

SEMINARE

t. 42 * 2021, nr 4, s. 23-36

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.21852/sem.2021.4.02>



PIOTR WALEWSKI

University of Gdańsk

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9546-274X> * religia@ug.edu.pl

Received: 22 Oct 2021; Reviewed: 23 Nov 2021; Accepted: 06 Dec 2021

CHRISTIANS AND CHRISTIANITY IN RASHI'S COMMENTARIES. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT STUDIES

Abstract

The article provides a critical analysis of both linguistic and historical aspects of selected Talmudic texts containing the preserved commentaries of Rashi, one of the most prominent medieval Jewish exegetes. It soon appeared that the undertaken studies would be hindered by the scarcity of source material on the one hand, and by the censorship of Talmudic manuscripts on the other. The implemented inductive study, which consists of lexical tracing of the words *nosrim* and *minim* in selected Talmudic texts, seemed to be a plausible solution.

The presented study, which falls into the scope of theological and religious studies, argues that Rashi explains the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) above all as a rabbi, by showing the literal as well as the hidden meaning of the text. As the commentaries contain no elements of polemics or dispute with Christianity, it can be assumed that it is beyond his scope of interest. Even if such polemics is present *implicite*, it still cannot be considered as the purpose of the commentaries *per se*.

Keywords: Rabbinic sources; Rashi; polemic between Synagogue and Church; Christianity in Talmud; Christians in Tanakh; messianic texts in the Hebrew Bible

CHRZEŚCIJANIE I CHRZEŚCIJAŃSTWO W KOMENTARZACH RASZIEGO. PRZEGLĄD I OMÓWIENIE NAJWAŻNIEJSZYCH BADAŃ

Abstrakt

W artykule poddano krytyce lingwistyczno-historycznej teksty talmudyczne, w których zostały zapisanie komentarze Rasziego, najśłynniejszego średniowiecznego żydowskiego egzegety. Szybko okazało się, że te badania są utrudnione z powodu braków materiałów źródłowych lub cenzury rękopisów Talmudu. Zastosowano więc badanie indukcyjne, polegające na leksykalnym przesłedzeniu wybranych tekstów w Talmudzie i Tanach w oparciu o słowa *nocrim* i *minim*. Niniejsze studium teologiczno-religioznawcze dowodzi, że Raszi wyjaśnia Biblię Hebrajską (Tanach) przede wszystkim jako rabin, pokazując podstawowe i ukryte znaczenia tekstu. Zdaje się nie interesować go polemika i spór z chrześcijaństwem, gdyż nie widać tego w komentarzach. Być może występuje ona *implicite*, ale nawet jeśli tak, to nie jest celem sama w sobie.

Słowa kluczowe: źródła rabiniczne, Raszi, polemika pomiędzy Synagogą a Kościołem, chrześcijaństwo w Talmudzie, chrześcijanie w Tanach, teksty mesjańskie w Biblii Hebrajskiej

INTRODUCTION

Rashi of Troyes (1040-1105) was one of the most prominent representatives of medieval rabbinic thought in the world of Western Christianity. He was the founder of the rabbinical school of Troyes, and his exegetical method found numerous continuators (cf. Singer 1907, 27). E. Shereshevsky writes that no monument was ever erected for Rashi (cf. Shereshevsky 1970-1971, 243), nevertheless, his commentaries can be considered a *living* monument, since they have reached almost a canonical status, as M.I. Gruber emphasizes (cf. Gruber 2004, 135). It is worth noting that Torah (the Pentateuch) was instructed not only based on *midrashim*, but also on Rashi's commentary, the first printed book in Hebrew.

The aim of the article is to find the answer to the question whether there are any statements about Christians and Christianity in Rashi's commentaries, and if so, how they should be interpreted. In order to provide a reliable answer to this question, it was necessary to consult source material. Hence, the exploration for the present article began with the study of the texts¹ considered by Talmud scholars² as related to Jesus Christ and Christianity, in order to reach, in this manner, the thought and teaching of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki. In this case, Rashi's commentaries included in the Talmud are the source *par excellence* for this study. Considering the lack of any other sources, their analysis shall be the only opportunity to obtain insight into his thinking and judgments.

It soon became clear that this research would be hindered by a scarcity of source material or by censorship (cf. Touitou 1990, 168) to which some of the Talmud texts were subjected, hence publishers nowadays are forced to rely on the manuscripts that are available to them (cf. Wróbel 2012).

After an unsuccessful attempt³ to find the above-mentioned texts, a following assumption has been put forward⁴: Rashi does not refer explicitly to Christians (נצרים; *nosrim*)⁵, and his views and statements on this subject are most likely to be found in the texts referring to מינים (*minim*)⁶. A question arises whether there is an "affinity" between Rashi's פרשנים (*parshani*) and Christian-Jewish dispute of that time. Moreover, because Rashi wrote the commentary not only to the Talmud but

¹ Based on research of M. Wróbel (2012, 15-50).

² Whenever in this article the Talmud is mentioned, the reference is to the Babylonian Talmud.

³ When starting work on this topic, no a priori assumptions were applied, the author did not know what to expect from Rashi's comments on this issue, neither did he know whether or to what extent the Christian question could be referred to by Rashi, and if so, how many texts might be relevant in this respect. In this work, the induction method was used.

⁴ Usually, the author abstains from any a priori in research, but when the first lexical search proved unsuccessful, it was necessary to develop a query plan.

⁵ Literally: "Nazarenes".

⁶ Literally: "heretics". This term can possess wide semantic connotations depending on the context and on the period of use.

also to the whole Hebrew Bible, it was not possible to cover every instance in this article, and it was necessary to work only on selected texts⁷.

His commentaries on Tanakh are very helpful in understanding Rashi's views on Christians⁸. Firstly, as already mentioned above, the texts were scrutinized in terms of their thematic content in the matter at hand. Secondly, a lexical search⁹ was applied to selected texts of Rashi's commentaries to the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh). The texts were divided into two groups: messianic texts¹⁰ and miscellaneous texts (selection¹¹) that can refer to historical events in the time of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki.

Rashi begins his commentary on the Song of Songs 7:8¹² with words: ועתה האמתי את דברי שלח תתפתי אחרי האומות ([...] Testify to my words and be not tempted by peoples).

When describing the situation of his generation, Rashi wanted to make a comment on it, but the diaspora was not considered by him a punishment for sins. By applying new methods in constructing his פשט (*peshat*) (see more Kamin 1980, 263-274), Rashi "evaded" strict methodological instructions, as it occurs in the commentaries. What was the most important for him, was the message he had for the Jews. His exegesis of Scriptures as illustrated by his commentaries differed greatly (for individual and contextual reasons) from that of other rabbis, e.g., Ibn Ezra or Radak¹³. The latter comment scripture with numerous references to Christians and Christianity. Rashi, on the other hand, rather brings out from the midrashim¹⁴ those elements that can be given a new character or rejects them if he finds them appropriate. As L. Himmelfarb states, Rashi incorporates in his commentaries various elements (Himmelfarb, 293), however, to find the literal and original meaning of the Scripture, is of the utmost importance for him.

⁷ These texts have been presented in the original, medieval Rashi's font and translated for the very first time into Polish by the author of this article.

⁸ The TNK acronym meaning *Tanakh* refers to the three parts of the Hebrew Bible (HB), i.e., the Torah, the Nevi'im and the Ketuvim and is used as the synonym and term for HB.

⁹ The current research findings on this subject have also been used.

¹⁰ Terminology used by Christian and some Jewish Scholars.

¹¹ More texts from each group were examined, but for the purposes of the present work, only selected ones (those raising the least doubt as regards their translation and interpretation) have been included.

¹² In the Polish translation of the Bible – Cant 7:9. NAU: I said, 'I will climb the palm tree, I will take hold of its fruit stalks'. Oh, may your breasts be like clusters of the vine, And the fragrance of your breath like apples. The translation of the Scriptures comes from *The New American Standard Bible with Codes* (abbreviation: NAU) and it is provided to give the reader an idea what text Rashi is commenting on. It also allows to follow the way Rashi develops his commentary and see which words and phrases he emphasizes in order to interpret them.

¹³ David Kimhi. In Hebrew דוד קמחי (1160-1235), known by the Hebrew acronym as the RaDaK (רד"ק).

¹⁴ Cf. His Commentary on Genesis 3:8. The term *midrash* comes from the Hebrew *darash* or 'to seek, to investigate' in order to 'find [the meaning], to interpret'. There are two types of *midrash* in rabbinic texts: *parshani* (exegetical) and *darshani* (instructive). "The rabbis believed that any one particular text could contain multiple meanings. The starting point for the interpreter was the text itself and its plain meaning (*peshat*) was resolved, the hidden, deeper meaning was sought". (Tate 2006, 214).

1. COMMENTARIES IN THE TALMUD

As it was noted above, the search for this study began with a query of Rashi's texts in the Talmud. Regrettably, it did not bring the expected results, hence, below only a general recap of this query, without any extensive translation or commentary, shall be presented. Rashi simply does not comment on the texts in which one could expect to find a reference to Jesus, Christians or Christianity, or his comments are too short and presented laconically – making it impossible to distinguish his intentions as a commentator. One of the possible reasons for the lack of Rashi's commentaries is undoubtedly the censorship of the Talmud. A great number of Talmud editions fail to include the texts proposed by M. Wróbel (cf. 2012, 15-50), thus they do not contain Rabbi's comments to those, lacking, passages.

In the commentary on the treaty עבודה זרה דף יז א (*Avoda Zara* 17a)¹⁵, although Rashi writes about idolatry, his remarks are of a general character, and they cannot be employed in order to prove his negative attitude or views on Christianity. Many authors think otherwise and look for formulations concerning Christianity expressed *implicite*. However, those and similar suppositions are not grounded on the text itself. It seems more probable that Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki comments the Talmud leaving aside the Judeo-Christian polemics. Nearly no reference can be found in Rashi's commentaries to Jesus or Christianity in the texts most commonly regarded as evoking these topics. According to H. Hailperin, nowhere in his works Rashi attacks Christianity (cf. Hailperin 1963, 164). He writes, for example, in a text concerning expiation for idolatry (verbatim the cult of the stars):

[...] לועקת הבא תקרובת לעבודה זרה כוכבי

[...] Those who weep will [now] bring me a sacrifice for idolatry.

As for the commentary on *Shabbat* 104b (שבת קד ב) to the text concerning *ben Stada*, it is not present in most of the Talmud editions, that had been analyzed here (cf. see various editions of תלמוד בבלי). After a long query, one mention of this issue has been found in an electronic version of the text, though with no source or reference given concerning the manuscript, from which it comes (Kantrowitz 1995):

זעל סתדא זועל פנדירא ונקרא על שם זעל אמו אף
על פי שהוא היה ממזר

[Her] husband [was] Stada, [her] lover [was] Pandira
and [he] was called after the name of his mother's husband,
despite being a mamzer

Both commentaries are enigmatic to the point, that they give no grounds for any decided interpretation. Rashi's argumentation is very specific. He expresses

¹⁵ The method of quoting rabbinic texts, see: Bazyliński (2006, 69).

short thoughts (probably clear to his audience), then abruptly changes the subject, as if leaving it without any continuation. This refers to both texts cited above. In the first, he writes about (ממזר), but it remains unclear whether he thinks of Christians. In the second, the verse does not convey any emotions or beliefs of the author. It consists only of a brief description – that this [son of] *Stada*¹⁶ was named after his mother's husband, despite being a *mamzer*¹⁷.

In the commentary on א סנהדרין 18 (*Sanhedrin* 67a) we read very briefly:

סטדא בעל אמו סטדא אמו

His mother's husband [was] Stada, His name [was] Stada

As regards the text of ב סנהדרין קד (*Sanhedrin* 104b) – [...] והלו בן סטדא הוציא [...] – Rashi does not comment it with a single word. The same refers to other texts. To those who may be surprised with his “silence” and restraint it is worth reminding that Rashi had his own concept of search for meaning contained of the sacred text. In his commentary on Genesis 3:8¹⁹ he wrote²⁰: ואני ל באתי אלא לפשותו של מקרא (I did not come to teach the simple meaning²¹ *Miqra*²²). Was Rashi worried of Christian missionaries and conversion from Judaism to Christianity in the eve of a crusade? As E. Shereshevsky states, there are some examples that directly demonstrate Rashi's deliberate reactions aimed at changing Christian interpretation (Shereshevsky 1982, 129). A. Grosman writes in a captivating manner about the cultural renaissance and a possible connection of *parshanim* of that time with the Jewish-Christian polemics (גרומן, 30). However, the question remains open, it may have been that way, though during this study no sufficiently convincing evidence of such thinking in the texts of Rashi has been found, at least not *explicite*²³. This may have been because Rashi was lucky to have missed the troubles caused by the time of the Crusades (see Liber 1970), he did not know these matters fully. Moreover, one has to remember that even after the First Crusade, the situation of the Jews in France remained favorable.

¹⁶ For more on the origin and interpretation of this term, see Lipiński (2012, 55-56).

¹⁷ *Mamzer*, i.e., an illegitimate child, a bastard, whose legal status was precisely defined in the Torah.

¹⁸ *Sanhedrin* 67a, by the edition: (Kantrowitz 1995). Text usually commented against Christians.

¹⁹ NAU: They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

²⁰ See similar expressions in his commentary on Bereshit 3:24: ואני איני בא אלא לפשותו [...] and on Bereshit 33:20: ואני לישב פשותו של מקרא באתי [...].

²¹ The word פשט (*peshat*), is used here, but Rashi understands it differently from other commentators.

²² We purposefully omit translating this term, e.g., as the *Scripture*, because, according to its semantic field, it is a Hebrew term and just as Tanakh, it means the Hebrew Bible. It comes from the root קרא which means, *what is recited, read, or, what [should] be recited, read* – cf. קרא (Briks 1999, 315; Jastrow 1996, 1409).

²³ Many modern Jewish scholars, such as E. Shereshevsky (1970-1971, 76) believe that he did this to prevent the Hebrew Bible from being taken over by Christians.

2. COMMENTARIES TO THE TANAKH

We read in the commentary²⁴ on Ps 2²⁵:

רבותינו דרשו את הענין על מלך המשיח
ולפי משמעו יהיה נכון לפותרו על דוד עצמו כעין שנאמר
Our rabbis interpreted (literally they gave the meaning of “derash”) this issue
in relation to the King Messiah [...]

Here, an interesting thread can be noted the elaboration of which exceeds the boundaries of this study. Many scholars referring to Rashi’s writings state that he writes his commentary on Ps 2 in opposition to Christian understanding of this Psalm. Claims that Rashi responds in this way to Jews converting to Christianity can be found in numerous commentaries (Hailperin 1963, 60). Nothing alike can be found in the text, unless scholars are using another manuscript, though it is not indicated in the critical apparatus.

Commentary on Ps 2:2²⁶:

ורוזנים שיניור”ש בלעז נוסדו לשון סוד
פורקונשילרונט בלעז ומה היא הענה
Heb. ורוזנים in Old French is *seigneurs* (lords)
Heb. נוסדו, an expression of counsel,
in Old French is *furent conseilles* (they hold counsel).
And what is the counsel?

R.A. Harris thinks that Rashi opened this verse to Christian messianic exegesis (cf. Harris 2008, 860). On the other hand, H. Hailperin claims that it is impossible, because he would not be willing to give such an argument to his opponents (cf. Hailperin 1963, 61). Yet another scholar, M.I. Gruber, concludes that Rashi wrote his commentaries in such a way as not to sustain any belief that Christ was announced in the Hebrew Bible (Gruber 2004, 88). As it can be clearly seen, opinions on this subject vary, which is probably a result of diverse hermeneutical approaches. It may be astonishing how the two latter opinions, hard to agree with, can be inferred from the text of Rashi’s commentary on Ps 2:2. This time, Grubner fails to provide any convincing arguments. It seems most likely

²⁴ All texts from Tehillim and Yeshaya in this article are cited from the issue: מע סיבותכו מיאיבנ
שדוק יארקמ משב ארקנ רקי יפו י”שר שוריפ
and consulted with Miqra’ot gedolot, issue from 2003 i.e.,

מקראות גדולות הכתר מהדורת יסוד חדשה ההדרה מדעית
על-פי כתבי יד עתיקים מנחם כהן רמת גן תשס”ג.

²⁵ NAU: Why are the [a]nations restless / And the peoples plotting in vain?

²⁶ NAU: The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers conspire together Against the Lord and against His Anointed

that in this commentary Rashi avoids contextual interpretation and limits the explanation to a philological note in order – one would assume – not to enter the polemics with Christians (cf. Gruber 2004, 625, n. 11). Nevertheless, a researcher cannot be sure of that – it is a certain presumption and not an exegesis of the text.

The answer to the question that started with Harris remains unknown or is: “why not”? If Rashi saw in this verse a messianic foreshadowing, should he be silent only because of Christians?²⁷

Above all, Rashi explains the Scripture as a rabbi, unveiling both the literal and hidden meaning of the text. The polemics and dispute with Christianity seem to be of no interest to him, as no traces of it can be found in his commentaries. Perhaps such polemics is present *implicite*, but even if it was the case, it does not constitute an end in itself. Rashi reads the text of Ps 2:7 and explains it – perhaps to counter Christian teaching and messianic (Christian, not Jewish) overtone of this verse (cf. e.g., Harris 2008, 850). Nonetheless, it seems more probable that, while practicing an intra-biblical exegesis, the rabbi reads the verse according to his own tradition of faith and beliefs²⁸.

It should not be ruled out, however, that he knew Latin and argued in a hidden manner with the Fathers of the Church, because, as S. Kamin infers, his knowledge of Christian writings was much more profound than some *ad hoc* knowledge for the sole purpose of polemics (Kamin 1983-1984, X). E. Shereshevsky believes that there is no evidence that Rashi knew Latin, however, that it is probable (Shereshevsky 1982, 129), while I. Baer claims explicitly that it has to be assumed²⁹. In the writings of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki some expressions and formulations characteristic for Christianity can be distinguished. How was it in fact? Without convincing evidence, it is impossible to conclude anything certain, though it is probable that through Latin, or French, he came into contact with Christian literature, or even studied it on purpose.

This assumption can be confirmed, in a way, by other texts. For example, in the commentary on Ps 21:2³⁰ one reads:

בעזר ישמח מלך רבותינו פתרוהו על מלך המשיח
ונכון הדבר לפותרו עוד על דוד עמנו
לתשובת אחרים³¹

²⁷ All the more so because in other places, he clearly indicates the messianic meaning of the psalm, as if he did not care at all how its interpretation would be used. For example, in his commentary to Ps 89:52:

עקבות משיחך סופי מלך המשיח ולשון
משנה הוא בעקבות המשיח חולפא יסגא

²⁸ The Messiah is 1) the people of Israel understood collectively; 2) King David; 3) King Solomon.

²⁹ Cf. יש להניח שרש"י ידה לטינית והרבה לקרוא בספריהם
(יצחק בער, רש"י והמציאות ההיסטורית של זמנו, תרביץ ב"תשי עמ' 326)

³⁰ NAU: O LORD, in Your strength the king will be glad, And in Your salvation how greatly he will rejoice!

³¹ In other manuscript there appears a word המינים (*minim*) meaning heretics.

[...] Our rabbis explained it [with regard] to the king Messiah, but it is a just matter to interpret it [with regard] to David himself, to refute [claims] of others.

Commentary on Ps 45:8³²:

משחך וגו שמן ששון כל לשון גדולה נופל עליה
ל משיחת שמן כדת המלכים

Any expression (literally speech, language) referring to greatness incurs anointment with oil, according to the custom of kings

Commentary on Ps 105:15³³:

אל תגעו במשיחי בגדולי כל משיחי לשון שררה וגדלה

[...] My great ones³⁴. Each anointed is the speech (word, tongue) of political power and grandeur

Who are “the others” from the commentary on Ps 21:2? In those examples, polemics with Christian interpretation, i.e., the messianic interpretation, can be implicit. In Ps 45:8 and 105:15 Rashi undoubtedly expands the meaning of the word *anointing*. In the commentary to Ps 84:10³⁵ there again appears an idea of David as an anointed king:

רוד משיחך והסתכל בחסדיו ובטרתו אשר טרח וייגע על בנינו

[...] Look at the face of David, Your anointed one, and notice his works

Rashi’s commentary on the Book of Psalms is particularly noteworthy for two reasons (Gruber 2004, 135). It is well known that the Book of Tehillim, by its liturgical use in the Synagogue and in the church, is a very “good element” meeting Jews and Christians. Rashi was aware of the role of the Psalter in the Church, he probably knew the Fathers of the Church in original and he could read their writings in Latin. And even if he did not read them in the original³⁶, it is possible to find in his texts references precisely addressing the messianic fragments in Psalms and in the Book of Isaiah. As Gruber stresses, the interests in messianic texts of both Christians and Rashi went beyond purely historical interest. Rashi addressed

Cf. מקראות גדולות הכתר מהדורת יסוד חדשה ההדרה מדעית על-פי כתבי יד עתיקים מנחם כהן רמת גן תשס"ג.

³² NAU (in this edition 45:7): You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

³³ NAU: “Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm”.

³⁴ Rashi uses this title with reference to his readers.

³⁵ NAU: See our shield, God, And look at the face of Your anointed.

³⁶ This cannot be stated with certainty.

his commentaries to three groups of people, and, alongside two groups of Jews, one can also list Christian scholars studying the Bible, teachers and students who desired to discover (Gruber 2004, 135) the Jewish roots of their faith preserved in various traditions of the Hebrew Tanakh exegesis. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that in his commentary on some of the texts of the Book of Isaiah, which were interpreted according to the earlier Jewish tradition³⁷ in a messianic way, Rashi seems to take a step back, as he interprets the text unambiguously as Davidic or through the “collective interpretation”. In this way he enters, *implicite*, into the polemics with Christians³⁸.

As we read in the commentary on Isa 53:3³⁹:

היה, כן דרך הנביא הזה מזכיר כל ישראל כאיש אחד
[...] This is the way the prophet always speaks
about all the people of Israel as one man

3. REFERENCES TO CONTEMPORARY HISTORICAL EVENTS

It would seem, however, that certain texts include some hints, implicit or explicit, which may relate to a historical perspective.

Commentary on Isa 42:3⁴⁰:

מלך שלהם לא יגזול את הדלים
ולא ירכז את העניים ואת החלשים
Your king will not rob the poor
He will not ruin the weak and the poor

This fragment may constitute a reference to feudal princes⁴¹ (or even to a specific person) whose behavior was widely known. The context implies that Rashi updates his commentary on Isa 42:3, referring to a specific situation known to him from personal experience or by hearsay. He is well known for his active participation in the life of his community.

³⁷ E.g., some targums.

³⁸ S. Bazyliński's suggestion during a consultation in Rome. Unfortunately, the author of this article was unable to research this thread adequately, so the topic is here only indicated and it may become the subject of further studies.

³⁹ NAU: He was disgraced and rejected by people, afflicted by disease and suffering,

⁴⁰ ¹¹k^e someone, in front of whom people cover up their faces. He was scorned and we ignored him.

⁴⁰ NAU: A bent reed He will not break off, And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴¹ For more, see 321 רש"י והמציאות ההיסטורית של זמנו, תרביץ ב"תשי עמ' 321

In the commentary on Isa 52:14⁴², where the disfigured appearance of the Servant of YHWH⁴³ is depicted, we read:

ראו מה תארם השוך משאר בני אדם
 כן כאשר אנחנו רואים בעינינו

See how their actions are different from those of other people,
 as we see it today (literally before our eyes)

Commentary on Ps 22:19⁴⁴:

ועל לבושי יפילו גורל בוזים את נכסי
 [...] They are ravaging our property.

Commenting on certain Psalms, Rashi may refer to the events of 856. In the commentary on Ps 140:10 he alludes to the events of that time and draws a comparison of the oppression of the Jews by the phrase: they surrounded me. The dramaturgy is amplified by the word מצאתי (I have found) and a reference to עשו (Esau), whose figure may be used by Rashi metaphorically to describe Rome:

חבורת חשבון גדודי עשו האומרים להסב אותי
 מעליך עמל שפתיהם יכסם מצאתי

[...] Esau's battalions planned to get me away from you
 what comes out of their words... [I found]

It may be also the case of the commentary on Ps 69:5, though it cannot be said with certainty⁴⁵.

Commentary on Isa 25:2⁴⁶:

כי שמת - הר שקר מעיר לגל
 ארמון זרים מעיר - מעון שעשו בעירך שהחריבוה
 תתן ארמונותיה חורבן אשר לעולם לא יבנה

⁴² NAU: Just as many were appalled at you, My people, So His appearance was marred beyond that of a man, And His form beyond the sons of mankind.

⁴³ It should be emphasized that Rashi interprets here the figure of the Servant of YHWH unequivocally collectively.

⁴⁴ NAU: They divide my garments among them, And they cast lots for my clothing.

⁴⁵

אויבי שקר שונאים אותי על שקר
 שאין אני רודף אחר שקר שלהם לחפז טעותם
 אז אשיב כשהם נאספים עלי אני משחד אותם בממון
 מה שלא גזלתי מהם

⁴⁶ NAU: For You have turned a city into a heap, A fortified city into a ruin; A palace of strangers is no longer a city,

It will never be rebuilt.

[You destroyed] Mount Seir because you made a pile of the city
 [City alien stronghold] tear down their palace, that they made in your city
 Ruin their palaces that will never (literally forever) be rebuilt

On the one hand, it could be supposed⁴⁷ that by writing those words Rashi wanted to strengthen the position of crusaders in Jerusalem. He writes about גוי צדיק ('righteous goy') who, by capturing Jerusalem, stopped the onslaught of the infidels. On the other hand, he argues with Christian princes by explaining to the Jews that their Messiah, when He comes, will not resemble in any way those mentioned above.

Several Rashi's texts and commentaries seem to be ambivalent. In the text concerning Exod 23:13 for example he warns against entering a partnership with *goyim*⁴⁸, as it may turn out that it will be necessary to swear by their gods⁴⁹, and yet everyday life in Troyes, trading between Jews and Christians implied and demanded cooperation.

Commenting on Isa 26:10 Rashi employs a strong image in which he juxtaposes Israel, people to whom Torah was given and who worship God, with gentiles and their customs⁵⁰. Does he have Christians in mind as well?

Finally, one last interesting thread in the oeuvre of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki. As I. Baer points out, Rashi writes concerning current events (maybe pogroms?) in a spirit of forgiveness and considers adverse actions of Christians as advancing the return of the Jews to the path of the Torah⁵¹. Among scholarly texts no further evidence has been found that would attest this thesis, but if deemed true, it helps to realize what kind of a person Rashi was and how seriously he took matters of interpretation and meaning of the Scripture.

CONCLUSIONS

This study intended to outline the problem and it constitutes an introduction to further study on the subject. Perhaps reaching other manuscripts would change some of the findings of this paper. At the current stage of research, a number of hypotheses, preceded by a thorough investigation, are put forward.

After the exegesis of selected fragments of Rashi's commentaries, following conclusions can be made:

⁴⁷ I. Baer contends it (331 תשי"ב ב תרבי"ג של זמנו" תרבי"ג ב תשי"ב), when he writes:

ואפשר שכוונתו היא לתחזקת הצלבנים בירושלים.

⁴⁸ It can also be assumed that, perhaps, when speaking of pagans, Rashi did not always mean Christians.

על פיד שלא תעשה שותפות עם נכרי וישבע לך.

⁴⁹ יוחן קסע בארץ נכוחות ירושלים ובית המקדש יעול לשלול ולבזו ולהשחית: כל יראה גאות ה לא חשב (אויב א):. צעניו גלך וגאונך וכל יראה ל רגילות ותמידות לא ראה לא חשב כמו ככה יעשה אויב (אויב א)

⁵¹ Cf. 324 עמ' ב תשי"ב עמ' 324

1. Rashi interprets the Scripture as a rabbi – for him this is of utmost importance. Only by means of this activity he interacts with others. Rashi does not consider the Scripture as an *instrumentum* in service of the dispute or polemics with those who “believe otherwise”. If it comes to a dispute with others⁵², it is an outcome of his inference, not a presumption *a priori* for reading and interpreting the Scripture. Above all he wants to be a Bible commentator and also encourages others to aim at being the best in this field: “Make sure your answers are like the best wine”.

2. From the examination of the writings of Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki (those analyzed in this study) it cannot be concluded that he argued with Christianity and Christians, though it cannot be excluded that his polemics are implicit when he speaks about **מינים** (*minim*)⁵³.

3. However, some isolated occurrences of his use of the word **מינים** (*minim*) had been noted in the works of scholars who had access to other manuscripts. Thus, this subject cannot be further elaborated here. In any case, even if those reviews of Rashi’s texts are authentic, the issue concerning what he meant by this term remains open to discussion.

4. The word **זרים** (*zeraim*) occurs more often. It signifies “foreigners” and does not have a negative connotation, but a neutral one⁵⁴. Or yet the word **אחרים** (*aharim*) meaning “others” – of a neutral connotation as well.

5. It would seem that often the understanding of his texts as anti-Christian polemics is added and built-up later by Rashi’s successors⁵⁵ (Berlin and Grossman 2011, 603) and Jewish⁵⁶ commentators of his writings. Thus, contemporary commentators writing about Rashi often conclude by stating that Rashi does not say it openly (cf. Kamin 1983-1984, XII).

6. For example, Rashi’s attitude to the Crusades is described on the basis of the legend of his meeting with Gottfried of Bouillon⁵⁷, Duke of Lower Lorraine and conqueror of Jerusalem (it may be based on historical events, but there is no evidence for that; and in the texts of the commentaries no reference that would strengthen this hypothesis can be found).

⁵² He discusses with an earlier tradition (e.g., midrash). He can even make changes to the Masorah, which also testifies to the fact that the Masoretic text was not treated as a constant and did not have the status that some Bible scholars attribute to it today. The process of “canonization” of the Hebrew Bible was in many cases very different from the status of the Old Testament canon in Christianity. For more, see Walewski (2011).

⁵³ For more on the interpretation problems of this term and research on this subject, see Wróbel (2006, 103).

⁵⁴ Consultation with Prof. A. Segal, an archeologist from Israel.

⁵⁵ It would be worthwhile examining the tradition and interpretation provided by the Tosephists, however, we decided not to develop this research thread due to the later and different character of *tosaphot* remarks than the texts of Rashi himself. Cf. Berlin and Grossman (2011, 603).

⁵⁶ And today, by some Christian commentators of rabbinical writings.

⁵⁷ *Remarquable étude de Martin Aurell sur la légende du Roi Arthur entre les VI^e et XIV^e ème...* Qui était vraiment Godefroy de Bouillon (Godfrey of Bouillon); see more Lobet (1943).

It is quite probable that Rashi explains the Hebrew Bible in a spirit we do not understand⁵⁸ or we do not want to grasp. He conveys his own interpretation, without any polemical intent. It is not certain that whenever Rashi speaks of *מינים* (*minim*)⁵⁹, he means Christians. The cultural and social context of the city of Troyes, where Rashi lives, promotes good contacts with Christian neighbors⁶⁰. This study states that Rashi does not employ a polemical tone⁶¹, because he wants to also encourage Christians to read Hebrew Scriptures, to discover Jewish roots of their faith (likewise Gruber 2004, 135). E. Shereshevsky writes that, in general, the bond between Jews and Christians in Troyes was good and friendly (Shereshevsky 1970-1971, 86). There is no reason to think otherwise. At least at the present stage of this research.

REFERENCES:

- בער יצחק "רש"י והמציאות ההיסטורית של זמנו" תרביץ ב תשי עמ'.
- Bazyliński, Stanisław. 2006. *A Guide to biblical Research. Introductory Notes* (Subsidia Biblica 28), Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico.
- Berlin, Adele and Maxine Grossman. 2011². "Rashi," In *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Briks, Piotr. 1999². *Podręczny słownik hebrajsko-polski i aramejsko-polski Starego Testamentu* (Prymasowska Seria Biblijna [12]). Warszawa: Oficyna wydawnicza "Vocatio".
- גרוסמן, אברהם, הפולמוס היהודי-נוצרי והפרשנות היהודית למקרא, עמ'.
- Gruber, Mayer I. 2004. *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms*, Leiden–Boston: Brill.
- Hailperin, Herman. 1963. *Rashi and the Christian Scholars*. Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania.
- Harris, Robert A. 2008. "Rashi and the 'Messianic' Psalms." In *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism Presented to Shalom M. Paul on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, edited by Chaim Cohen et al., 845-862. Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns.
- Himmelfarb, Lea. 2008. "The Link Between the Jewish-Christian Polemic and the Masorah Notes in Rashi's Bible Commentary." *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59/2: 187-293.

⁵⁸ Or we should accept at least the statement of H. Hailperin (1963, 31) that we have no possibility to name his "apology". Rashi goes beyond simple interpretive schemas. The apparent questions that concern us today and our concepts of reading texts, unfortunately not free of the "sin" of anachronism (especially in the case of Christian-Judaic dialogue), may have been alien to Rashi's mentality.

⁵⁹ Insofar as these texts are authentic, as emphasized above, they were not found in the manuscripts during the query for this study.

⁶⁰ For more on the character of the city and everyday life, see Shereshevsky (1982, 60n) and Hailperin (1963, 17).

⁶¹ Which does not mean that he refrains from engaging into a specific "silent" polemics, so that the recipients of his writings would have no doubts that the Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible is wrong (however, this cannot be stated with certainty).

- Jastrow, Marcus. 1996. ספר מלים, *Dictionary of the Targumim Babli, Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature*, vol. 1-2, New York: The Judaica Press.
- Kamin, Sarah. 1980. *Rashi's Exegetical Categorization in Respect to the Distinction Between Peshat and Derash*. Jerusalem: Magnes.
- Kamin, Sarah. 1983-1984. "Rashi's Commentary on the Song of Songs and Jewish-Christian Polemic." *Shnaton* 7-8: X.
- Kantrowitz, David. 1995. *Judaic Classics Library* (electronic resource), Chicago IL: Davka Corporation, ed. CD-Rom.
- Liber, Maurice. 1970. *Rashi*. Translated by Adele Szold. New York: Hermon Press.
- Lipiński, Edward. 2012. "Pandera & Stada and Jehoshua bar Perahya." *Estetyka i Krytyka* 27/3: 51-66.
- Lobet, Marcel. 1943. *Godefroid de Bouillon: Essai de Biographie Antilégendaire*. Brussels: Éditions Les Écrits.
- מקראות גדולות הכתר מהדורת יסוד חדשה ההדרה מדעית על-פי כתבי יד עתיקים מנחם כהן רמת גן תשס"ג.
- The New American Standard Bible with Codes*. 1995. La Habra CA: The Lockman Foundation.
- נביאים וכתובים עם פירוש רש"י ופי" יקר נקרא בשם מקראי קודש, כרך שמיני, ווארשא, תרל"ה.
- Shereshevsky, Esra. 1970-1971. "Rashi's and Christian interpretations." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 61/1: 76-86.
- Shereshevsky, Esra. 1982. *Rashi. The Man and His World*. New York: Sepher Hermon Press.
- Singer, Isaac. 1907. "Talmud Commentaries." In *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York-London.
- Tate, W. Randolph. 2006. "Midrash." In *Interpreting the Bible. A Handbook of Terms and Methods*. Peabody MA: Hendricson Publishers.
- תלמוד בבלי המכון הישראלי לפרסומים תלמודיים, ירושלים.
- תלמוד בבלי תרגום עברי ופרוש חדש, חלופי גרסאות ומראי-מקומות, ירושלים רז"ל.
- Toutou, Eleazar. 1990. "Rashi's Commentary on Genesis 1-6 in the Context of Judeo-Christian Controversy." *Hebrew Union College Annual* 160: 168-179.
- Walewski, Piotr. 2011. „Kanon Starego Testamentu.” In *Wstęp ogólny do Biblii* (Series Religiologica Pomeraniae 2), Rumia: Biblicum.
- Wróbel, Mirosław S. 2006. "Birkat Ha-Minim (מיניס) and the Process of Separation between Judaism and Christianity." *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 5/2: 88-103.
- Wróbel, Mirosław S. 2012. „Krytyka tekstologiczna i historyczna passusów Talmudu o Jezusie i chrześcijaństwie.” *Estetyka i Krytyka* 27/3: 15-50.
- Wróbel, Mirosław S. 2013. *Jezus i Jego wyznawcy w Talmudzie. Analiza tekstologiczna, historyczna i socjologiczna*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.
- זכרון יעקב המרכז לחינוך תורני, ש"ס.