, positing Jewish awareness of and comfort with the nature and dimensions of Christian dialectic is perhaps even easier to assume than the path of acculturation that Fishman suggests with regard to the penitential practices of *Ḥasidei*

23 See S. Albeck, "Yaḥaso shel Rabbenu Tam le-Be'ayot Zemanno," *Zion* 19 (1954): 72–119, at 112–113 (in Hebrew).

24 See T. Fishman, "The Penitential System of *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* and the Problem of Cultural Boundaries," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 8 (1999): 201–229, at 214–218. Similarly, my "Dreams as a Determinant of Jewish Law and Practice in Northern Europe during the High Middle Ages," *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History [Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan]*, ed. D. Engel, Lawrence Schiffman and Elliot R. Wolfson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 111–143, suggests that there is ample reason to believe that the Jews were aware of some of the larger ideas and tendencies about dreams that were prevalent within Christian circles. See also Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "For a prayer in this place would be most welcome': Jews, Holy Places and Miracles—A New Approach," *Viator* 37 (2006): 369–395.

Ashkenaz.²⁵ Indeed, a section in *Sefer Hasidim* clearly shows that at least by the year 1200, Jews in Germany (if not in Ashkenaz more broadly) clearly recognized the dialectical method that was prevalent within Christian learning, and that this was a highly significant and central method of study for them.²⁶

Sefer Hasidim strongly objects to the use of unrestrained *pilpul* and dialectic (although not to the genre and use of *Tosafot* texts per se), especially by students who were not qualified or properly prepared properly to do so. In the section in question, the author of *Sefer Hasidim* maintains that it inappropriate for students of Torah to be under the influence of disciplines or methods that are not in accordance with the ethos of the Torah, and especially that the Jewish scholars should not be unduly influenced by “dialeqtīqah shel goyim” (“dialectic of the gentiles”).²⁷

At the end of this section, the author of *Sefer Hasidim* also decries *limmud shel niṣṣahon* (literally, study that is predicated on one participant emerging victorious over the other), which reflects the *disputationes* that were typically and regularly conducted in the cathedral schools of the twelfth century. Although this section does not demonstrate that the Jews knew about the specific details or mechanics of Christian dialectic, it does show that Jews recognized that this was an important and effective method in the eyes of the Christians, and they were certainly aware of it in broad terms.²⁸

25 On the similarities between older Jewish ascetic (and mystical) approaches and medieval Christian practices, and the implications for influence in the medieval Jewish milieu, see, e.g., Peter Schafer, “The Ideal of Piety of the Ashkeanzi Ḥasidim and Its Roots in Jewish Tradition,” *Jewish History* 4 (1990): 9–23; Ivan Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 102–127; Fishman, “The Penitential System of Hasidei Ashkenaz,” 218–223; and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 125–130, 253–258.

26 See *Sefer Hasidim* (Parma), sec. 752; I. Ta-Shma, *Halakhah, Minhag u-Meṣi’ut be-Ashkenaz* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996), 119–129 (in Hebrew); Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1:81–84 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1999) (in Hebrew); and my *Jewish Education and Society* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 73–75, 86–88.

27 See Haym Soloveitchik, “Three Themes in the *Sefer Hasidim*,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 339–354; I. Ta-Shma, “Mitsvat Talmud Torah ki-Be’ayah Ḥevratit—Datit be-Sefer Ḥasidim,” *Sefer Bar-Ilan* 14–15 (1977): 98–113 (in Hebrew); and Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1:81–84.

28 Note also, for example, the awareness by *Sefer Hasidim* (and R. Eleazar of Worms) of the strict decorum that was present in the churches during Christian prayer, a practice that *Hasidei Ashkenaz* sought to instill within the synagogues as well. See, e.g., Moshe Hallamish, “Siḥat Ḥullin be-Beit ha-Knesset: Metsi’ut u-Ma’avaq,” *Milet* 2 (1985): 226–227, 243–244 (in Hebrew); and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 83–84. Cf. Ivan Marcus, “A Jewish-Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz,” *Cultures of the Jews*, ed. D. Biale (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 2002), 449–501.

Especially since Jewish scholars of the twelfth century were not being initiated into the realm of dialectic by the Christians, the Jews' familiarity with the use of this method by Christians could almost be expected lead to additional interest on their part. Indeed, it would appear that Christian dialectic acted upon Jewish scholarship as a kind of "enzyme," hastening, sharpening, and expanding the process of dialectical study. The unfettered continuation of this process, and the possible extension even to unqualified students and scholars, is what led to the concern expressed by *Sefer Ḥasidim*.

Christian Analogs

We can find an example within the Christian world itself of this kind of larger intellectual process and development. The canonist Gratian, who worked exclusively in Bologna as far as we can tell, may also have studied theological dialectic with Abelard in northern France, or was at least familiar with his works. Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum* (better known by its briefer name, the *Decretum*) has been characterized in the following terms by David Knowles: "Gratian composed an overarching collection which was generally well organized, of the essence of the laws that were organized carefully according to the titles and topics of the law, and he exposed all of this to the dialectical approach of the *Sic et Non* (the book, and the method, of Abelard). In this way, Gratian was able to reach conclusions in every issue, and he included also brief discussions in which he demonstrated the rules of analysis and law that he employed."²⁹

Richard W. Southern has also suggested that Gratian was influenced by Abelard's *Sic et Non*.³⁰ Although Gratian's presence at academic institutions in northern France is difficult to prove conclusively, Gratian's work certainly reached Paris by the middle of the twelfth century, as demonstrated by its citation in Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, a work that was composed (in Paris) no

29 See David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (New York, NY: Longman, 1962), 177–178. See also S. Kuttner, *Harmony from Dissonance: An Interpretation of Medieval Canon Law* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1960), 12–26; R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953), 205–06; and Gordon Leff, *Medieval Thought: From Saint Augustine to Ockham* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1962) 130–131.

30 See R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 284–288, 292–296.

later than 1158.³¹ Moreover, much of what we know about Gratian comes from Parisian sources. Indeed, there are a series of parallels between the books of Abelard, Ivo of Chartres, Gratian, and Peter Lombard.³² Although Gratian was somewhat less systematic than Ivo of Chartres (and others among his predecessors), he excelled at putting forth trenchant comparative analyses that led to practical conclusions, just as the literature of the Tosafists does.

In the same way that Gratian adapted the theological dialectic that he may have learned from Abelard in northern France, and found a way to use it in his deliberations and in the writing of his legal major work, it is quite possible that the early Tosafists used the essential elements of (and at least the power of) the dialectical methods that reached them through their contact with Christians to enhance their Talmudic studies. Their steady and extensive use of the method, far beyond what had been done in Worms during the late eleventh century, as a means of inquiring from and about the texts of the Talmud which then allowed them to suggestively interpret these texts and to issue definitive halakhic conclusions helped the Tosafists to establish their own renaissance, which led to a sea change in the study of Talmud and Jewish law.

There are other significant parallels between the circles of Talmudic scholars in Ashkenaz and the scholars of canon and Roman law in Christian society that have not received sufficient attention but can also contribute to this discussion. These comparative aspects are located in the structure of the institutions of learning themselves and the status of the teachers within them. Indeed, the nature of these institutions and the status that they conferred

31 See Anders Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 136–142. Winroth offers this datum in the context of his larger thesis that Gratian's *Decretum* was produced in two recensions, the first by Gratian himself before 1140, and a second (updated version) by his successors (such as Bernard of Pavia), which included the first recension within it. It was this second or fuller recension that was cited by Peter Lombard of Paris in his *Sentences*, which establishes that the completion of this second recension occurred before 1158, when Peter's *Sentences* appeared. See also James Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 96–105. Winroth, 144, stresses the similarity between Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in the area of theology and Gratian's *Decretum* in the area of canon law. Note that a key element of the second recension of Gratian's work was its much better grasp of Roman law. Winroth shows that the study of Roman law in Bologna was undertaken in a significant way only c. 1140, when Gratian's first recension was already nearing completion. See Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum*, 171–173.

32 See R. W. Southern and A. Winroth, in the two above notes. See also *Prefaces to Canon Law Books in Latin Christianity*, ed. R. Somerville and B. C. Brasington, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 170–180.

underwent very similar changes between the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Moreover, these changes were directly linked to the growth of the dialectical method in both Christian and Jewish circles, although we should note once again that the changes took place in Christian society a generation or so before they occurred within the institutions of Jewish learning.

Through the beginning of the eleventh century, the monastery was the center of knowledge and wisdom in the Christian world. Learned monks assimilated vast amounts of Scripture and its interpretation, as well as Church law and other bodies of knowledge, through their constant and repetitive patterns of reading and review. The monasteries encouraged the study of canon law as it existed (and even advocated its memorization), without attempting to reconcile seeming contradictions or other textual problems that appeared throughout the corpus. The goal or aim of monastic study was simply to soak up or gather as much material as was to be found, in the broadest possible way.³³

Already at the end of the tenth century, however, cathedral schools such as the one at Chartres (under the direction of Fulbert) began to compete with the monasteries for students and attempted to establish themselves as the centers of learning in Christian society. By the second half of the eleventh century, the cathedral schools had won the day. These educational institutions were different from the monasteries in two basic ways. First, the name and status of each school were determined not by the place in which the school was located (as was the case with the monastic schools, such as that of Bec or Cluny). Rather, the reputation of the cathedral school was dependent on the teacher(s) who taught there at a particular time.³⁴ Even the name of Paris as a center for higher education in the twelfth century was dependent, at its inception and at

33 See D. Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 79–82; R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 185–192; Jean Leclercq, *The Love for Learning and the Desire for God* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 1961), 87–93; M. D. Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society in the Twelfth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 300–309; Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 173–175; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 21–27.

34 See, e.g., G. Pare, A. Brunet and P. Tremblay, *La renaissance du XIIe Siècle: Les écoles et l'enseignement* (Paris: Ottawa, 1933), 18–38; Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 310–320; Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages*, 193–203; Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 20–24; and Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 46–48, 217–219. See also Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Cambridge, 2001), 62–65.

its core, on the fact that there were several great, independent teachers who taught there.³⁵

Similarly, Richard Southern has argued that Chartres was a significant school only when particular masters taught there; its importance was not tied to its location or history per se. The students who wandered to France from Germany (e.g., Otto of Freising, who reached Paris ca. 1125),³⁶ or who followed certain masters (such as Peter Abelard) around northern France, also reflect this phenomenon.³⁷ These wandering students were inclined to identify themselves more by the names of the teachers with whom they studied than by the places in which they studied. Indeed, despite the very free academic environment that was the rule in the cathedral schools, students typically thought of themselves as students of their teachers rather than of a place.³⁸

The second basic difference was that even though the lessons in the cathedral schools began, as in the monastic schools, with the reading and fundamental analysis of an underlying text (*lectio*), the goal of the educational process was to pose questions in order to clarify the texts and what stood behind them, to resolve or to rectify texts or commentaries that appeared to contradict each other or other possible challenges and questions (*quaestio, disputatio*). In the study of the Bible (Jewish and Christian), Church law, or Christian theology, presenting contradictory texts and sources and the search for their resolution stood at the center of the educational process.³⁹

35 See, e.g., R. W. Hunt, "English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century," in *Essays in Medieval History*, ed. R. W. Southern (London: Macmillan, 1968), 106–108; A. L. Gabriel, *Garlandia: Studies in the History of the Medieval University* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1969), 1–6; I. Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanut la-Talmud*, 1:105–111; and S. Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and their Critics, 1100–1215* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 101–103, 125–128, 163–166, 270–271.

36 See Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 208–212. See also Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 275; Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 239.

37 R. W. Southern, "The Schools of Paris and the School of Chartres," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Benson and Constable, 113–132; Southern, *Medieval Humanism* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1970), 61–85; and Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 66–88. Others disagree, maintaining that Chartres's status was fundamentally tied to and derived from its location. See, e.g., J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 48, and see also Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 88–100.

38 See, e.g., Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 239–243; Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 272–290; Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 163–176, 204–212; and cf., J. W. Baldwin, "Masters at Paris from 1179 to 1215: A Social Perspective," in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Benson and Constable, 138–163.

39 See Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society*, 291–310; Pare, Brunet, and Tremblay, *La renaissance*, 110–123; J. W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton

The cultivation and use of scholastic dialectic in this way was the hallmark of the cathedral schools even before the days of Peter Abelard (d. 1142). The canonist Ivo of Chartres (d. 1116, or perhaps 1095), who arrived at the monastery of Bec in 1060 and went to Chartres in 1090, employed this type of dialectic in his work *Panormia*. Even before, this form was widespread in the writings of Bernold of Constance.⁴⁰ Indeed, a number of monastic teachers during the eleventh century also employed dialectic, including Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) and his teacher Lafranc of Bec, who left his birthplace in Italy and reached northern France, becoming the head of the monastery at Bec in 1042, two years after Rashi's birth.⁴¹

In the early twelfth century, however, German monastic scholars led by Rupert (d. 1130), abbot of Deutz (located in the eastern quarter of Cologne), broadly criticized this newer method and suggested that students return to study according to the venerable monastic methods. A distinction made at a debate held at the cathedral school of Laon in 1117 caused Rupert, who was then a monk at Liege, to travel to northern France in order to publicly raise his objections. The distinction in question, made by two masters at Laon, William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon, identified two wills of God: a permissive will (*voluntas permittens*) that tolerates evil, and an approving will (*voluntas approbans*). In Rupert's view, this was an absolute denigration of the outlook of Scripture. Such a meaningless and sterile distinction (*tam inertem divisionem*) could lead only to the blasphemous notion that God wills evil. Rupert continues by noting that he did not follow the schools of dialectic but that, even if he had mastered their knowledge, he would not make use of it, for such knowledge can only lead to the worst incongruities while adding nothing to the holiness and simplicity of the Divine truth. For Rupert, "Whatever can be thought up apart from sacred scripture or fabricated out of argumentation is unreasonable and therefore pertains in no way to the praise or acknowledgment of

University Press, 1970), 88–101; Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 174–175; Ivan Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 60–65; Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 93–106; Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanut la-Talmud*, 1:97–98.

40 See Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 83–106; Kuttner, *Harmony from Dissonance*, 12, 24; *Prefaces to Canon Law Books in Latin Christianity*, ed. Somerville and Brasington, 111–117, 132–133; Winroth, *The Making of Gratian's Decretum*, 16; and Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession*, 194–196. On Ivo and his travels, see Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 252–261.

41 See Leff, *Medieval Thought*, 93–115; Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 116–148; Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 250–252; and Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 274–275.

the omnipotence of God.” Thus theology is nourished by faith, according to Rupert, and not by “reasoning” in the manner of the cathedral masters.⁴²

In accordance with his mystical orientation, Rupert believed that God displayed His will to men in human history through the theophany of Scripture. Rupert and likeminded monks had no desire to transform this theophany into a rational theodicy that attempted to sort out the Divine attributes as the cathedral masters did.⁴³ At the same time, however, it must be noted that Rupert had to defend himself throughout his life against internal Christian charges that he innovated in his own reading (or *sensus*) of Scripture, against the knowledge of the Divine that had been passed down through the Church.⁴⁴ Again reflecting his involvement with mysticism, Rupert, an older contemporary of Rashbam, sometimes indicates that these “new” interpretations were revealed to him in heavenly dreams or visions.⁴⁵

This tension concerning the use of dialectic had further repercussions within northern France. Robert of Melun, in the preface to his *Sentences* (composed ca. 1160), rails against “a new type of teaching that has recently appeared which has gained inordinate popularity among certain men . . . by their strange and disgusting newness of terminology, they do not fear to divulge what they hope.” Bishop Stephen of Tournai (from 1192 to 1203; he studied both canon and Roman law in Bologna in the early 1150s, and then studied in Orleans and Chartres) denounced the new method from a different perspective: “Students applaud nothing but novelties, and the masters are more intent on glory than doctrine. Everywhere they draw up new and modern summaries and supporting commentaries on theology with which they lull and deceive their listeners,

42 See Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 204–210, 216–217, 270–272, 302; Little, *Religious Poverty*, 26–27; and see also U. T. Holmes, “Transition in European Education,” in *Twelfth-Century Europe and the Foundations of Modern Society*, ed. M. Clagett, Gaines Post and Robert Reynolds (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 15–38; and Ian Wei, “From Twelfth-Century Schools to Thirteenth-Century Universities: The Disappearance of Biographical and Autobiographical Representations of Scholars,” *Speculum* 86 (2011): 42–78.

43 See Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 307.

44 *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. M. Signer and J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 126–127, 154–166; Peter Classen, “*Res Gestae*, University History, Apocalypse: Visions of Past and Future,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Benson and Constable, 404–406; Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 314–315; and my “Progress and Tradition in Medieval Ashkenaz,” 287–288.

45 See Ralph Lerner, “Ecstatic Dissent,” *Speculum* 67 (1992): 42–57, and Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1100.

as if the works of the sacred fathers did not still suffice."⁴⁶ Indeed, the schools that championed the new dialectic were characterized in reports from both the monastic and cathedral communities "as teeming with cavalier students, whose breasts swell with pride in their knowledge, who can dispute, cast doubt, redefine old usage, violate the laws of *reverentia* and *pietas* left and right, and have the nerve to contradict and show up their own teachers."⁴⁷

More nuanced concerns about the use of dialectic were raised in northern France as part of the disputes between Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux, and Peter Abelard. Bernard characterizes Abelard's reasoning as "a war of words (*pugnae verborum*), marred by novelties of expression (*novitates vocum*)."⁴⁸ Despite the harshness of his words and his goal of ultimately branding Abelard a heretic (if not the head of an international conspiracy who sought to reject all authority, both religious and divine),⁴⁸ Bernard, who was trained as a so-called new monk mainly in the Benedictine monastery of Citeaux,⁴⁹ was not against the powers of logical thinking or even the dialectical method per se, as his older German contemporary Rupert of Deutz was. Rather, Bernard was opposed to incorrect applications or mistaken manipulations of these methods, and the misguided reasoning that resulted from their overly wide use. He preached about this to students in Paris in 1140: "Flee from the midst of this Babylon and save your souls; fly to the cities of refuge [i.e., the monasteries]. You will find much more in the forests than in the books, and the rocks will teach you more than any master."⁵⁰ Moreover, as Richard Southern has observed, "St. Bernard . . . has not been given as much credit as he deserves for the trouble he took to promote masters of whom he approved."⁵¹

Abelard was charged by Bernard with believing that reason can accomplish more than its legitimate aims. The way of teaching the Bible should dovetail with the ordinary experiences of life. It is important to note that neither Rupert of Deutz nor Bernard participated in the newer cathedral schools. Moreover,

46 See Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 310–311, and see also 95, 235. Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 33–43; and *Prefaces to Canon Law Books*, ed. Somerville and Brasington, 177–178.

47 See Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 217, and cf., the statement by R. Samson of Sens, above, n. 19.

48 See M. T. Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 218–219, 311–313, 371.

49 See G. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 7–8, 42–43; and Clanchy, *Abelard: A Medieval Life*, 37–38. Cf., Chenu, *Nature, Man, and Society*, 95; and *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Signer and Van Engen, 165.

50 See J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 21–22. See also Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels*, 269–277.

51 See Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 170–173.

both were inclined toward mystical teachings and study, as has already been noted for Rupert. For Bernard, mysticism was the means by which man could get above himself, through upward spiritual striving. In Bernard's words, the more profound truth that sometimes stands behind the obvious, which instructs the soul in the way it should go, militates against trying too hard to achieve explications through reasoning.⁵²

Jewish Educational Institutions

In turning again to the study of Talmud in medieval Ashkenaz in the period prior to the First Crusade, we note that for rabbinic scholarship at this time (as for the monastic schools), the aim was to absorb as much as possible from biblical and Talmudic literature, and to identify bona fide post-Talmudic customs, without searching for or relating in a consistent way to contradictions or comparative questions. This is clearly seen in the halakhic compendia that were produced in this period, such as *Ma'aseh ha-Geonim*, and in the so-called *sifrut de-Bei Rashi*, and perhaps even within Rashi's Talmudic and biblical commentaries themselves.⁵³ Talmudic studies in the pre-Crusade period were centered in two main *yeshivot*, Mainz and Worms. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, these academies, similar to the monasteries, were identified by their location and not on the basis of the teachers who taught there or the figures who headed them. Although the Rhineland academies of the eleventh century were few in number, they were closely tied to their communities. Academy heads (*roshei yeshivah*) came and went, but the community and its academy remained. For a lengthy period, the *yeshivot* of Mainz and Worms were the centers of learning and custom, to which both students and new teachers gravitated.⁵⁴

A suggestive example of the significance of the academy and its locale over and above the presence of a particular rabbinic scholar or master can be seen

52 See Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 42–56, 71, 102–105, 141–142; Clanchy, *Abelard*, 7–9, 35–37, 40, 216, 244; Giles Constable, “Renewal and Reform in Religious Life,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Benson and Constable, 59–60; Classen, “*Res Gestae*,” 404–407; Jean Leclercq, “The Renewal of Theology,” in *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, 71, 77–87; J. Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, 41–44, 61–62; Southern, *Scholastic Humanism*, 225–228; and Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1109–110.

53 See H. Soloveitchik, “Three Themes in the *Sefer Hasidim*,” 342–343, 348–349.

54 See my *Jewish Education and Society in the High Middle Ages*, 57–59.

in regard to a question that was asked in Mainz ca. 1000 regarding the proper place during the prayer service for a circumcision that was to be performed on Rosh ha-Shanah: Should it occur at the end of the prayers or after the Torah reading, prior to the blowing of the *shofar*? The question was posed to the “holy scholars of the city,” including Rabbenu Gershom b. Judah (d. 1028), R. Simeon b. Isaac *ha-Gadol*, and R. Judah *ha-Kohen*. According to the textual source for this episode, however, “the remainder of the holy academy” (*sh-’ar bnei ha-yeshivah ha-qedoshah*) was also queried. A number of the rabbinic teachers and students who were present disagreed with the view of the majority, which Rabbenu Gershom supported, and Rabbenu Gershom was compelled to explain and prove this position. Even though Rabbenu Gershom was considered to be the most outstanding scholar at Mainz in his day, the students are not referred to as the members of the *yeshivah* of Rabbenu Gershom or as the students of Rabbenu Gershom but rather as the students of the “holy academy at Mainz,” who were able and entitled to voice their opinions.⁵⁵

Similarly, we now know that the surviving so-called commentaries of Rabbenu Gershom on several tractates of the Talmud are, in reality, *perushei Magen* that were written and composed in layers over several generations in Mainz during the eleventh century, even for a period of many years after the death of Rabbenu Gershom.⁵⁶ The locale and *yeshivah* of Mainz was the central educational entity in these endeavors, over and above the presence of any individual teacher, including Rabbenu Gershom.⁵⁷

By the second quarter of the twelfth century, with the beginning of the Tosafist enterprise, these educational entities, approaches, and values began to change. The dialectical method, which had been used in a limited way in only one academy in the Rhineland (Worms) toward the end of the eleventh

55 See *Sefer Or Zarua*, pt. 2, sec. 275; and the annotated text and parallel sources in *Teshuvot Rabbenu Gershom*, ed. S. Eidelberg (New York, NY: Yeshivah University, 1955), 98–100. See also *Arukh ha-Shalem*, ed. A. Kohut (Jerusalem: Makor, 1968), vol. 1, editor’s introduction, xi–xii (in Hebrew); Avraham Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz: Their Lives, Leadership, and Works (900–1096)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 120 (in Hebrew); I. A. Agus, “Rabbinic Scholarship in Northern Europe,” in *World History of the Jewish People: The Dark Ages*, ed. C. Roth (Ramat Gan: Massada Press, 1966), 193–194; *Teshuvot u-Pesaqim*, ed. E. Kupfer (Jerusalem: Mekize Nirdamim, 1973), 314–315 (in Hebrew); and I. Ta-Shma, “Halakhah, Minhag u-Massoret be-Yahadut Ashkenaz ba-Me’ot ha-Yod Alef/ Yod Bet,” *Sidra* 3 (1987): 137–138 (in Hebrew).

56 See, e.g., Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz*, 165–174, and Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1:35–40.

57 On the centrality and significance of customs (*minhagim*) in the *yeshivot* of the pre-Crusade period, see, e.g., Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz*, 412–415.

century, becomes the dominant approach in the various Tosafist study halls that develop. Similarly, the reputations and presence of leading Tosafists themselves, rather than the traditions, customs, and name of a particular academy or locale, begin to draw students from Germany to northern France and back.⁵⁸ A phrase from a liturgical poem (*reshut*) composed for the Sabbath after a wedding by Rashi's (and R. Meir b. Samuel's) teacher at Worms, R. Isaac b. Eliezer ha-Levi (d. ca. 1080), may provide a literary snapshot of the incipient shift from the older, location-based institutions to the newer contexts of dialectical Talmudic instruction, in which the teachers were seen as the most prominent element: "from those who study nights and days . . . they are coming from city to city, to study from the mouths of rabbinic scholars."⁵⁹ It is also worth remembering that in Germany during the Tosafist period, where the dialectical method was a bit more restrained, the rabbinic court was the preferred venue for rabbinic interaction and tutorial power, rather than the academy.⁶⁰

In the Tosafist period, a city or town had an important, high-level academy only when a particular Tosafist or other rabbinic scholar was there. Students wandered from the study hall of one leading scholar to the study hall of another, and the rabbinic scholars themselves occasionally changed locales.⁶¹ Thus, for example, we hear nothing about the academy or study hall in Ramerupt or Troyes once Rabbenu Tam had departed. When a situation comparable to the one in Mainz ca. 1000 (described above) arose involving Riḏba of Dampierre (d. 1210) and his colleagues and students (*ha-ḥaverim ve-talmidim*), Riḏba took immediate charge of the situation. His decision was open to discussion only after the fact (at which point it emerged that Riḏba could not parry all of the

58 This was the case, for example, with the students of Rabbenu Tam who came from Regensburg and returned there following their studies. See, e.g., R. Reiner, "Rabbenu Tam: Rabbotav (ha-Sarefatim) ve-Talmidav Bnei Ashkenaz" (MA thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1997) (in Hebrew), 79–95.

59 For the fuller passage (on the basis of MS Parma 586, fol. 94v), see Grossman, *The Early Sages of Ashkenaz*, 292.

60 See Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 1:89–92; 2:116–117; and my "Religious Leadership during the Tosafist Period: Between the Academy and the Rabbinic Court," *Jewish Religious Leadership*, ed. J. Wertheimer (New York, NY: JTS Press, 2004), 265–305.

61 See, e.g., Mordechai Breuer, "Nedudei Talmidim ve-Ḥakhamim—Aqdamot le-Pereq mi-Toledot ha-Yeshivot," *Tarbut ve-Ḥevrah be-Toledot Yisra'el Bimei ha-Benayim*, ed. R. Bonfil et al. (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1989), 445–468 (in Hebrew); Mordechai Breuer, *Ohalei Torah* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2004), 431–441; my *Jewish Education and Society*, 49–52; and Rashi's commentary to the Song of Songs, 5:16 (in Judah Rosenthal, "Perush Rashi 'al Shir ha-Sirim," *Jubilee Volume for S. K. Mirsky*, ed. S. Bernstein and G. Churgin (New York, NY: Va'ad ha-Yovel, 1958), 169) (in Hebrew).

questions that were raised).⁶² Moreover, the Talmudic comments that were produced in the academies of the Tosafists were referred to as the commentary of Rabbenu Tam or the *Tosafot* of Ri. Even though students were often responsible for copying and preserving the lectures or *novellae* of their teachers, the written forms of *Tosafot* are always referred to as the *Tosafot* of R. so and so, the teacher. They are never referred to as the *Tosafot* of study hall or academy X, in the place or city of Y.⁶³

Parallel Critiques

In addition, the strong critique of *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* against *pilpul* (dialectic) in the style of the Tosafists—especially as it appears to have developed in northern France—and the concomitant suggestion that the more monochromatic method of halakhic study prevalent in the Rhineland during the pre-Crusade period was more appropriate for most students, is similar in many respects to the critique of Rupert of Deutz and others against Christian dialectic. Especially irksome to these critics and to *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* as well was the inflated name or reputation that could easily be acquired by someone who was facile in presenting distinctions and intellectual manipulations. Additionally, there was great concern for the misguided conclusions (theological and dogmatic for the Christians, halakhic for the German Pietists) that might emerge from these distinctions, results that stood in opposition to the modesty that was to be expected from someone who excelled in religious and spiritual studies.⁶⁴ As was the case for Rupert, the mystical outlook of the German Pietists played a strong role in their view. They believed that their mystical

62 See Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:264; I. Twersky's review of Urbach, in *Tarbiz* 6 (1957): 226 (= I. Twersky, *Studies in Jewish Law and Philosophy* (New York, NY: Ktav, 1982), Hebrew section, 53) (in Hebrew); and my *Jewish Education and Society*, 59–60.

63 The so-called *Tosafot Shants* to various Talmudic tractates do not weaken my argument. Rather, this is an abbreviated term for the *Tosafot* that were composed by R. Samson b. Abraham (Rash) of Sens, the rabbinic scholar who made Sens a recognized Tosafist locale. See Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:22:24, 272, 2:584–585; and Ta-Shma, *Ha-Sifrut ha-Parshanit la-Talmud*, 2:101–107, 119–120.

64 See my "Progress and Tradition in Medieval Ashkenaz," 287–315; and above, n. 27. On Rupert's intense anti-Jewish formulations throughout his corpus, see, e.g., Anna Abulafia, "The Ideology of Reform and Changing Ideas Concerning Jews in the Works of Rupert of Deutz and Hermannus Quondam Iudeus," *Jewish History* 7 (1993): 44–50; and Jeremy Cohen, *Living Letters of the Law* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), 271–272.

forebears in Mainz, the members of the Qalonymus family and others, had a more salutary approach to Torah study and its limits. Interestingly, however, and again like Rupert, the “reactionary” exegesis of the German Pietists was often considered in its own way to be highly innovative at the same time, albeit in a different direction.

In northern France as well, and mirroring perhaps the concerns of Bernard of Clairvaux, R. Elijah b. Judah of Paris typically favored a less expansive form of logic than Rabbenu Tam did, as can be seen in several of the halakhic disputes between them. And, like Bernard, R. Elijah was also associated with mystical study.⁶⁵ R. Elijah was connected to R. Meshullam of Melun, a spirited antagonist of Rabbenu Tam in matters of halakhic proofs and the justification of popular customs, who hailed originally from Narbonne but reached northern France no later than 1130. R. Elijah and R. Meshullam sat together for a time on the rabbinic court in Paris,⁶⁶ and R. Meshullam appealed to R. Elijah and to other members of the rabbinical court in Paris for guidance and support in his confrontations with Rabbenu Tam. R. Meshullam considered R. Elijah's piety and modesty to be such that “access to the Almighty cannot be denied to the people of Israel owing to his existence.”⁶⁷

Rabbenu Tam recognized the unusual spiritual qualities of R. Elijah of Paris, and on one occasion, he went along with R. Elijah (and against his own proclivities) in permitting the magical adjuration of a Divine name, which would then allow the practitioner to raise the spirit of a deceased child so that his father, who was not present at the time of the child's death, might see him one last time.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Rabbenu Tam firmly rejected the differing ritual customs that R. Meshullam and R. Elijah proposed and apparently implemented.⁶⁹ As with the conflicts between Abelard and Bernard (especially in regard to the notion of negative theology),⁷⁰ the conclusions that were challenged by

65 See Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 122–123; R. Reiner, “Rabbenu Tam u-Bnei Doro: Qesharim, Hashpa'ot ve-Darkei Limmudo ba-Talmud” (PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, 2002) 70–84; and cf. my *Jewish Education and Society*, 28–29.

66 See *Sefer ha-Yashar (heleq ha-teshuvot)*, ed. S. Rosenthal (Berlin: Defus T. H. Ittşkoyski, 1898), 24, 51 (in Hebrew).

67 See *Sefer ha-Yashar*, ed. Rosenthal, 92, cited in Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:76.

68 See Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:123; and my *Peering through the Lattices*, 170–171.

69 Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 1:79, 122. Cf. my “Rabbinic Authority and the Right to Open an Academy in Medieval Ashkenaz,” *Michael* 12 (1991): 239–240. Interestingly, although Talmudic interpretations by R. Elijah are cited within northern French *Tosafot*, his halakhic rulings and responses are cited mostly by German rabbinic authorities throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Urbach, *The Tosafists*, 123–124.

70 See Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 105.

Rabbenu Tam had more to do with issues of reasoning and textual interpretation than with lapses in or abject errors of religious doctrine per se.⁷¹

All of these phenomena support and further establish the correlation between the cathedral school masters in northern Europe during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the Tosafist enterprise. Although a number of the commonalities that have been identified may best be attributed more broadly to *zeitgeist*, the specific patterns and manifestations that have been discussed suggest that a more discreet series of interactions may have been occurring.⁷² If we had from an earlier period additional explicit texts like the passage in *Sefer Hasidim*, which clearly points to Jewish awareness of Christian dialectic and its methods, our case would be airtight. Nonetheless, neither the large amount of circumstantial evidence and distinct similarities that has been assembled, nor the clear sequence of the various events and trends noted, can be explained by mere coincidence, and both support the possibility of Jewish awareness of Christian methods. Certainly oral communication between Tosafists and Christian scholars was surely not difficult to imagine.⁷³

71 See R. Reiner, "Parshanut ve-Halakhah: 'Iyyun me-Ḥadash be-Polmos Rabbenu Meshullam ve-Rabbenu Tam," *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri* 21 (1998–2000): 207–239 (in Hebrew); and Reiner, "Rabbenu Tam u-Bnei Doro," 283–321. In light of the focus of Tosafist enterprise on resolving contradictions between divergent Talmudic texts and between rabbinic texts and a number of Ashkenazic customs, it is interesting to note that Abelard wrote to Bernard on the subject of discrepancies between the Gospels, and the role and status of custom. This follows on the heels of a formulation by Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) that custom establishes an "ought" (i.e., "one ought to do this by custom"). See Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux*, 141.

72 For additional discussion of aspects of these issues, see my *The Intellectual History and Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 84–110.

73 I owe this formulation to Harvey Hames, *Like Angel on Jacob's Ladder: Abraham Abulafia, the Franciscans and Joachimism* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2007), 104 and 151 (n. 7).