

Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations

A peer-reviewed e-journal of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations

Published by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College

*The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Jewish Community*¹

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Volume 6 (2011)

<http://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/scjr>

¹ I humbly dedicate this article to the beloved memory of Michael Signer, בטוב תלין נפשו. I delivered an earlier version to the "Society for the Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages," an organization to which Michael introduced me, at the International Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May, 2009. I am grateful to my teacher, Professor Edward L. Greenstein, who read a subsequent draft; his valuable suggestions greatly improved the final version. I also wish to express thanks to the anonymous readers whose critique challenged me to better prepare this article for publication.

In 2001, John Van Engen published an essay entitled "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community." In Van Engen's words, Ralph's voluminous commentary, composed and published in the mid-twelfth century, aimed at "refuting Jewish arguments" about Leviticus and the nature of the levitical law, particularly as these Jewish arguments might influence young Christian clerics who were "fascinated and troubled by a close reading of the biblical text."² Van Engen portrays Ralph as facing a Christian monastic community that was no longer satisfied with patristic florilegia and early medieval commentaries on Leviticus that offered "christocentric" or moralistic interpretations but did not offer a systemic accounting of this "Old Testament" book that made sense for the community as Christian scripture. Moreover, Ralph's community was well-aware that their Jewish neighbors did read Leviticus, a mostly legal book, as central to their own sense of self-expression—and this posed a significant challenge to young and generally uneducated Christian clerics who might otherwise be influenced or even persuaded by Jewish arguments. Thus, Ralph set out to provide a thorough and comprehensive commentary that would take account of and refute Jewish interpretations, and enable Christians to incorporate Leviticus into their own sense of community through identification with Scripture. As Van Engen understands it:

Jews claimed, as Ralph heard it, to keep faith with and submit themselves to biblical law.³ That resonated for

² John Van Engen, "Ralph of Flaix: the Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community," in Michael A Signer, and John Van Engen (eds.), *Jews and Christians in Twelfth-Century Europe* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 159. For an earlier study of this commentary, see Beryl Smalley, "Ralph of Flaix on Leviticus," *Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medievale* 35 (1968): 35-82.; see also Beryl Smalley, "An Early 12th Century Commentary on Leviticus," *Recherches de Theologie Ancienne et Medievale* 36 (1969): pp. 78–99.

³ Van Engen refers his readers at this point to his note 15, p. 167.

him in a double sense: it was an assertion both that they rightly understood and kept levitical law, and that they enjoyed God's unique sanction for their "law," their community practices.⁴

In my opinion, Van Engen has interpreted Jewish attitudes correctly: from antiquity through the Middle Ages and into modern times, Jews have claimed that their observance of the specific injunctions and precepts of the Torah (as interpreted by the rabbinic sages, as we shall see) represent nothing less than the unbroken covenant that the people of Israel have enjoyed with God since the revelation on Mount Sinai. Jews have maintained this belief about Leviticus as much as about any other section of the Torah, despite the book's large number of commandments and practices relating to the (destroyed) Temple, such as sacrifices and purity laws.

This essay will examine the ways that three medieval rabbinic commentaries on Leviticus show evidence for this interaction, those of Rashi (d. 1105), Rashbam (1085–c.1174) and R. Joseph Bekhor Shor (mid-to-late 12th century). Rashi demands our attention, not only because of the excellence of his commentary and because it represents the earliest northern French expression of the role Leviticus played in the study-life of the Jewish community, but also because of the pervasive influence it had on all medieval (and modern) Jewish exegetes. Rashbam, Rashi's grandson, represents the pinnacle of northern French rabbinic commentaries devoted exclusively to *peshat*, or "contextual," approaches to biblical literature. Bekhor Shor, perhaps a student of Rashbam but most assuredly a disciple of Rashbam's younger brother (R. Jacob, known as "Rabbenu Tam"), represents the latest expression of northern French *peshat* exegesis whose authorship is undisputed. (There is a body of anonymous exegesis produced by Jewish

⁴ Van Engen, 152.

commentators in the 13th century, whose work will not be considered here.) Examining the “close reading” through which these three exegetes interpreted specific biblical texts will enable us to determine whether or not the rabbinic exegetes presented what might be considered as “The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Jewish Community” and as such conveyed what may have been the types of arguments with which Ralph was in conversation. Please note, however, that I am not attempting to demonstrate a direct correspondence between specific Jewish and Christian exegetes, nor am I claiming that such a one-to-one relationship existed. What the evidence indicates—in both Van Engen’s article and my own—is that the content and form of 12th century Jewish and Christian biblical exegesis bespeak a type of conversation among those using the literary genre of “commentary writing,” and that it is possible to gain an understanding of the contours of that conversation through analysis of the commentaries they wrote.⁵

Before beginning, however, we must offer a caveat. It

⁵ It is, of course, also possible (and perhaps more straightforward) to gain an insight into the nature of the “conversation” through examination of the more overtly “polemical literature” written by both Jews and Christians in the High Middle Ages. However, we would do well to remember that the distinction between “exegetical” and “polemical” literature may be more of a modern distinction than medieval. With that caveat in mind, see Gilbert Dahan, *The Christian Polemic Against the Jews in the Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998); David Berger, “Mission to the Jews and Jewish-Christian Contacts in the Polemical Literature of the High Middle Ages,” *The American Historical Review* 91:3 (1986): 576–91; Avraham Grossman, “The Jewish-Christian Polemic and Jewish Biblical Exegesis in Twelfth Century France (on the Attitude of R. Joseph Kara to Polemic) [Hebrew],” *Zion* 51:1 (1986): 29–60; idem, “The Commentary of Rashi on Psalms and the Jewish-Christian Polemic [Hebrew],” in *Studies in Bible and Education Presented to Professor Moshe Ahrend*, ed. Dov Rappel (Jerusalem: Touro College, 1996), 59–74; Sara Japhet, “Exegesis and Polemic in Rashbam’s Commentary on the Song of Songs,” in *Jewish Biblical Interpretation and Cultural Exchange: Comparative Exegesis in Context*, ed. Natalie Dohrmann and David Stern (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 182-95, 304-310 (notes).

would seem unnecessary to demonstrate that the Book of Leviticus could be “interpreted as Jewish community.” Any law of Leviticus that still figures as the source for rabbinic *halakha* (post-biblical Jewish law) would of course be “interpreted as Jewish community”—and there are dozens of *halakhot*, Jewish legal practices, based on Leviticus! Whether one considers the honored central position that the book occupies in the Torah, or its pride of place as the first text taught to Jewish children according to traditional rabbinic lore,⁶ it could well be argued that the answer is so obviously “yes” that any effort to demonstrate it would be beside the point.

However, what we are interested in is not a demonstration of “Leviticus as Jewish Community” in the abstract, but in the polemical dialogue that existed between Jews and Christians in the 12th century. In other words, in what ways might medieval Jewish exegetes have advanced arguments in their commentaries that were intended to sustain the Jewish community in their observances and belief structures against the increasing tide of Christian hegemony?⁷ To what degree were

⁶ See Leviticus Rabba 7:3; in Mordecai Margulies, *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah: a Critical Edition Based on Manuscripts and Genizah Fragments With Variants and Notes* (New York and Jerusalem: The Maxwell Abbell Publication Fund; The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1993), I:156. For an English translation, see Harry Freedman and Maurice Simon, *Midrash Rabbah* (London, Soncino Press: 1961), III, 95. For further information about this rabbinic source, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Scripture: The Evidence of Leviticus Rabbah* (Chicago Studies in the History of Judaism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

⁷ The growing aggressiveness of the Church in establishing its own prerogatives was manifested between the 10th–13th centuries not only against the Jews and Judaism but also within European Christendom and against its foreign opponents. For example, the long struggle over investiture spanned many years and only ceased in a manner of speaking with the Concordat of Worms (1122); the first formal Inquisition was established to fight heresy within the Catholic Church in 1184; and beginning in 1096 and continuing for centuries a series of Crusades were launched both against Muslims and Eastern Christians. However, certainly by the 12th century if not earlier, Eu-

rabbinic exegetes responding to Christian claims that threatened Jewish ownership of the meaning of Scripture and/or countered the positive nature of God's continued, covenantal relationship with the Jewish people?

Michael Signer addressed these issues in his article that appeared with Van Engen's in their co-edited volume.⁸ Most of the specific comments that Signer adduced were Rashi's initial glosses to each of the Torah's five books.⁹ Let us, therefore, begin with a review of Rashi's comment on Leviticus 1:1:

ויקרא אל משה: לכל דברות ולכל אמירות ולכל ציוויים קדמה קריאה, לשון חיבה, לשון שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו, שנאמר: *ויקרא זה אל זה*. אבל לנביאי אומות העולם נגלה עליהן בלשון עראי, בלשון טומאה, שנאמר: *ויקר אלהים אל בלעם*.

And he called to Moses: For all speech-acts and for all sayings and for all commands,¹⁰ a

rope was at least nominally and institutionally Christian; only the Jews remained as "hold outs" against a Europe that came to consider itself "Christendom." It is only natural that during this period we see redoubled Christian efforts to convert the Jews, and this aggressiveness is to be seen both in such trends as the establishment of the mendicant orders (particularly the Dominicans) and eventually in the adoption of strategies of trials, disputations, and other practices of the 13th century and beyond that further marginalized and ultimately demonized the Jewish people. See, e.g., Dominique Iogna-Prat, *Order & Exclusion: Cluny and Christendom Face Heresy, Judaism, and Islam (1000-1150). Conjunctions of Religion & Power in the Medieval Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

⁸ Michael A Signer, "God's Love for Israel: Apologetic and Hermeneutical Strategies in Twelfth-Century Biblical Exegesis," in *Jews and Christians in Twelfth Century Europe*, ed. Michael A Signer, and John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 123–149.

⁹ I have treated these comments, and others, in my article, "Rashi's Introductions to His Biblical Commentaries," in *Shai Le-Sara Japhet: Studies in the Bible, Its Exegesis and Its Language*, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher et al. (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 2007), 219*–41*.

¹⁰ The Hebrew term here is not the familiar *mitzvot*, "commands," but, curious-

"calling" came first, the language of affection, the language which the ministering angels use, as it is said: *And one called to another* (Isaiah 6:3). But with regard to the gentile prophets, God is revealed to them in the language of happenstance and defilement, as it is said: *And God happened [to appear] to Balaam* (Numbers 23:4; see also 23:16).¹¹

In this comment, Rashi understands God's "calling" to Moses (Hebrew root ק-ר-א) to self-evidently connote God's affection for the Jewish people. Rashi bases this on earlier midrashic use of Scriptural prooftexts.¹² However, as Rashi interprets this, the opening verse of Leviticus contains an additional polemical aspect. It contrasts God's loving call to Israelite prophets (here, Moses), to God's call to gentile prophets, which he associates with ritual defilement. When God makes God's own self manifest to Balaam, the Torah apparently employs the root ק-ר-א, meaning, "to happen [to do something]," a verb that the Rabbis use to refer to the ritual impurity of nocturnal sexual

ly, *tzivuyyim*, literally "commandings."

¹¹ For a different translation of this text, see Michael A Signer, "God's Love for Israel: Apologetic and Hermeneutical Strategies in Twelfth-Century Biblical Exegesis," 13. My convention for the citation of rabbinic texts is to present the biblical text that the exegete is glossing in bold-faced type; the commentary itself in regular font; and any biblical verses cited by the commentator in italics.

¹² See my, "Rashi's Introductions," *Shai Le-Sara Japhet*, 299–300. There, 299, n. 27, I point out that in this example, Rashi adopts the term לשון חיבה, "(this is) affectionate language" from its midrashic context in Lev. Rab. 2:8 (where it expounds the word "man" in Leviticus 1:2) and applies it instead to the significance of God's "calling out" to Moses before "speaking" to him in Leviticus 1:1, which he has learned from Sifra. Of course, the ancient rabbis made a connection between the verb ק-ר-א and the idea of affection in other contexts, as well; see the discussion in Betsal'el Mayani, et al., *Pentateuch, With Rashi Hashalem* (Jerusalem: Ariel United Israel Institutes, 1986), 4:2–5, nn. 1–2.

emissions.¹³ Perhaps the term may as well be understood to have connotations of “hostility” or “disloyalty,” as the Biblical Hebrew noun קרי is found repeatedly with those meanings in such texts as Leviticus 26. Signer indicates that the significance of Rashi’s citation of Numbers 23:4 is even more “pointed towards disparaging Christianity, since Balaam (the speaker in the verse) was often utilized by the Rabbis as a cipher for Jesus.”¹⁴ Thus, Rashi has guided his readers towards considering Leviticus as an example of God’s continued loving kindness towards Israel and simultaneously of God’s disparagement of a gentile nation that — especially if Signer’s inference is on the right track — considers its “prophetic” understanding of Scripture to be primary.

Another verse has long been considered to contain teaching central to at least a large section of the book of Leviticus. Since antiquity, rabbinic sages had approached Leviticus 19 as containing, like the Decalogue, the central principles of Judaism.¹⁵ In his brief comment on Leviticus 19:2 (דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עֵדֻת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדָשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, “Speak to the entire community of the Children of Israel, and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the LORD your God, am holy”), Rashi pithily reflects that ancient understanding:

¹³ See Rashi on Numbers 23:4. There, concerning the biblical expression ויקר, “(God) encountered (Balaam),” he comments: לשון גנאי לשון טומאת קרי (“this is) the language of disgrace, the language of the impurity of a sexual discharge...”

¹⁴ Signer (2001), 137. There, Signer cites Judith Reesa Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition*, Brown Judaic Studies; no. 47 (Chico, Calif: Scholars Press, 1983) as his source.

¹⁵ E.g., see R. Aqiba’s celebrated claim that Leviticus 19:8 (“You should love your neighbor as yourself”) contained “the great principle of the Torah”; *Sifra*, *ad. loc.* See also *y. Ned.9:4*; *Gen. Rab. 24:7*, and Rashi, *ad. loc.*

דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל: מלמד שנאמרה פרשה זו בהקהל, מפני שרוב גופי תורה תלויין בה.

Speak to the whole assembly of the Children of Israel: This teaches us that this section was proclaimed in full assembly because most of the fundamental teachings of the Torah are dependent on it.¹⁶

The word Rashi employs here (הקהל), that I have translated as “in full assembly,” is actually a technical, rabbinic term. It refers to the biblically-ordained rite of reading the Torah aloud once every seven years, during the time when the people are gathered at the Temple during the fall Sukkot festival.¹⁷ Like the ancient midrash, Rashi wants to know why God did not simply instruct Moses to convey God’s instructions to בני ישראל, the “Children of Israel”; why did God elaborate by sending that Moses should speak אל כל עדת בני ישראל, “to the entire congregation of the Children of Israel.” Rashi’s answer, that this section of Leviticus contains “the fundamental teachings of the Torah,” speaks to its importance not just with regard to what modern scholarship calls “the Holiness Code” (i.e., Leviticus 17–26), but to the entire Five Books of Moses. Leviticus Rabbah, a classic rabbinic midrash, holds that Leviticus 19 contains the essence of the Decalogue—the only biblical “commandments” viewed as still in force by the Christian Church. However, Rashi prefers to up the ante, as it were, and cites Sifre, a different midrash, that would have us understand that the chapter encompasses the entire Torah. In particular, Rashi states that the chapter was read aloud to the entire people, in solemn assembly, just as Deuteronomy commanded vis-à-vis the entire Torah.¹⁸ The Jewish community that Rashi

¹⁶ Or: “contained in it.” See *Sifra*; Lev. R 24.

¹⁷ See Deuteronomy 31:10–13.

¹⁸ For the assertion that Leviticus 19 contains the essence of the Decalogue, see R. Levi’s statement in Leviticus Rabbah 24:5. For the claim that the chap-

addressed confronted a Christian Church that functionally did not much value the Five Books of Moses beyond the narratives of Genesis and the so-called “Ten Commandments.”¹⁹ By connecting this passage to the Sinai revelation in Exodus, on the one hand, and to Deuteronomy’s command that Israel read the whole Torah, on the other, Rashi emphasizes the continued, essential nature of Leviticus and the entirety of Torah in Jewish perspective.

Similarly, Rashi addresses the text of Leviticus 25:1 (likewise part of the Holiness Code), with a famous rabbinic question that addresses the alleged anomalous nature of the verse:

בהר סיני: מה ענין שמיטה אצל הר סיני? והלא כל המצות נאמרו מסיני?

On Mount Sinai: For what reason is the sabbatical year mentioned specifically with regard to Mount Sinai?

His answer affirms the significance of its message:

אלא מה שמיטה נאמרו כללותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני, אף כל נאמרו כללותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני; כך שניה בת"כ. ונראה לי שכן פירושה: לפי שלא מצינו שמיטת קרקעות שנשנית

ter encompasses not only that but the entire Torah, see likewise Leviticus Rabbah 24:5 and Sifra on Leviticus 19:1; again, it is the latter midrash that Rashi cites in his comment on the verse.

¹⁹ The term “Ten Commandments” itself expresses an essentially Christian and not a Jewish idea, as though they are the only ones worth keeping, as opposed to the rabbinic understanding that the Torah contains “613 commandments.” We do well to remember that the rabbis called them not the “Ten Commandments” but the עשרת הדברות, literally “the ten words” (or statements/proclamations); this rabbinic Hebrew phrase translates the biblical Hebrew of such texts as Exodus 34:28 (עשרת הדברים). Thus, the term “Decalogue” (from the Greek, *deka logos*, or “ten words”) is a more accurate English representation of the Jewish understanding.

בערבות מואב במשנה תורה, למדנו שכללותיה ופירושה ופרטותיה כלן נאמרו מסיני, ובא הכתוב ולמד כאן על כל דבור שנדבר למשה שמסיני היו כלם, כללותיה ודקדוקיה, וחזרו ונשנו בערבות מואב.

Were not all of the commandments stated on Sinai?! Rather (the juxtaposition between the term “sabbatical year” and the words “on Mount Sinai” teaches) that just as both the general rules and details of the sabbatical year were stated at Sinai, so too were the general rules and details of all of the commandments stated at Sinai. Thus it was taught in Sifra,²⁰ and it seems to me that this is its explanation: Since we do not find that the sabbatical release of lands was repeated in the Plains of Moab, in Deuteronomy (15:1–2), we learn that its general rules, explanations and details were all stated at Sinai. And the text has come and taught here concerning all of the statements that were spoken to Moses, that they were all from Sinai, both generalities and details, and they were repeated and taught in the Plains of Moab.

First, let us unpack this comment. The rabbinic question that Rashi reiterates is why would the Torah go out of its way to state that the law of the sabbatical year was given “at Mount Sinai” when Leviticus 1:1 already stated that the laws in the book were revealed in the Tent of Meeting—while Israel was still at Sinai. The Israelites do not depart from Mount Sinai until Numbers 10:11. Moreover, Leviticus concludes by stating that the laws contained in the book were revealed at Mount Sinai.²¹ So what is the special significance of the mention of “Mount

²⁰ Sifra 1:1.

²¹ See Leviticus 26:46 as well as the final verse of the book’s “appendix,” Leviticus 27:34.

Sinai” in Leviticus 25:1? Rashi’s reply is rooted in the eighth of the Rabbi Ishmael’s thirteen exegetical principles by which the Torah may be expounded²²: If anything included in a general proposition is made also the subject of a special statement, it is intended that what is thus predicated upon it shall apply also to everything included in the general proposition. What then is stated about the sabbatical year? That God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai giving him not alone its main provisions but also supplying their elaboration—presumably found in the Oral Torah that the rabbis considered was revealed to Moses along with the Written Torah. If it is true about the sabbatical year, goes the rabbinic reasoning, so too must it be the case regarding all of the commandments.²³

Lest we get lost amidst the trees, what is the “forest” that we are seeking to find in this comment? Here, Rashi returns to a theme that he has emphasized elsewhere in his commentary.²⁴ Where Christian tradition holds that only the Ten Commandments, and the Bible’s ethical content, are still in effect, none of the ceremonial or ritual biblical commandments are still in force; certainly Christianity would aver that none of the rabbinic traditions about biblical

²² See the “Baraita de-Rabbi Ishmael” with which Sifra begins; Louis Finkelstein, *Sifra on Leviticus* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1983), II, 3–4 (the midrashic illustration of the exegetical principles are found in the continuation, 5–9).

²³ The remainder of Rashi’s comment addresses the complementary nature of Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15:1–2: the first text teaches the sabbatical year regarding fields, whereas the second one teaches the sabbatical release of debts.

²⁴ See also Rashi’s comment on Exodus 21:1, where he similarly teaches that not just the Ten Commandments but all of the laws following Exodus 20 (thus including virtually all of the Torah’s legal material), including their exposition in the Oral Torah, were all revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai. See my fuller treatment of this text in the excursus to my article, “Rashi’s Introductions to His Biblical Commentaries,” 238*–241*.

commandments were ever valid. Rashi demonstrates that Judaism (properly understood!) regards all of the Torah’s provisions—whether general or specific in nature, and whether directly of Sinai origin (“Written Torah”) or indirectly stated and understood by proper rabbinic authority (“Oral Torah”)—as of continuing significance and binding.

While it is true that Rashi’s claims are primarily theological and legal, it is nonetheless true as well that his comments point to social and communal implications, as the three comments we have examined thus far indicate. In his gloss on Leviticus 1:1, Rashi stressed what he considered to be the unique and loving relationship of God to Israel, as contrasted with that between God and the gentile nations; at Leviticus 19:1, Rashi stressed that the verse—standing not only in the place of the Decalogue but in essence for the entire Torah—addressed the entire nation of Israel in solemn assembly; on Leviticus 25:1 Rashi taught that all of the “generalities and details” of the revelation at Sinai covenant (constituting, in essence, the totality of rabbinic Judaism) continued through their reiteration on the Plains of Moab and, by implication, up to and including Rashi’s own generation. All three insights (God’s love for Israel; the entirety of the nation being addressed by God; the comprehensive regimen of rabbinic ordinances supposed to be practiced by the community being nothing less than the continuation of the active covenant that originated at Sinai) bespeak some of the most prominent hallmarks of Jewish communal self-image throughout the Middle Ages and certainly in the Jewish community of 12th century northern France.²⁵

²⁵ See, e.g., Salo Wittmayer Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York and London: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), V: 60–81. There Baron writes (p. 80), “Within that Jewish quarter Jewish law reigned supreme... [Jewish communal life] was hallowed by ancient custom and reinforced by legal sanctions which, everyone believed, were of divine origin.”

Let us turn to one final comment that illuminates the broader issue of the role of Leviticus in framing the Jewish communal self-concept. It is found in an unlikely context, the laws concerning sacrifice in Leviticus 2:13: וְכָל-קֶרְבַּן מִנְחֹתֶיךָ בְּמֶלַח: וְלֹא תִשְׁכַּח מִלַּח בְּרִית אֱלֹהֶיךָ מֵעַל מִנְחֹתֶיךָ עַל כָּל-קֶרְבְּנֶיךָ תִּקְרִיב מֶלַח, "You shall season your every offering of meal with salt; you shall not omit from your meal offering the salt of your covenant with God; with all your offerings you must offer salt." R. Joseph Bekhor Shor, late in the 12th century, finds in this verse not only a rite of the ancient Temple but also a very practical, reasonable requirement—and one that helps him establish the eternal and grand purpose of the commandments in connecting God and Israel:

מלח ברית אלהיך: מלח דבר המתקיים, לפיכך צוה הקב"ה להקריב במנחות ובקרבנות, להראות שהקרבנות ברית קיים לעולם לכפרה. וכבר פירשו נ, הכל יודעים כי הקב"ה אינו צריך לא לריח ולא לשום הקרבה, אלא לזכות בהם את ישראל... וכן כל המצות אין הקב"ה צריך, אלא לזכות את ישראל, כמו שאמרו רבותינו: רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצות.

The salt of your covenant with God: Salt is a preservative,²⁶ therefore the Holy One commanded to sacrifice grain and animal offerings with it, to demonstrate that the sacrifices (function as) an enduring, eternal covenant for atonement. And (the rabbis) have already explained (it) so: all know that the Holy One requires neither aroma nor any type of sacrifice, but rather (has commanded the sacrifices) for the purposes of granting merit through them to Israel... And so too all of the commandments, God does need them, but wants to grant merit to Israel. This is as our rabbis have said: the Holy

²⁶ Literally, "salt is a thing that endures."

One wanted to grant merit to Israel, therefore did He increase for them Torah and commandments.

It is hard to imagine a more direct response to Christian claims that Israel's covenant with God is no longer in effect. Not only does Torah stand over and above Christ as the source of human "merit," but Bekhor Shor also finds an enduring role for the rites of the ancient sacrificial service, extrapolating from them to the enduring, continually practiced commandments. Bekhor Shor is, however, not speaking about the performance of the sacrificial rites which had not been practiced in his time for over a thousand years. He alludes to a concept that would be understood by any contemporary rabbinic Jew. The understanding that the *study* of all of the precepts, even those no longer in effect (such as biblical laws of sacrifice), grants merit equal to the performance of the rites themselves shaped the ongoing practices of his community.²⁷ What he *does* state explicitly is even more important. Israel receives merit for the performance of all Torah commandments; the more commandments there are to perform (including the *study* of those, like sacrifices, no longer observed), the more merit Israel can receive. Bekhor Shor's comment about "the granting of merit" thus refers to an idea deeply rooted in rabbinic culture.²⁸

²⁷ This idea is driven home in many rabbinic texts, e.g., *Lev. Rabbah* 7:3: אמר להם הקב"ה: הואיל ואתם מתעסקין בהן מעלה אני עליכם כאילו אתם מקריבין אותם. The Holy One said to them (i.e., to Israel): as long as you occupy yourselves in their study (i.e., the laws of sacrifice), I will consider it as though you have actually performed them." Indeed several rabbinic statements (e.g., *m. Peah* 1:1; *b. Shabbat* 127a) regarding the ultimate importance of Torah study (over and above the performance of the commandments) are included in many rabbinic liturgies intended for daily recitation.

²⁸ In the continuation of his comment (not cited above), Bekhor Shor specifies almsgiving as another commandment for which God grants merit to Israel. A comprehensive presentation of the role of "credit and debit terminology" for expressing ideas about "sin" and "merit," as these terms are employed in biblical, post-biblical and rabbinic literature, is found throughout Gary A. Anderson, *Sin : A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009). See in

Having established the macro issues concerning the overall role of Leviticus in the Jewish construction of community (God's love for Israel; the perception of a vibrant covenantal relationship with God, expressed through the practice of numerous laws and customs; that loyalty to this way of life was endowed with merit in God's eyes), especially insofar as these beliefs and practices radically differentiated the role the book occupied in Judaism from that played in Christianity, let us now turn to some of the micro issues where Jews and Christians dispute. For example, it is clear that biblical dietary laws in Leviticus 11 and the elaboration of these in rabbinic literature provided one of the main cultural and religious distinctions between Judaism and Christianity. Rashbam's comment on Leviticus 11:3 may be taken as one example that highlights the polemical nature that the exegesis of this chapter conveyed to these two communities:

...ולפי פשוטו של מקרא ותשובת המינים: כל הבהמות והחיות והעופות והדגים ומיני ארבה ושרצים שאסר הקב"ה לישראל מאוסים הם, ומקלקלים ומחממים את הגוף, ולפיכך נקראו טמאים. ואף רופאים מובהקים אומרים כן. ואף בתלמוד: גוים שאוכלים [שקצים] ורמשים חביל גופייהו.

...And according to the context of Scripture and as a response to the Christians: all of the beasts and animals²⁹ and fowl and fish and species of locust and crawling things that the Holy One forbade to Israel are disgusting, and destroy and heat up the body, and therefore are they called impure. Moreover, even expert physicians say so. And even in the Talmud (it is taught) gentiles who eat creepy crawling things—this heats up

particular Anderson's discussion beginning on p. 27 and 135–151.

²⁹ It is possible that Rashbam is making a distinction between domesticated animals and wild animals.

their bodies.³⁰

The gist of Rashbam's comment before this excerpt was to oppose Rashi's interpretation of the nature of the split hoof that defines animals whose flesh is fit for Israelite consumption.³¹ But it is clear from the continuation that Rashbam is aware of the Christian critique of the continued Jewish observance of these precepts. The operative indicator is the phrase תשובת המינים. I have translated this as "a response to the Christians" although in its original talmudic context the term מינים—which merely means "types"—probably meant "heretic" (or even "rebel").³² By the 12th century, though, it was understood as a reference to Christians.³³ Rashbam, a good representative of

³⁰ See, e.g., b Shabbat 86b.. The Hebrew root נ-ב-ל generally has the meaning "to harm"; in his glossing the verse with both מילקקמו and מימחמם, Rashbam seems to want to have the word ליבה express a semantic range of both "harm" and "heat up." For a consideration of how the talmudic sources influence our understanding of Rashbam's comment, see Martin I. Lockshin, *Rashbam's Commentary on Leviticus and Numbers: An Annotated Translation* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2001), 60, n. 56.

³¹ See Rashi's comment ad loc; for the dispute between the two, see Lockshin (2001), 59, n. 52.

³² See Shaye J.D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984): 27-53.

³³ There is a long history of attention to the medieval use of the phrase in contemporary scholarship. For an excellent summary, see Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2004), 179-180, n. 6. In addition to the sources cited by Gruber, see Avraham Grossman, "The Jewish-Christian Polemic and Jewish Biblical Exegesis in Twelfth Century France (on the Attitude of R. Joseph Qara to Polemic) [Hebrew]," *Zion* 51:1 (1986): 29-60; idem., "The Commentary of Rashi on Psalms and the Jewish-Christian Polemic [Hebrew]," in *Studies in Bible and Education Presented to Professor Moshe Ahrend*, ed. Dov Rappel (Jerusalem: Touro College, 1996), 59-74. Some older articles that still bear attention are: Erwin Rosenthal, "Anti-Christian Polemic in Medieval Bible Commentaries," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 11 (1960): 115-35; Judah Rosenthal, "Anti-Christian Polemics in the Biblical Commentaries of Rashi," in *Studies and Texts in Jewish History, Literature and Religion* (Jerusalem: Reuben Maas, 1967), 101-116.

the so-called “renaissance” spirit of the age, appeals to reason to find a reason for the commandment: prohibited animals are “disgusting.” Supporting this judgment, Rashbam first appeals to (contemporary?) physicians, and then to the Talmud. A rational, health-oriented interpretation acknowledges that this meat is harmful for humans, and this is why God has forbidden it.³⁴

That there is polemical import to the passage may already be seen in Rashi’s comment on Leviticus 11: 2:

דברו אל בני ישראל: את כולם השווה להיות שלוחים בדיבור זה, לפי שהשווה בדמימה וקבלו עליהם גזרת המקום מאהבה. **זאת החיה:** לשון חיים, לפי שישראל דבוקים במקום וראויין להיות חיים, לפיכך הבדילים מן הטומאה וגזר עליהם מצות, ולאומות לא אסר כלום, משל לרופא שנכנס לבקר את החולה וגו’, כדאיתא במדרש רבי תנחומא.

Speak to the Children of Israel: The word “speak” is in the plural... He made all of them alike His messengers with regard to (communicating) this speech, because they were all alike in remaining silent and they lovingly accepted the decree of the Omnipresent.³⁵ **This, the living**³⁶: This (the word חיה) is an expression denoting life.³⁷ Because Israel cleaves to the

³⁴ See Lockshin’s insightful comment, 59–60, n. 54.

³⁵ I.e., in respect to the death of Nadab and Abihu (see Sifra 1:1).

³⁶ I have deliberately translated awkwardly. As will be made clear, Rashi’s first interpretation of the words זאת החיה does not regard the words as a reference to the prohibited animals (which he relegates to the second *incipit*, not included here) but rather as an address to the Israelites. As Rashi himself makes explicit, this interpretation is midrashic in origin, from Tanhuma (Shemini 6). The words זאת החיה may be taken to mean: “This is the type of living thing that you may eat...” But see the discussion below.

³⁷ ...and is purposely used here in preference to המהב to express the follow-

Omnipresent and therefore deserves to remain in life, He therefore separated them from what is unclean and imposed commandments upon them. Whereas to the other nations who do not cleave to him he did not prohibit anything! A parable: It may be compared to the case of a physician who goes to visit a sick person, & etc.; as may be found in the Midrash of R. Tanchuma.³⁸

First, I have included the initial segment of Rashi’s comment on Leviticus 11:2 (on “Speak to the Children of Israel”), although it may have no direct relevance here. Based on Rashi’s comment on Leviticus 1:1, it is apparent when he writes, “He made all of them alike His messengers...,” he refers to Moses, Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Further, his “they were all alike in remaining silent and lovingly accepted the decree of the Omnipresent...” seems to evoke a midrashic expansion of the biblical narrative concerning the sudden death of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1–2. Not only did Aaron accept God’s killing of his sons in silence (v. 3), but so also did Moses, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Rashi juxtaposes this to his presentation of the dietary laws. Thus, their silence and acceptance apparently speak directly to the continued Jewish commitment to observing the dietary laws, despite all difficulties: “they were all alike in remaining silent and they lovingly accepted the decree of the Omnipresent... these are the animals that you may eat...” This juxtaposition was not necessarily a deliberate and conscious exegetical move.³⁹ However, it is

ing idea...

³⁸ Shemini, Parasha 6.

³⁹ The idea that authors—and, by extension, medieval exegetes—may work unconsciously is, of course, not new; the classic article on the subject is William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, “The Intentional Fallacy,” *Sewanee Review* 54 (1946): 468–88.

indeed striking, and when one considers the relative freedom exercised by Rashi in his appropriation of the wide variety of midrashic sources at his disposal, one may wonder at the message that the conjunction of the two comments engenders.

Rashi, however, definitely appeals directly to polemical issues in his following comment. The Hebrew words את החיה literally read “this is the animal,” but I have rendered them as “this, the living” because reading them to mean “the living nation (of Israel)” is more faithful to the spirit of Rashi’s interpretation.⁴⁰ The parable to which Rashi alludes teaches that a physician only prescribes specific medicinal foods for the patient he expects will survive. The one who will die may eat what he wants. Thus, Rashi is obviously distinguishing between Israel, who requires kosher food that will help it “recover” and gain entrance to life eternal, and the gentile nations, which in Rashi’s estimation are not destined *en masse* for such eternal life and do *not* therefore require the discipline of the cure.⁴¹ They may thus eat whatever they want to eat.⁴²

⁴⁰ Indeed, one popular translation of Rashi into English offers, “This, O Living Nation”; see M. Rosenbaum, A.M. Silverman, *Pentateuch With Targum Onkelos. Haphtaroth and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi’s Commentary Translated Into English* (London: 1946), *ad. loc.*

⁴¹ Rashi does not here address the presumed fate of individual gentiles, for whom the promise of life-eternal in the World to Come could be gained through righteous behavior. See Tosefta Sanhedrin 13 (“the righteous of the Nations of the World have a share in the World to Come”); see also Bavli Sanhedrin 105a. In the century following Rashi, Maimonides standardized the positions expressed in those ancient rabbinic sources in his great code of Jewish law; see *Mishneh Torah*, Repentance 3:5. Of course, one might argue that Rashi would disagree with these positions. However, it is known that Rashi had amiable relations with at least some of his Christian neighbors, and there is no reason to doubt—despite the pain he suffered over the murder of so many friends and colleagues in the First Crusade—that he recognized the possibility of the ultimate redemption of righteous gentiles. See Avraham Grossman, *Rashi: Religious Beliefs and Social Views* [Hebrew] (Alon Shevut, Israel: Tevunot, 2008), 152-154.

⁴² Following the homily, Rashi does provide a more “plain sense” interpreta-

Rashi’s understanding, that Israel’s observance of the Levitical dietary laws will help it to gain entrance to heaven, appears also in his comment on Leviticus 11:43 (אל-תשקצוּ אֶת-נַפְשֵׁיכֶם בְּכָל-הַשָּׂרָץ הַשָּׂרָץ וְלֹא תִטְמְאוּ בָהֶם וְנִטְמַתֶּם בָּם, “You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves through anything that swarms; you shall not make yourselves impure through them and thus become impure through them”):

אל תשקצוּ, באכילתן. שהרי כתיב: נפשותיכם, ואין שיקוץ נפש במגע. וכן: ולא תטמאו באכילתם. ונטמתם במ: אם אתם מטמאין בהם בארץ, אף אני מטמא אתכם בעולם הבא ובישיבת מעלה.

You shall not draw abomination upon yourselves by eating these. (This must be the meaning), because it is written **you shall not make your souls abominable** and no “abomination of the soul” arises from touching them.⁴³ And similarly the words **become unclean through them**⁴⁴: if you become impure through them on earth, even so will I make you as impure in the world to come and in the heavenly academy.⁴⁵

In this comment, Rashi extrapolates, directly from the biblical text, as it were, legal rulings of the ancient rabbis concerning a distinction between eating the flesh of the forbidden animals and merely touching them; these arguments and interpretations do not concern us. However, we see the import Rashi attaches

tion of the words, but these are not germane to our discussion.

⁴³ I.e., touching the creatures. The rabbis ruled that touching the carcass of forbidden animals is not prohibited by the verse. See, e.g., *b. Rosh Hashanah* 16b and Rashi and Bekhor Shor on Deuteronomy 14:8.

⁴⁴ I.e., Rashi is reading that here, too, the words **become unclean through them** must mean: by eating them.

⁴⁵ See *b. Yoma* 39a.

to these interpretations by his final, homiletical comment: eating the flesh of forbidden animals would have severely negative implications for Israel in the world to come. Now, to be sure, Christians are not governed by Jewish dietary laws, and their consumption of foods that would be illicit for Jews does not on the surface have implications for any polemical dialogue with Christians in Rashi's comment. Yet, "Jewish carnality" was a common accusation of Christian polemicists against the validity of continued Jewish adherence to the ritual laws of the Pentateuch;⁴⁶ observance of the dietary laws was from time immemorial one of the most obvious cultural markers of Jews in Christian society. While not explicitly and consciously reacting to Christian polemics against Jewish dietary laws, Rashi nonetheless chooses this opportunity to encourage Jews to observe them literally (and not, say, honor them in some figurative way). Much is at stake: Rashi states that the Jews' very status in gaining the World to Come, i.e., the equivalent of Christian salvation, is predicated upon their observance of the Levitical dietary laws.

Rashbam's comment on Leviticus 11:34 provides further demonstration that the interpretation of the dietary laws continued to be an exercise through which the Jewish and Christian exegetes found differing expressions of "community" in their reading of the biblical text. Here he addresses the question of the reason for the law, *מִכֹּל-הָאֲכָל אֲשֶׁר יֵאָכֵל אֲשֶׁר יָבֹא עָלָיו*, "As to any food that may be eaten, it shall become impure if it came in contact with water."

אשר יבא עליו מים יטמא: מי שרוצה לתת טעם במצוות לפי דרך ארץ ולתשובת המינין, לא הזקיק הקב"ה טומאה למיני אוכלים ומשקין עד שתקנם לצורך מאכל; ונתנית מים היא תחילת תיקונם ועיקר חשיבותם לצורך אכילה.

⁴⁶ See Anna Sapir Abulafia, "Jewish Carnality in Twelfth Century Renaissance Thought," in *Christianity and Judaism*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford, England and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 59–75.

If water comes upon it, it shall become impure: Whoever wishes to give a rationale for the commandments⁴⁷, according to the way of the world and as a response to Christians [should explain as follows]: the Holy One did not cause a requirement of impurity to be designated for various kinds of food and liquid until someone has made them fit to be considered as food; and contact with water is the beginning of that designation and the essential way of considering them to be food.

Why would this verse in particular be a cause for debate? As Martin Lockshin has already argued, "Christians presumably argued that the rules of kosher food and the rules of ritual impurity make no sense on the literal level. Only an allegorical Christological explanation would make sense of them. Rashbam and other Jews argue, then, that these rules have some form of logic or at least common sense on the literal level."⁴⁸ In this case, Rashbam claims that the touch of water to a "potential food substance" in its natural state is the beginning of that process that leads it to be considered afterwards as "actual food"—and hence, subject to possible impurity.

⁴⁷ Lockshin suggests that Rashbam's use of the term *טעם במצוות*, "the rationale for the commandments" may be the earliest attestation for the term that later came into standard use in the rabbinic literature that attempted to provide reasons for the Torah's commandments; see Lockshin (2001), 65, n. 74. But cf. Rashi's comment on Exodus 21:1 (ד"ה אשר תשים לפניהם), where he uses the expression *טעמי הדבר ופירושו*, "the reasons of a matter and its explanation," which seems to refer to the same notion.

⁴⁸ Lockshin (2001), 65, n. 76. See there also his citation of Elazar Touitou, "The Method of Rashbam's Commentary on the Halakhic Parts of the Torah [Hebrew]," *Millet 2* (1985): 275–88, which finds its expression also in Elazar Touitou, *Exegesis in Perpetual Motion: Studies in the Pentateuchal Commentary of Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir* [Hebrew] (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2003), 177–188.

One final issue contributes to our understanding of the differing Jewish and Christian notions of “Levitical community.” In an appendix to his edition and translation of the medieval polemical work, *Sefer Nitzahon Yashan*, “the Ancient Book of Victory,” David Berger addresses the age-old Christian inclination to find “absurdities, contradictions, or at least improbabilities in the literal content of a given precept” in order to “establish the necessity of” Christian allegory to replace the Jewish interpretation.⁴⁹ An example of just such a place where Christian exegesis would vie with rabbinic tradition was Leviticus 19:19: אֶת־חֻקְתֵי תִשְׁמְרוּ, בְּהַמְתִּיךָ לֹא־תִרְבִּיעַ כְּלָאִים שָׂדֶךְ לֹא־תִזְרַע: “You shall observe My laws. You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.” The question of why God would prohibit wearing such a cloth—*shaatnez*, is the biblical term, one that still defies precise etymological definition—and wish to regulate the other actions mentioned in the verse is the stuff of age-old Jewish-Christian debate.⁵⁰ Rashbam’s comment immediately demonstrates that he is aware of the polemical import of the verse:

⁴⁹ David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc, 1996), 355–361. Berger translates this polemical treatise as “the Old Book of Polemic,” which is certainly accurate. I chose to translate the way I did because the medieval author employed the word “victory” for the title of his treatise, which he hoped would enable Jews to be victorious in their polemical battles with Christians.

⁵⁰ The Egyptian etymology of Lambdin is persuasive: *lambdin* must be a foreign word, and an Egyptian origin for something related to cloth would make sense; see Thomas Oden Lambdin, “Egyptian Loan Words in the Old Testament,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 73:3 (1953): 145-55. See also Yoshiyuki Muchiki, *Egyptian Proper Names and Loanwords in North-West Semitic*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, Vol. 173 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999), 257, even though Muchiki is uncertain. I am grateful to Edward L. Greenstein, for this observation.

בהמתך לא תרביע כלאים: לפי דרך ארץ ותשובת המינין: כשם שציוה הכתוב שכל אחד ואחד יוציא פרי למינהו במעשה בראשית, כך ציוה להנהיג את העולם בבהמות ובשדות ואילנות; וגם בחרישת שור וחמור שהם שני מינים; וגם בצמר ופשתים, שזה מין בהמות וזה מין קרקע וגידוליו. ולמינים אמרתי הצמר צבוע והפשתן איננו צבוע, וקפיד בבגד של שני מראות, והודו לי.

You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind: According to the way of the world and as a response to the Christians, (interpret as follows): just as the Text commands that each and every species bring forth a fruit of its kind, during the “Making of Creation,”⁵¹ so, too did it command that we guide the world with regard to animals, fields and trees; and also with regard to the plowing of an ox and a donkey together, since they are two (separate) species; and also with regard to wool and linen (clothing), since one is a species of animal (life) and the other is a species of the earth and its growths. To the Christians I said that wool is dyed and linen is not dyed, and it (Scripture) is stringent about clothes of two appearances.⁵²

Rashi had previously commented on this verse, חקים אלו גזירת, “these statutes are decrees of the King, for which no reason can be provided.” Rashbam disagrees, and offers what we earlier saw he calls a *טעם במצוות*, a “rationale for the commandments.” As Lockshin has noted, Rashbam specifically claims that “his explanations are appropriate ways of neutralizing non-Jewish criticism.”⁵³

⁵¹ This is the rabbinic name for the Creation narrative of Genesis.

⁵² Lockshin translates “colors,” which is, indeed, the sense of this passage; see his note 3, p. 77.

⁵³ Lockshin (2001), 107, n. 34. As it happens, R. Joseph Bekhor Shor ad-

Conclusion

I began this study by referring to John Van Engen's essay, "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community." One of the central questions animating Van Engen's article was, "If Jewish positions ostensibly occasioned [Ralph's] commentary, to what degree did Jews represent a real alternative, a threat in any sense, even real people?"⁵⁴ One conclusion that we can draw from our study of the rabbinic exegetes contemporary with Ralph is that they saw Christian "alternatives" as "threats" to the Jewish community in a manner not so dissimilar from the Jewish positions observed by Ralph. If, as Van Engen describes, Ralph faced a monastic community that was curious about, if not actually persuaded by, Jewish exegetical interpretations, then what was required, Ralph felt, was a comprehensive, verse-by-verse interpretation of Leviticus that both accounted for *ad litteram* exegesis but also turned Christian readers in the direction of Christian verities.⁵⁵ If Ralph was indeed aware of a nobleman whom Guibert of Nogent called a "neuter," for he neither followed the [Jewish] laws he praised...nor praised the Christian laws he seemed to follow,⁵⁶ and saw fit to gloss the Bible on behalf of those who may have been poised between competing avenues of

interpretive discourse, then it stands to reason that Jewish exegetes like Rashi and Rashbam would address themselves to a Jewish community who may have been similarly attracted to their neighbors' religious beliefs (and surely actual conversion of Jews to Christianity is much better attested than the reverse, although the latter is known also).⁵⁷ As Van Engen correctly observes, "contact between Jews and Christians—in neighborhood streets, in marketplaces, at princely and ecclesiastical courts—could provoke questions, even doubts, about which 'law' was right."⁵⁸ It hardly matters which chicken came before which particular egg! The two communities came to depend on biblical exegesis that reacted to and anticipated the other in both overt and covert ways. While it is, of course, true that on occasion Christian exegetes would explicitly mention Jews (or more often "Hebrews") in Christian exegesis, and Jews would likewise refer to Christians (either as *minim*, for "heretics," as above, or less often as "Nazerines"),⁵⁹ it is more often the case that exegetes on both sides would employ covert arguments to address matters pertaining to the faith of the other. But in either case, both Jews and Christians, whether explicitly or covertly, are constructing senses of sacred communities through their exegesis of Leviticus, both in terms of self-image as well as

dresses this verse (Leviticus 19:19), and offers a brilliant, innovative interpretation; however, his comment does not fully address our question of considering Leviticus "as Jewish community." However, see Edward L. Greenstein, "Medieval Bible Commentaries," in *Back to the Sources*, ed. Barry Holtz (New York: Summit Books, 1984), 246–247, for an insightful analysis and translation.

⁵⁴ John Van Engen, "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community," 151.

⁵⁵ John Van Engen, "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community," 150–151.

⁵⁶ John Van Engen, "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community," 153.

⁵⁷ A classic study that addresses some of these concerns is Amos Funkenstein, "Changes in the Patterns of Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics in the Twelfth Century [Hebrew]," *Zion* 33 (1968): 125–44. See also Ivan Marcus, "Jews and Christians Imagining the Other in Medieval Europe." *Prooftexts* 15:3 (1995): 209–26; Ben Zion Wacholder, "Cases of Proselytizing in the Tosafist Responsa." *Jewish Quarterly Review*, NS 51:4 (1961): 288–315.

⁵⁸ John Van Engen, "Ralph of Flaix: The Book of Leviticus Interpreted as Christian Community," 153.

⁵⁹ See Rashbam on Exodus 20:13; Bekhor Shor on Numbers 12:7; and Radak on Psalms 19:10 or 110 (end) for some of the most explicit considerations of Christianity in the overtly "exegetical," as opposed to the "polemical," literature.

through reference to the other.⁶⁰ While the 12th-century biblical exegesis—in Hebrew, by and for the Jews, and in Latin, by and for the Christians—offered at least the semblance or the possibility of true intellectual discourse and debate,⁶¹ it soon and unfortunately gave way to the explicitly polemical literature and poisoned social, religious, and legal atmosphere of the 13th century and beyond, yielding a world in which co-existence of the two religious communities no longer was possible, a world of disputation, eventual destruction, and exile of the Jewish community.⁶²

⁶⁰ For an insightful discussion of this idea as it plays out in the 12th century exegesis of Rupert of Deutz and the *Sefer Nitzahon Yashan*, see David E. Timmer, "Biblical Exegesis and the Jewish-Christian Controversy in the Early Twelfth Century," *Church History* 58:3 (1989): 309-21 (esp. p. 319).

⁶¹ Consider Rashbam's comment on Leviticus 13:2 and Andrew of St. Victor's (Lockshin, 72, note 11).

⁶² For an important study of the shift between the 12th and the 13th centuries in Christian anti-Jewish attitudes, see Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).