

Rashi's Glosses *Belaaz*: Navigating Hebrew Scripture under Feudal Lanterns

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To Helen, on our golden anniversary

Abstract

Amid sporadic anti-Jewish violence whipped by a crusading frenzy, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki ("Rashi") composed a commentary on the Hebrew Bible that was destined to become a vast navigational aid for God's scriptural plan. Many of Rashi's glosses invited medieval Jews on a spiritual pilgrimage that would dispel their sense of subjugation to temporal Christian powers. From the advent of Christianity, Jewish communities increasingly steered a course between Jewish autonomy and welfare, on one hand, and accommodation of Christian and feudal strictures, on the other. Wondering whether the cataclysmic destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. signaled God's abandonment of his people, medieval Jews' scriptural interpretations intensified the themes of survival and internal social cohesion. To guide medieval Jewry through a middle ground between a characteristically triumphant scriptural landscape and the dispiriting Christian counterpart, Rashi frequently incorporated into his glosses French terms he transliterated into Hebrew characters. This incorporation of French was both purposeful and well-informed. As a minority community in Rashi's Troyes, Jews lived two distinct experiences: in one, they spoke vernacular French with Christian neighbors, while, in the other, they prayed and studied the Pentateuch and Prophets in Hebrew. In this setting, the *laazim* communicated to Jewish readers in a specialized language akin to a password or a special handshake. Yet the glosses, because they were enveloped in Hebrew commentaries and disguised in Hebrew letters, would have eluded French-speaking Christians who could not have identified fragments of their own language hiding in plain sight.

Keywords

Solomon ben Isaac – Rashi's French glosses – Jews in feudal society

I Prelude: Jewish Pawns Checked by Bishops and Crusading Knights

Amid sporadic anti-Jewish violence whipped by a crusading frenzy, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki ("Rashi") composed a commentary on the Hebrew Bible that was destined to become a vast navigational aid for God's scriptural plan. Besides illuminating the sacred narrative, many of Rashi's glosses invited medieval Jews on a spiritual pilgrimage that would dispel their sense of subjugation to temporal Christian powers. From the advent of Christianity, Jewish communities increasingly steered a course between Jewish autonomy and welfare, on one hand, and accommodation of Christian and feudal strictures, on the other. Wondering whether the cataclysmic destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. signaled God's abandonment of his people, medieval Jews' scriptural interpretations intensified the themes of survival and internal social cohesion. To allay Jews' anguish and enhance Jewish solidarity, rabbis identified assurances of the nation's welfare in a covenant in which the Jews pledged obedience to God's law in exchange for his protection of the nation and the promise of a homeland. The Jews were required to distinguish the scriptural covenant that embraced them from vassalic bonds that excluded them.

Celebrated in chivalric romances, Christian knights' bonds with their lords promised military service in exchange for the latter's allegiance. From about 1075, papal legates struck fear in Jewish communities by adopting Augustine's doctrine of just war and recruiting knights to destroy non-Christians or expel them from the holy land. In medieval Jewish memories, the principal trauma lay in church-promoted persecutions that began around 1096, when crusaders slaughtered Jews on both shores of the Rhine. If Rashi's evocations of God's covenant prodded medieval Jews to seek from their temporal rulers protection from sporadic violence, their quest was doomed. Far from acting as the Jews' protectors, the rulers regularly collaborated with crusaders in persecuting them as Christ's enemies.

To guide medieval Jewry through a middle ground between a characteristically triumphant scriptural landscape and this dispiriting Christian counterpart, Rashi frequently incorporated into his glosses French terms he had transliterated into Hebrew characters. This incorporation of French was both purposeful and well-informed. He systematically telegraphed his French by

locating beside it the Hebrew word *belaaz* [singular: *laaz*; plural: *laazim*]. In Rashi's glosses, *belaaz* signified "in French," though scholars originally designated as *belaaz* any Romance language in which a Jewish author composed his work. Like handrails that steady a passenger on a rocking ship, the signals enabled a reader to seize upon key French terms as he tackled the original Hebrew analyzed in the gloss. According to Raphael Levy, Rashi thought "one word [author: a *laaz*] in a living language clarified a difficult passage better than a long circumlocution in a dead language . . . hence he resorted to various vernaculars to illustrate complex passages, mainly to his native tongue as used in Troyes."¹

The lack of an autograph manuscript contributes to both the untrustworthy provenance of Rashi documents and scholarly debate about Rashi's purposes for his *laazim*. Though scriptural verses spoke clearly to a learned man like Rashi, his *laazim* likely helped unlettered readers grasp the semantic load of the original Hebrew. Rashi's Champenois readers must have welcomed the clues emitted by his French terms. A common characteristic among communities of wanderers, the practice of incorporating vernacular terms anticipated Judeo-Provençal and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), both written in Hebrew characters.

As a minority community in Rashi's Troyes, Jews lived two distinct experiences: in one, they spoke vernacular French with Christian neighbors, while, in the other, they prayed and studied the Pentateuch and Prophets in Hebrew. In common with Jewish communities elsewhere in Europe, Champenois Jews' worship and Hebrew study placed them in a minority in-group on the margins of Christendom. A combination of Hebrew and vernacular French made them a Francophone sub-group. The *laazim* communicated to Jewish readers in a specialized language akin to a password, a special handshake, and, in the internet age, a tweet. Champenois Jews likely appreciated in-jokes and witticisms communicated by the *laazim*. Yet the glosses, because they were enveloped in Hebrew commentaries and disguised in Hebrew letters, would have eluded French-speaking Christians who could not have identified fragments of their own language hiding in plain sight.

Initially sparking a reader's attention, the *laazim* under review punctuate Rashi's arguments; they contribute to thematic depictions, on one hand, of the glories of an idealized scriptural landscape in which the Jews were central figures, and, on the other hand, a hostile feudal framework that dolefully excluded them. Land tenure depended on military service, from which Jews

1 Raphael Levy, "Rashi's Contribution to the French Language," in *Jewish Quarterly Review New Series* 32, 71 (July, 1941), p. 73.

were excluded, because they could not swear oaths to lords on the Christian bible. Animating a resolute path-dependent narrative, the contrast of ancient victories with mostly contemporary defeats resonated in the familiar refrain, “how the mighty heroes have fallen!” According to an optimistic interpretation of this elegy, spoken by David about the Philistines’ defeat of Jonathan and Saul, the Jews had long triumphed, on the model of their escape from Egyptian bondage. Despite the Jewish fall that David lamented, they would regain divine sanctuary by keeping God’s law.

Rashi’s French glosses frequently yield pointillist evocations of Jewish longing for a divine shield against recurrent threats from their feudal and Christian surroundings. A psychological drama likely played out in his audience when, as seen below, the consecration of a priest in Exodus, resonating in a feudal vassal’s investiture, evoked a constellation of *laazim*. As the feudal ceremony fed Jewish anxiety, its scriptural counterpart evoked spiritual uplift. In their lachrymose moment, to use Salo Baron’s phrase, readers might yet dispel their gloom. Other *laazim* invited similar contrasts between the Jews’ epic past and their bewildering present. A promise of redemption lay in God’s sovereignty over creation and Jews’ stewardship over the Holy Land, while Christian rulers manipulated instruments of Jewish humiliation. Jews’ collective imagination likely distinguished their forefathers’ biblical councils from medieval “parlements” that excluded them. Even seemingly anodyne symbols such as biblical weapons of war and warriors’ garments reminded Rashi’s readers that their chattel status excluded them from the feudal hierarchy, while lords of Champagne moved them wherever they seemed commercially most advantageous. Rashi betrayed his perplexity in an almost relentless use of the French archaism “astordisson” (formless chaos, moral perturbation, dizziness, vertigo, bewilderment) and its derivatives (estordisant; estordizon).²

2 Rashi’s initial *laaz* in Genesis envelops his readers in perplexity. Translating “*tohu va-vohu*,” the primordial chaos and formlessness preceding creation, the term “*astordisson*” appears about twenty times throughout his commentary. See “Estordissons,” DECT Dictionnaire Electronique de Chretien de Troyes, vol. 3, p. 622. But *estordisons* frequently denoted a disorientation suffered by a knight when his assailant strikes him in the head. [“assome, etourdi par un coup violent.” [stunned by a violent blow] Après celui le conte anchauce,/ Por bien ferir la barre hauce, Qu’il li done tel esparree /De la barre qui fu quarree/Que la hache li chiet des mains,/Et fu si estordiz et vains. Que s’au mur ne se retenist,/N’eüst pié qui le sostenist.

[He attacks the count; to strike hard he raises a beam and deals him such a blow that the ax falls from his hands; he was so stunned that he had to lean against the wall because his feet would not have held him up.] *Cliges*, lines 2019–2026 DECT.

I.A *Methodological Issues*

1 Limitations of Rashi's Interpretive Method

Readers might ask whether our speculations about Rashi's glosses have respected his interpretive methods. He is remembered for emphasizing the plain meaning of a text (*p'shat*) over *d'rash*, which embraced broad exegesis and homiletics. As Rashi declared rather disarmingly, "I am only concerned with the literal meaning of the scriptures and with such aggadot as explain the biblical passages in a fitting manner."³ His "unambitious" program might nevertheless include schooling his readers in nuanced points of French grammar, such as the distinction between demonstratives such as "cet" [*hazeh*] and "celle" [*ke-negdo; ayver halaz*], 1 Sam. 14:1. Even *p'shat*, a shorthand for the obvious meaning of a Hebrew text under examination, *could* invite us to explore both the context in which the text occurs [*mashma*], and grammatical features of the text. But unlike *d'rash*, the spirit of *p'shat* does not authorize us to consult an entirely separate text.

P'shat limits the range of inquiry into Rashi's French expressions. Indeed, by resorting to a feudal lexicon, Rashi arguably defied the traditional method of *p'shat*. With an ironic twist, one might claim that the *laaz* constituted the *p'shat* of a verse. Rashi, in any case, confronted the limits of communication inherent in sticking exclusively to Hebrew. Though broader than *p'shat*, the range of *d'rash* likely would also have excluded legal lexicons and chivalric romances. But, as I hope to show, these sources constitute fertile terrain for identifying continuities with Rashi's French glosses.

2 Philological Approaches

Seemingly judging that *p'shat* and *d'rash* do not go far enough in analyzing Rashi's *laazim*, scholars have deployed an array of philological techniques⁴ to uncover clues to his medieval French lexicon. Scholars have sometimes imposed rather stringent standards upon the French texts; at other times, the techniques may border on exercises in free association, or "cognateness." The techniques have invited exploration for kindred sounds in Hebrew texts and French *laazim*, without regard for kindred meanings. Technically called paronomasia, the phenomenon is popularly recognized as punning. A clever

3 "Rashi (Rashi as Grammarian)," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 17, pp. 101–103.

4 According to Sarfatti, Rashi intended to show a linguistic kinship between Hebrew and French, e.g., verbs of complaint were reflexive; a collective noun was formed from the singular, the infinite absolute corresponded to the French participle or gerundive. In N.M. Waldman, *The Recent Study of Hebrew: A Survey of the Literature with Selected Bibliography* (Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, 1989), p. 175. Banitt identified an array of techniques suggesting that the Bible was studied by a translation method. Waldman, p. 174.

play upon words in a single language prompts in the interlocutor a wry smile, and an awkward pun a grimace; for example, a popular pun informs the Italian aphorism “traduttore traditore” (translator, traitor; “something is always lost in translation”).

According to Jonathan Weiser,⁵ Rashi’s *laazim* relied upon phonemic similarities between Hebrew and French, on the premise that all elements of the universe, including languages, originated in a single divine source. This view of the unity of sources prompted Rashi to discount the origins of French and Hebrew in different linguistic stocks. The *laazim*, for example, evoked the feudal hierarchy by glossing the Hebrew word for “region” as a *seigneurie* and made a pun of the Hebrew יְרִיב (*Berim; Bikrites*) with *bers*, an ancient Norman French designation for *seigneur*.

3 Illustration of Associative Technique: Beyond *Pshat* and *D’rash*
Weiser illustrated Rashi’s associative technique in a *laaz* accompanying God’s grant of the promised kingdom to the Jewish tribes:

to describe how a Hebrew root meaning “to lean” can refer to a small house attached to another larger house, Rashi offers *appendiz* (Num. 34:7). The French word illustrates how the name for one object can signify its general association with another object.⁶

As far as it goes, Weiser’s explanation seems unobjectionable. His argument also found support in the modern French term *appendice*, a designation for both the human anatomy and a book supplement. He seems to have overlooked medieval French lexicons, though, we argue, they would have been rich repositories for deciphering Rashi’s glosses *belaaaz*. The principal medieval definition of *appendeis* as a territorial dependency or appurtenance conveys the spirit of Rashi’s use of *appendiz*. As a human organ, *appendix* is understandably missing from medieval French databases.

According to the chapter of Numbers discussed by Weiser, God fulfills his scriptural covenant, a capital matter for diaspora Jews in precarious circumstances, by granting the Jewish tribes sovereignty over the territory of Canaan. In several senses the entire holy land was God’s dependency, described in Exodus as a treasured possession, while Israel is a kingdom of priests and a sacred nation (Exod. 19:5–6). First, God intended the Jewish tribes to become stewards of the holy land, not its owners. The tribes’ continued security and

5 Jonathan M. Weiser, “Translation as Interpretation: Rashi’s Use of French in His Commentary to the Torah,” in *Tradition*, vol. 29, no. 4 (Summer, 1995), p. 35.

6 Weiser, p. 37.

enjoyment of the protectorate depended upon fulfilling God's commandments. Second, all the discrete regions of Canaan were God's dependencies; as God's protégés, the Israelites were collectively destined to enjoy a territory that would be subdivided among the various tribes. In a third sense, the twelve tribes of Israel were mutually dependent, bound in a sacred political alliance of mutual aid and protection that required their concerted action whenever any member tribe suffered an attack.⁷ Although the scriptural grant of the holy land lacks indications of longitude and latitude characteristic of an engineer's survey, its terms otherwise recall a deed of land whose form and language have changed little over centuries. In twelve verses, God identifies land masses, natural boundaries, frontiers, adjacent kingdoms, water bodies, and islands (*insel*) linked as dependencies by directional turnings and inflections. Rashi would likely have recognized Chretien de Troyes's use of *apant* as "dependency" in his romance, *Yvain*:

S'ancontre aus vos poez desfandre,/Et aus endues vaincre et ocirre,
Ma fille et s'enors vos desirre //et de cest chastel vos atant/L'enors et
quanqu'il i *apant*.⁸

Supporting Weiser's reading, *le Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du XI^e au XV^e siècle* defines *apendeis* as "un bâtiment dont le toit en pente d'un seul cote *append* ou tient au mur contre lequel il est appuyé" [italics added]. This meaning of *appendise* informed the account of King Solomon's construction of the temple: "... against the wall of the house he built a side-structure round about, against the walls of the house round about, both of the temple and of the sanctuary; and he made side-chambers roundabout."⁹ However, for the sense of the word *apendis* in the text high-

7 The allied tribes were obligated to come to the aid of any one of the league that found itself in difficulty. Saul's battle with Nahash the Ammonite (1 Sam. 11) is a classic example of joint action taken by the league of twelve tribes acting "as one man, from Dan even to Beer-Sheba, with the land of Gilead" (Judg. 20:1; 1 Sam. 11:7). In one case, the tribes launched a unified action against one of their members, Benjamin, for a breach of the terms of the covenant (Judg. 20:7). Because of the sacred nature of the league, the wars of the tribes were considered "wars of the Lord" (Exod. 17:16; Num. 21:14). B. Oded and H. Freedman, "The Twelve Tribes," in *EJ*, vol. 20, pp. 137–140.

8 "If you can defend yourself against them, and conquer and slay them both, my daughter desires the honor (realm) and you as her lord, and the suzerainty of this honor (realm) and all its dependencies awaits you" (author's translation). Chretien de Troyes, *Yvain ou Le Chevalier au Lion*, lines 5466–5470 in *DECT*.

9 2 Kings 6:5. For other uses of *apendiz*, see Ezek. 40:7, 41:5.

lighted by Weiser, the medieval definitions “apartenance” (appurtenance) and “dependence” provide valuable guidance. Jewish lenders reportedly negotiated for security in church “appurtenances,” a derivation of “appertaining.” The term *apendisse* figured commonly in thirteenth-century land deeds: *Le muelin de Plankes et les apendisses del muelin* (the mill of Plankes and the dependencies of the mill); *don li fi di Linci et des apendises en mariage* (a marriage gift of the fief of Linci and its dependencies.)¹⁰ Characteristic identifications of estates, these granting clauses highlighted a nexus between an identifiable monument, adjacent lands, and perhaps minor outbuildings that served the principal tenements. The scriptural grant of the Holy Land likely had a kindred function for the reader.

4 Rashi's Moods Illuminated in the *Laazim*

Going beyond *p'shat* and *d'rash*, our interpretation of the term “appendise” has rested upon Jewry's deeply ingrained solidarity and impulse to survive. Without those characteristics, Rashi's project would have come to naught for Jewry. More generally, we have projected Rashi's supposed psychology on his *laazim*. On the assumption that Rashi did not face hostile circumstances with clinical detachment, we have used his *laazim* as talismans for his predictable moods—resignation, joy, despair—as he navigated scriptural materials and hostile surroundings. The *laazim* probably stirred the collective spirit of even those of Rashi's readers who gleaned little from his Hebrew commentary.

5 French Databases

A few remarks are in order regarding the medieval French databases used in our analysis. The standardization of the French lexicon and its spellings lay centuries beyond Rashi's era. Until the French revolution, a number of regional dialects prevailed among Frenchmen; as if to vindicate the aphorism that a language is a dialect with an army, the revolutionary French state adopted the langue *d'oui* as a national language. Long dominant in the south, Provençal endures today; written in Hebrew characters this language became Judeo-Provençal. In the north, Norman dialects prevailed. Even today, one

10 *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du ix^e au xv^e siècle [Complément]* [Paris; 1881–1902], vol. 1, p. 330 [hereinafter *Dictionnaire Godefroy*] Lexilogos at <http://micmap.org/dicfro/search/dictionnaire-godefroy/apendisse>. Medieval French deeds sometimes substituted *dependice* for *apendisse*. “Toutes les autres choses et dependices touchans l'estat de la mairie et eschevinages.” [“All the other things and dependencies touching the estate of the town hall and the tribunals.”] *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 2, p. 513.

hears Occitane in southern France, Basque on the Spanish frontier, Breton in Brittany, and Italianate dialects in Corsica. Furthermore, the French academy has dominated the evolution of the national language, including its selective exclusion of “non-Gallic” terms from other languages.¹¹ The academy’s dictionary elevated some expressions to prominence in the French lexicon and sought, sometimes unsuccessfully, to consign others to oblivion.¹²

A broad dispersion of Rashi’s commentaries among Jewish communities assured variations among transcriptions of copyists and scribes who worked in different languages. Different versions of Rashi’s commentaries are apt to reveal notable variations among common parts of speech. But there has been surprising consistency among feudal terms; for about two centuries after the Norman Conquest, even “exceptional” English laws largely rested upon a French and Norman legal lexicon. According to Merriam Webster’s Dictionary of Law:

Strictly speaking, Anglo-French—at least in its earlier stages, when it was still a living tongue—was simply one of several dialectal variants of medieval French; its sound system and grammar were strongly influenced by western and northern dialects, especially the speech of Normandy [Old North French].¹³

Norman and Anglo-French dictionaries are valuable guides to medieval French law terms. Well into the seventeenth century, Anglo-French still figured in English pleadings and doctrine. Medieval French poetry also displays more consistency than vernacular French, perhaps because the poetry, whether sung or spoken, depended upon consistent patterns of rhyme and meter. (Chretien de Troyes’s romances, as can be seen in our inquiry, were composed in strict meter and rhyming couplets.) I have cross-checked Rashi’s *laazim* against contemporary literary lexicons, such as that of Chretien de Troyes, as

11 With the *Loi Toubon* (full name: *law 94–665 of 4 August 1994 relating to usage of the French language*), the French government mandated the use of the French language in official government publications, all advertisements, all workplaces, commercial contracts, and government-financed schools. http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loi_Toubon. Last visited April 10, 2014.

12 For example, the French academy has excluded many English words originating in technology and supplied for them artificial French words (e.g., email has become *courriel*, *courier* + *electronique*). Colloquial French speakers have often frustrated the academy by nonetheless using the unapproved foreign language. *Mel*, for example, has entered French usage for email. “Internaut,” a Gallic invention, combines astronaut and internet.

13 *Merriam Webster’s Dictionary of Law* (Springfield, MA, 1996), p. xiii.

well as legal lexicons, because they are relatively more consistent and stable than lexicons of daily conversational French. For on-line dictionaries and lexicons of medieval French as well as five of Chretien de Troyes's romances: DECT. Dictionnaire Electronique de Chretien de Troyes, at <http://www.atilf.fr/dect/>. For a rich trove of medieval French dictionaries, I have also consulted Lexilogos, http://www.lexilogos.com/francais_dictionnaire_ancien.htm.

I have also consulted several collections of Rashi's *laazim*, including those found in the *Metsudah Chumash and Rashi Commentaries*; Moshe Katan, *Otzar ha-laazim* (in Hebrew, English, French; 1990); D.I. Gukovitzki, *Sefer Targum Halaaz* (1985); Yosef Greenberg, *Foreign Words in the Bible Commentary of Rashi [Laazay Rashi beTanach]* (Hebrew, English and French; 1980); and Mayer I. Gruber, *Rashi's Commentary on Psalms* (2008).

I.B Goals of Inquiry

Though medieval Jewry's collective memory was anchored in a narrative of divinely informed triumphs, the Jews' medieval insecurities arose largely from a millennium of exile and subjugation following the destruction of the second temple. Both Jewry's exclusion from feudal institutions and Christian animus toward Judaism reinforced their sense of humiliation. Jewish anxieties also intensified as the vanguard of a crusading army annihilated a corps of scholars and students in the Rhineland, or drove them into Rashi's academy in Troyes.¹⁴ Our principal goal is to discover ways in which Rashi's *laazim* alleviated medieval Jews' despondency in the face of persecution. Oscillating among lofty and mundane themes, Rashi's *laazim* sometimes recreate the glories of ancient Jewish history; at other times they evoke rewards promised at the end of days; still others likely reassured Rashi's readers of relief from their contemporary humiliation.

A *laaz* could be polyvalent in the sense that it concurrently evoked several historical moments, much as unleavened *seder matzah* concurrently symbolizes Jewish bondage, the hasty flight from Egypt and, as *afikoman*, the Jews' future salvation. Similarly polyvalent, the *eiphod* was described as a sacred garment worn by a Jewish priest, in token of his role as a scriptural guardian of the nation's spiritual life; translated as *porceint* in the *laaz* of Exod. 28:4, the apron likely jarred medieval readers: "The ladies of the nobility tie[d] on . . . the apron . . . when riding horses, thus made for the lower part of the body." Some years after Rashi's death, grandson and a celebrated Tosafist, Samuel b. Meir (Rashbam), evoked images of the nobility on parade. Reported Samuel,

14 Maurice Liber, *Rashi* (trans. Szold; Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1906), p. 68.

"It is the custom of princes to go for promenades and rides in the morning."¹⁵ By juxtaposing the biblical *cohen* with a feudal noble woman, Rashi implicitly contrasted an elite Jewish leader central to God's covenant with a figure alien and even hostile to Jews' spiritual lives. This rapid shift from the sacred to the profane likely signified for Rashi's medieval readers a debasement of the *eiphod* and thus, more generally, of Judaism. Lest it appear that we have exaggerated the shift, medieval Jews were generally forbidden to ride horseback.¹⁶ If, by chance, a Jew rode on horseback, he had to ride sidesaddle, like a woman.

II Rashi's Grasp of Feudal Institutions

To illuminate feudal hallmarks in Rashi's *laazim*, we explore lexicons of medieval French terminology and romances of the period. This section concerns badges of feudal relationships and practices such as bonds of allegiance and homage. We first explore parallels noted by Rashi between biblical regulation of priestly consecration, on one hand, and oaths of homage between feudal lords and vassals, on the other. We next trace *laazim* that identify feudal legal practices; note parallels between scriptural trustees and their feudal counterparts; and describe a ruler's consultation with his vassals and chieftains. Part III then explores literary sources for distinctively medieval terminology in Rashi's *laazim*. Notable in this lexicon are words connoting sanctuary and defense. These goals, though crucial in God's covenant, typically eluded medieval Jews across Christendom. Part IV concentrates on Jewish-Christian interactions in commerce, military campaigns, and metal artifacts. The *laazim*, frequently mirroring scriptural and medieval struggles of military heroes, could have propelled Jews resolutely to resist their persecutors. Into the background of the scriptural struggles, Rashi's glosses introduced mundane images evocative of the experiences of an urbanizing medieval Jewry as it sought political sanctuary in feudal Champagne.¹⁷

15 L. Rabinowitz, *The Social Life of the Jews of Northern France in the XII–XIV Centuries as Reflected in the Rabbinical Literature of the Period* (Goldston Press, London, 1938), p. 237. For Samuel's considerable scholarly achievements, see A. Grossman and I. Moses Ta-Shma, "Samuel ben Meir," in *EJ*, vol. 17, pp. 771–774, cited *supra*.

16 Yaron ben Naeh, *Jews in the Realm of the Sultans: Ottoman Jewish Society in the Seventeenth Century* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2008), p. 107.

17 Liber, *Rashi*, p. 20: "The Jews, although they attached themselves to the soil and tried to take root there, were essentially an urban population. [Their strength] resided in the fact that they were organized in communities... marked by intense solidarity and in which harmony and tranquility were assured by the rabbinical institutions."

Aryeh Grabois captured Rashi's aversion to his feudal environment: "Rashi was repulsed by the feudal world, which visited upon subjects violence, endemic war, and arbitrary exactions, especially on Jewish merchants.... Rashi would have disparaged feudal homage for its reliance upon oaths that Jewish tradition condemned as idolatry."¹⁸ But Rashi's bewilderment in the face of feudal persecutors did not deprive him of clear-eyed insights into the dominant Christian and feudal culture along the Rhine. Mistaking animus for ignorance, Maurice Liber, a Rashi biographer, doubted Rashi's familiarity with feudal culture; he wondered if Rashi's supposed unfamiliarity informed his haphazard explanation of biblical expressions in light of contemporary customs. For example, according to Liber:

Rashi *thinks he* explains [the gesture] of filling hands, a scriptural gesture signifying consecration of a cohen by comparing it with a feudal ceremony and discovering *in it something* analogous to the act of putting on gauntlets.... The authors of Rashi's time, paying little regard to historic setting, explained ancient texts by popular legends or by Christian or feudal customs.... One need not scruple to point out this defect in Rashi's knowledge. Like his compatriots he did not know the profane branches of learning. He was subject to the same limitations as nearly the entire body of clergy of his day.¹⁹ (Italics supplied)

I argue that Liber underestimated Rashi's knowledge of feudalism. Far from being uninitiated into feudalism, Rashi might have deliberately evoked feudal figures and practices to shape arguments against feudalism. He likely knew by reputation leading crusaders such as Godefroi de Bouillon, the first ruler of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.²⁰ Surely, as Grabois has argued, Rashi realized that Christians saw nobility in feudal pacts of allegiance and homage; but

18 Aryeh Grabois, "La société urbaine chrétienne dans la France septentrionale du XI^e siècle, vue à travers les Responsa de Rashi," in *Revue Historique*, vol. 296, fasc. 2 (600) (Octobre–Decembre, 1996), pp. 241–252, at 246.

19 Liber, *Rashi*, p. 81. Other scholars have disagreed with Liber's assessment of rabbinical knowledge of chivalry. See, for example, Rabinowitz, *The Social Life*, p. 237. According to Rabinowitz, medieval Jews of northern France had intimate knowledge of chivalric institutions and practices, as suggested by Samuel b. Meir's matter-of-fact testimony: "It is the custom of princes to go for promenades and rides in the morning." Rabinowitz, p. 67. Rashbam detailed the proper use of the sword, the construction of the strongbow, and the chivalric custom of throwing the gauntlet. Idem at p. 238.

20 Lucia Raspe, *Juedische Hagiographie im mittelalterlichen Aschkenaz* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2006), p. 201.

Rashi also recognized in feudal pacts a perversion of God's covenant with the Jewish tribes. Indeed, inspiration for this contrast pervaded Hebrew scripture and medieval French romances.

The Hebrew bible portrayed God as lord over creation and the Jewish tribes as stewards over living things. Talismanic acts of homage between Jews and between Jewish tribes and God recurred perhaps sixty times in the Hebrew Bible. In Gen. 33:10, for example, Jacob offered Esau gifts, asking him to accept "the homage of my hands."²¹ Rashi seems consciously to have led his readers to conceive the Jewish epic narrative in terms of God's covenant and, consequently, to recoil from ceremonies of feudal homage that distorted God's covenant.²² Against Liber's view, Rashi's feudal designations testified to his familiarity with his feudal surroundings and likely deepened his readers' bitterness as social outcasts.

II.A *Continuities and Discontinuities between Scriptural Institutions and Their Feudal Counterparts*

- 1 Feudal Investiture of *serjeant* by filling of hands (וּמְלֵאָתָא אֶת יָדָם); *Serjenterie* an analogue of Hebrew priesthood [וְלִכְהֻנָּה]; revestir, consecration of prelate.

In explaining *serjentry*, Rashi's gloss of Exod. 28:3 embraced a vision of feudal homage that fused a vassal's oath, a lord's protection, and his enjoyment of a tenement.²³ Rashi correctly linked these elements to "service," though an exclusively Christian service. Unlike feudal sergeants in service to a temporal ruler, and sergeants of crusader orders who administered vast patrimonies, medieval Jews owed their allegiance to a divine ruler, who in turn owed them protection in this life and redemption in the hereafter. By contrasting a feudal ceremony of homage with a *cohen's* scriptural consecration, Rashi reminded Jewish readers of God's covenant of protection. On Rashi's view, his *laaz* underscored the sacredness of the Jewish narrative and the spiritual distortion of its Christian counterpart.

21 Gen. 33:10: "... receive my present by my hands"

22 For references to feudal figures, see *supra*.

23 "Wherever the expression filling hands (*umilayta yadayim*) is used, it is a term for installation. When one embarks on something (i.e., a position) that he will occupy from that day on, it is referred to as filling of hands. In old French when a person is appointed to any position in government, the ruler puts in his hand a leather glove called *gant* ... and by that means he establishes him in that position. This transmission is called in old French *revestir* and that is the expression [filling the hand]." Exod. 28:41, *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos* [translated Avrohom Davis; E. & D. Scheinfeld Edition, 2006], p. 457.

According to Exod. 28:3,²⁴ God furthered his plan for a priestly kingdom by implementing his covenant with the Israelites. He had Moses instruct his most competent craftsmen to prepare Aaron's priestly garments for his consecration. According to Rashi's gloss, the word *kahano* לִי-לְכָהֵנוּ (*pontificat*) rested upon an idea of service enshrined in the medieval *laaz* "serjenterie." The transliterated term *sergeantry* סֶרְגֵּאנְטִי implied a word play upon *servientes*. Though Champenois Jews themselves could not have functioned as sergeants for feudal lords, they had probably dealt with such figures as seigneurial stewards, designated in Latin charters as *ministeriales*.²⁵

By the twelfth century, a sergeant was customarily enfeoffed in a tenement designated as a "sergeanty" (Latin: *serianteria*, *serillantia*). Rashi's transliterated *laaz* seems the nearest approximation of these Latin terms. Formally (though not substantively) resembling a biblical covenant that exchanged worship and obedience for God's protection and promise of a homeland, a ceremony of vassal homage envisioned a sergeant, in token of his service, promising his lord allegiance while kneeling before him and placing his hands (Rashi: יָדָיו וְכַלְאֵת אֶת יָדָיו)²⁶ into those of his seigneur.²⁷

The Jews of Troyes probably had witnessed ceremonies of vassal homage akin to an archetype described by Marc Bloch:

Imagine two men face to face; one wishing to serve, the other wishing or anxious to be served. The former puts his hands together, and places them, just joined, between the hands of the other man—a plain symbol of submission. . . . further emphasized by a kneeling posture; . . . the [sub-ordinate] became the man of mouth and hands.²⁸

Bloch's description echoed Rashi's comments on the scriptural investiture of a Hebrew *cohen*. According to Rashi,

in Old French, when a person is appointed to a position [in government] the ruler puts in his hand a leather glove (Rashi's French *belaaaz*: *gant*) by which he is invested with his functions. The expression "filling of hands"

24 "Speak to all who are wise in heart, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, and have them make Aaron's garments, to sanctify him to serve Me [as *kohein*] . . ." Exod. 28:3. *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, p. 429.

25 Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society* (translation L.A. Manyon; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1961), vol. 2, p. 337.

26 Exod. 28:41, Rashi gloss, *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, vol. 2, p. 457.

27 See Weiser.

28 Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 1, p. 145.

signaled investiture of a vassal or protégé who newly exercised an office. This act, called in medieval French *revestir* corresponds וַיִּמְלֵךְ to the biblical filling of hands.²⁹ (*Italics added*)

According to Godefroy's lexicon of medieval French, "*revestement*" designated a lord's duty toward a new feoffee of a tenement. Feudal custom designated as *vesteure*³⁰ relief payments a newly installed vassal owed the lord.³¹ Betokening a prelate's assumption of religious duties, the verb *revestir*³² reinforced Rashi's term for the consecration of a *cohen*. In describing the *cohen's* scripturally ordained robes, Rashi seems to have had in mind the dress of a medieval knight. To contrast Jewry's triumphant past with a dispiriting present, he highlighted the *cohen's* apron, as a symbol of energy mobilized for devotion to God [*porceint*,³³ *belaaaz*, to gird].³⁴ The garment reached the inductee's elbows (*laaz: codes*).³⁵ For the *cohen's* ceremonial headwear as a miter or a

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- 29 Exod. 28:41, *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, vol. 2, p. 457. See also "emplissage des mains," filling of hands, יָדָם אֶת וּמָלָאָהּ. יָדָם מְלֵוִי קָל. rendered in Hebrew as *mainvestir*; and denoting assumption of a sacred office, Exod. 32:29. In Judges 17:5, Micah consecrated one of his sons and inducted him as a priest. Reinforcing links between the act of filling hands and feudal investiture, Perceval's vassals are described as "ses hom liges fu de ses mains" ["his liege men were of his hands." *Perceval le Gallois, ou le Conte du Graal* (C. Potvin and Wauchier de Denain, eds., 1866); vol. 1, p. 302, line 18179.
- 30 The following passage suggests links between putting on a garment and enfeoffment or investiture of seisin: ... aus seigneurs foiaudaux, des quix les dites choses meuvent et sont tenues, en quelque maniere que ce soit, et aus quix les vesture et saisine en doit appartenir, que des dites choses il vestissent et saisissent le dit acheteur. [To the feudal lords of whom the said things are held, and to whom the vesture and seisin should belong, in order that the said things vest and are seised in the said purchaser.] In *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, 1330–1500] <http://atilf.atilf.fr/scripts/dmfX.exe>, s.v., vesture.
- 31 For links between investiture in a tenement and a newly installed vassal's payment of relief to the lord, see *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, [1330–1500] "veture"; "vesture."
- 32 *Revestir*: to invest or enfeoff a vassal in a fief or tenement. (...) S'avra ma suer ce que li siet De la part de mon heritage ; Vostre cors li doing en ostage Por ce que plus seüre an soit.— Revestez l'an tot orendroit, Fet li rois, et ele deveingne Vostre fame, et de vos la teingne (...). ["she will have the rightful part of my land, your body given in pledge so she will be secure; invest her with the land outright, said the king, and she will be your wife, and hold [her fief] of you."] Yvain 6430–6432, at DECT.
- 33 Exod. 28:3, *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, vol. 2, p. 431. Rashi's description of the apron recalls a monk's scapular, originally a work apron, the width of the shoulders, that reaches somewhere between the knees and the hem of the tunic. See Monastic Habit of St Benedict, osb.org/gen/habit. 2 Sam. 6:14 rendered a linen apron or tunic as *porceint*.
- 34 Exod. 28:4, in *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, vol. 2, p. 431.
- 35 Exod. 28:7–8 in *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos*, vol. 2, p. 436.

domed hat, Rashi supplied the *laaz coife*. In a medieval lexicon, the term *coife* also designated a protective coat of mail on a knight's helmet.³⁶ It had gold settings, קִטְשָׁבִי, for precious stones (French *belaaaz*: *chastons*).³⁷

2 Feudal Legal Practices

Anchored in ties of dependence³⁸ between lords and vassals, a feudal regime consisted of a military hierarchy of interlocking diads; each diad consisted of a vassal who had sworn an oath of homage in exchange for his lord's promise of protection. If an enemy threatened a lord or his realm, his vassals could be rapidly mobilized into a defensive force. Feudal narratives characteristically consisted of battles among armed warriors and noble commanders. Investiture of a new vassal was typically accompanied by his seisin of a tenement carved from the lord's *seigneurie* or his *royaume* (realm). A *laaz* of Jer. 46:25 designated as a *seigneurie* a district of Alexandria. In exchange for the vassal's service, the lord guaranteed the former's possession and promised to come to his defense. If a *trespasser* (Ps. 18:13: Rashi's *laaz* for piercing; as in "hailstones pierced (עָבְרוּ) the thick clouds") interfered with the vassal's possession of his tenement, the latter could institute action through a "*plaideur*"³⁹ (one who pleads in court, Rashi gloss *belaaaz* of Exod. 7:1). To commence a judicial action, the *plaideur* proceeded by *averrement*.⁴⁰ If the lord resisted a court order against him, then the vassal, in concert with other vassals, could bring a

36 Exod. 28:4: מִצְנֶפֶת, miter or conical hat; הַכֹּתֶרֶת; 2 Kings 25:17, crown, capitol.

37 *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française et de tous ses dialectes du ix^e au xve siècle. Complement* (Paris, 1881–1902), vol. 9, p. 61, "un *chaton* d'or pour ycelui fermail" (golden setting for this clasp).

38 The phrase "the growth of ties of dependence" figures in the subtitle of the first part of Marc Bloch's pioneering study, *Feudal Society*, cited *supra*. Personal dependence between a lord and his vassal was mirrored in medieval patterns of land distribution. A vassal did not own his tenement; instead he possessed his land as tenant only for as long as he fulfilled his personal obligations to his lord.

39 Some Rashi editions render the *laaz* as פְּרִידִי גֵר, translated as German *predigter* (preacher). Rashi *laaz*, Sefarim.fr, Exod. 7:1. In context, either *plaideur* or *predigter* would be reasonable. The *Metsudah Chumash/Rashi Shemos* renders the Hebrew as "spokesman" (*preidour*). The confusion between the two words arises because in French *prier* is "to beg" or "pray;" *plaider* is "to plead." As in American and English procedure, both *plaider* and *prier* occur in French procedure.

40 Is. 25:1: judicial evidence by witness testimony. "Nous volons *averer* qe nous sums seignurs de meisme la vile." *Dictionnaire de l'ancien langue française et de tous ses dialectes du ix^e au xv^e siècle* [*Complement*] Paris; 1881–1902) vol. 8, p. 253. "We wish to aver that we are lords of the same town."

distress or *distrain* against the lord's chattels.⁴¹ The dispute could be settled via reconciliation or compensation (*laaz: guerredonement*).⁴² The vassal could prove his right against a trespasser by force of arms, i.e., *derainement*.⁴³ As vindication of a "right" (*mishpat*: מִשְׁפָּט)⁴⁴ the term *desreinement* likely reminded Champenois Jews that the feudal tribunals denied them legal recourse.

3 Scriptural Trustees and Their Feudal Counterparts

Prefiguring feudal pacts of allegiance, scriptural bonds of trust and protection informed a number of Rashi's glosses. For example, entrustment, a motif associated with Adam's stewardship of creation (Gen. 2:15), resonated in Exod. 22:7: "If a man deliver unto his neighbor money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of [his] house; if the thief be found, he shall pay double." In Dan. 1:11, Daniel addressed a royal official [*meltzar*]; Rashi's *laaz* on this verse designated the *meltzar* as a *seneschal*, i.e., a steward of the king's household.⁴⁵ Rashi invoked the terms *commanderie* and *prevostie*, two quintessentially feudal archetypes

41 Ezek. 1:3. The essence of the *laaz distrain* is compulsion of an obligor. (Ps. 139:5, "Thou hast hemmed me in behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me.") Frequently, the constraint is symbolized in the hand alone, as in "the hand of the lord lay upon him." Distrain, or distress, a vassal's customary remedy against his lord if the latter failed to warrant the vassal's possession, involved seizing the lord's chattels and thereby paralyzing his estate's operation and subtenancies until he complied. Distrain was a collective right of all vassals of a lord; like the Israelite tribes, see n. 7, supra, a lord's vassals were bound by a pact of mutual assistance if any one of them were invaded or denied its rights. To put teeth into this remedy, customary regulation authorized the aggrieved vassal to call upon fellow vassals to join him in distrain against the lord. Notably, distrain and coercive remedies occur in several scriptural verses; see, e.g., Exod. 18:10.

42 Translated *ratzon*, רָצוֹן, from the root for will, Rashi's *laaz apaisement* [אֶפְיִימֶנְט] is also translated as amicable compounding, Lev. 22:19; Gen. 33:10; in a contractual setting, *Apaisement* implies a consensus ad idem or meeting of wills.

43 "li uns a l'autre dient et jurent/Que ce n'iert ja fet sans desrene/D'espee ou de lance de fresne;" "proving one's right by force of arms." "They swore this was not done without proof of right (*desrene; deraisne*) of sword or by lance of ash." *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française* [Godefroy], vol. 2, p. 522.

44 Is. 32:7: The instruments also of the churl are evil; he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, and the needy when he speaketh *right*.

45 Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 2, p. 340. On the seneschal's duties, see generally *les Assises de Jerusalem, Recueil des Ouvrages de Jurisprudence Composes dans le XIII^{eme} Siecle, dans les Royaume de Jerusalem et de Chypre*, ed. Beugnot, Livre de Jean d'Ibelin, pp. 407ff. According to the statutes of the crusader kingdom of Jerusalem, the seneschal, a royal deputy, decided on meals for the king and his court; was custodian of the royal scepter, collected rents from royal properties, and generally oversaw royal castles and fortresses.

of trusteeship and investiture. His gloss for Ps. 31:6, "I commend my spirit," translated "I commend" [אֶפְקֵד] as *commanderie*. At the conceptual foundation of this complex medieval institution lay entrustment of a benefice in favor of a high cleric; the *commanderie* gained popularity as military orders such as the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller sought to manage their burgeoning real estate patrimonies by commending large benefices to trusted brothers of the order.⁴⁶ Throughout Europe, especially around the Mediterranean basin, *commanderies* rapidly developed into both economic nerve centers for their surrounding communities and fortified hostels for pilgrims and crusaders. *Commanderies* traded extensively with urban and rural dwellers and contracted credit transactions with Jewish lenders, merchants, and crusaders. Once fully developed, the Hospitaller priory of Champagne had more than thirty *commanderies* in Champagne. As a vineyard owner, Rashi might have come into contact with early outposts in Troyes of the Hospitaller priory, whose main commerce lay in wine production and sale.⁴⁷ Rashi's gloss on Ps. 109:8 ("have another take his charge") translated the term "charge" into a characteristically medieval term "*prevostie*," a civil or judicial office in medieval French administration.⁴⁸ In Ezek. 44:11, Rashi rendered the Hebrew term "charge" (*pequdah*) as *comandie* and associated it with the theme of sanctuary. A broad range of feudal terms captured in Rashi's *laazim* evidences his keen

46 For background on the genesis and administration of the *commanderie* as a military-economic institution, see generally *La Commanderie: Institution des ordres militaires dans l'Occident medieval* [sous direction d'Anthony Luttrell et Leon Pressouyre 2002] [Paris; 2002, Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques]. During Rashi's lifetime, he likely witnessed early forms of *commanderies*; they reportedly began to emerge in large numbers about the time of the first crusades to render care and hospitality to pilgrims and crusaders. For *commanderies* in Champagne during the fifteenth century, see Jean-Marc Roger, "Les différents types de *commanderies* du prieuré de Champagne au xv^e siècle," in that volume.

47 Roger, p. 49. *Winos* (wine; vineyards) recurs in Rashi's *laazim*. See, e.g., Deut. 32:14: "Of the blood of the grape thou drankest foaming wine."

48 "Or tost, por Deu, messire Yvain, Movroiz vos enuit ou demain ? Feites le nos savoir, biax sire, . . . Que nos vos voldrons convoier; N'i avra *prevost* ne voier Qui volantiers ne vos convoit. (Yvain 604) DECT. [Do you, Sir Yvain, go tonight or tomorrow; let us know, kind sir . . . We would like to escort you there, there would be no provost who would not gladly escort you."] As seigneurial agents, *prevosts* frequently brought actions for tax collection and confiscation of assets, and litigation between a *commanderie* and a *prevost* was not unknown. For a dispute over penalties for thieves [*justicia latronum*], see Jean-Marie Carbasse, "Les *Commanderies*: aspects juridiques et institutionnels, in *La Commanderie*, pp. 22–23.

observation of contemporary feudal institutions, which deepened his readers' sense of social exclusion.

4 Liege Vassals' Deliberations with Their Lord

Rashi's use of the term *parlement* suggests his knowledge of a lord's ancient right to summon his liege vassals (1 Sam. 9:17, *laaz: chieftains*) for counsel on important issues such as war making and levying taxes needed to conduct campaigns. Evocations of summoning chieftains to a *parlement* could not have been lost upon medieval Jews who, as non-Christians, were excluded from feudal deliberations. Rashi's translation of "reports" [דְּבַת עָם] as *parlement* implied that the reports originated in deliberations by several figures.⁴⁹ In Ezek. 36:3 and Gen. 37:2, *laazim* characterize evil reports as *parlediz* ("speaktalk"). Rashi's gloss on Ps. 2:2 presented vassals' consultation as "porconsilient," from the Latin *Consilium*, also a designation of deliberations of church conclaves and canon lawyers.

III Thematic Continuities between Scripture and Chretien de Troyes's Romances

Until this point, our inquiry has explored mainly medieval law dictionaries for institutions and practices reflected in Rashi's *laazim*. These institutions loomed large in the Northern French lexicons of Chretien de Troyes's chivalric romances. Chretien's language reasonably reflects the discourse of educated Champenois. As Rashi lived about a century before Chretien de Troyes, he would never have read Chretien's poems. However, Rashi could have known from European folklore the chivalric exploits in the background of de Troyes's accounts. Our interest here lies less in details of de Troyes's narratives them-

49 *Laaz Summons* [of top leaders] at the head of a cavalcade of lords, vassals and officers (Ezek. 23:23). "Parlement" in Chretien de Troyes implied a ruler in consultation, as in "De vilenie ne d'enui Ne tienent parlemant ne plet" (of villainy nor chagrin/holding neither parlement nor pleading; Lancelot, lines 4590–4592). Here "parlement" implies a formal deliberative body, i.e., a ruler in council (in consilio). Yvain, le Chevalier au Lion, Lines 2038–2044 in DECT:

Et la dame ot son parlemant devant tenu a ses barons/Et dit: De ci nos en
Irons an cele sale ou ces genz sont/qui loe et conseillie m'ont Que mari a
Prendre m'otroient/Por le besoing que il I voient.

(and the dame held her parlement before her barons and said: "from here let us go into the room where these people are who have counseled me; about which husband I ought to take for the need that they see.")

selves than in the lexicon and motifs that celebrated chivalric conquest. This section presents an overview of resonances between Chretien's feudal themes and medieval Jewry's experience.

De Troyes's romances presented theophanies of God's plan in a chivalric framework. Particularly dispiriting for Rashi's readers were medieval narratives that vilified the Jews and distanced them from God. According to electronic databases I have consulted, for example, Chretien de Troyes's romances mentioned God over five hundred times as a champion of the faithful; an inspiration for noble conquests; and a source of protection, good fortune, and sound health. Chretien's *Perceval* celebrated the consecration of Christian knights as archetypal crusaders; and, importantly for our inquiry, the poem often evoked Christ's betrayal by a Jew.⁵⁰

Known in chivalric practice as "dubbing," a knight's consecration was patterned upon the investiture ceremony between lord and vassal, except that when a candidate for knighthood kneeled to swear his fealty, the lord bestowed a sword upon him or tapped his shoulder with a sword. An encomium in de Troyes's *Erec* linked God with Christian vassals and knights:

tuit present sa chevalerie,
n'i a chevalier qui ne die:
Dex, quel vasal, soz ciel n'a tel.⁵¹

Refining Marc Bloch's description of a ceremony of homage, de Troyes's *Perceval* memorialized a vassal's oath:

Ge sui vostre hom et vos mes sire:
De moi et de tot mon lignage
Vous rant ge ici vostre homage
Et vos desfi tot maintenant,

50 'i sacrefie l'an le cors Jesu Crist, la prophete sainte, Que *Giu* firent honte mainte (Pe 580)." Sacrificing the body of Jesus Christ, the saintly prophet, whom the Jews did much disgrace" *Perceval le Gallois*, vol. 1, line 1750. SLi fel *Giu* par lor anvie, Qu'an devroit tuer come chiens, Se firent max, et a nos biens, Qant il an la croiz le leverent (*Perceval* 6292–94) *Perceval le Gaillois* 205, vol. 1. The Jews in their wicked jealousy, [they ought to be killed like dogs] setting him high upon the cross.

51 "All praise [Erec's] knighthood; there is not a knight but who does not claim, 'God, what a vassal, there is none better.'" *Erec*, Chretien de Troyes, lines 1247–1249 at DECT, http://atilf.atilf.fr/scripts/DECT.exe?TEXTES_CONTINU.

Einz qu'a cestui desavenant
Fere an on ostel vos sofrisse.⁵²

Signifying a vassal in arms, the term *sergent* occurred over fifty times in romances of Chretien de Troyes. The following illustrative verses appeared in Chretien de Troyes's *Lancelot du Lac*:

Li rois maintenant i envoie,
Par son rëaume, ses messages,
*Sergen*z bien coneüz et sages,
Qui ont par tote la contree
De lui novele demandee. (Italics added)⁵³

III.A *Citadels, Garrisons, and Cures*

The theme of sanctuary, translated by Rashi's comment in Ezek. 45:4 (וּמִקְדָּשׁ שְׁקֵדָמָל) (וּמִקְדָּשׁ שְׁקֵדָמָל), resonated in both the Jews' scriptural covenant and Chretien's romances. In 2 Sam. 22:3, David addressed God, "my guardian and my shelter, my shield and my powerful savior, my rampart and refuge; who helps me against violence." In Gen. 15:1, God declared himself Abram's shield (מָגֵן). A *laaz* translated shelter and shield as *abrimment* (refuge).⁵⁴ Rashi rendered "dwelling" (Gen. 30:20: "now will my husband dwell with me") as *herbergerie*. אֶהְיֶה לְרִיבֵיךָ or abode. "Defense" in Is. 31:5 was rendered as the verb "esmouchier" (to slap or beat back).⁵⁵ In Gen. 41:40, God addressed Joseph: "by your command shall all my people be governed (organized) under you" (יִשָּׁק). Rashi captured the theme of safeguarding Jewish autonomy in the French term *garnison*, וְגָרְנִישׁוֹ

52 "I am your man and you my lord/for me and all my descendants/I here render you homage/and pledge you now/and hereafter my service in your host;" Perceval 5242–5247, in DECT, http://atilf.atilf.fr/scripts/DECT.exe?TEXTES_CONTINU;B.

53 "Now the king sent his messengers throughout his realm, sergeants (men-at-arms) well-knowing (knowledgeable) and wise, who newly inquired for him throughout the country." *Lancelot du Lac*, lines 5334–5228. DECT.

54 *Laaz*, Gen. 15:1. "Abriment" contemplates both lodging and guarantee. "La tres precieuse couronne, La tres digne, la tres honneste/que Jesus Christ ot en sa teste/si con Juis l'en abrierent/le jour qu'il le crucifierent" ["the very precious crown, very noble, very honest/that Jesus Christ had on his head/with Jews he lodged/the day that they crucified him"]; *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 1, p. 35. See also Is. 30:2: "to shelter" as "abrier."

55 "batter," *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 3, p. 500. A la tierce l'un et l'autre esmouchie fu si tres bien que leurs lances rompirent en leurs escusz" quoted from Guiart. "To the third one and the other struck so well that their lances broke on their shields."

(Gen. 41:40). As in modern French, the *laaz garnison* also designated *citadel* or *fortress*.

Images of garrisons and citadels punctuated a medieval rendition of the biblical account of the Assyrian King Sennacherib's attack upon Judea:

Quant Sennacherib vit que li temps de miesson aprochoit en Judee il vint en Judee a grant ost des Assyriens guasta tous les bles et les vignes et les oliviers; mais toutes voies en escaperent aucunes choses entre les pies des chevaux qui defouloient les *guarisons*.⁵⁶

In Chretien de Troyes's lexicon, the verb *garir*⁵⁷ contemplated an army mobilized to respond to an ally's forewarning of danger. *Garir* also summoned the image of a stronghold in which an army stored supplies and weapons for campaigns. In Godefroy's dictionary, *garison* denoted renewed health (*salut*; e.g., "Joie est guerrisons de tristesse;"⁵⁸ "...qui veut la guarison du mire, il luy convient tout son mal dire). Many of the evocations of refuge and welfare likely constituted bittersweet reminders to medieval Jews for whom personal security had become more promise than reality.

III.B *Images of God*

1 God as Dispenser of Justice

Translated as *justice* and *judgment* (Is. 28:17), the Hebrew term *mishpat* may have seemed polyvalent in the feudal context. The Pentateuch frequently portrayed the Israelites' God as a judge (Rashi's *laaz:Justicier*).⁵⁹ While Rashi's

56 "When Sennacherib saw that the time was approaching he came to Judea with a great force of Assyrians who laid waste to all the grain and vineyards and olive trees; but some things escaped nevertheless underneath the horse hooves that trampled the fortresses." *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 4, p. 231.

57 In DECT. "protéger; préserver; guerir; se défendre de quelqu'un. A variety of connotations of *garir* figured throughout de Troyes's romances. E.g., Mes j'ai tel foi et tel creance An Deu qu'il me *garra* par tot (Lancelot, line 3085: "But I have such faith and belief in God that he will protect me from everything.")

58 "Joy is the remedy for sadness." *Godefroy Dictionnaire*, p. 258. "Whoever wishes the cure of the doctor, ought to tell him all his ills." Godefroy's *Dictionnaire*. Lacurne, vol. 7, p. 388. In the following passage a word play on *garrison* makes its meaning ambiguous: "*En cele David revint en sa meson Tout droit en Belleem lui sa garnison/sa dame ensemble o lui en maine le saint bon.*" ["and David returned to his home, straight to Bethlehem, his sanctuary (healing), his wife together to saintly (or healthy) good."] *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 4, p. 231.

59 See, for example, 1 Sam. 2:10, Is. 5:16, Prov. 19:28.

commentaries praised God for impartial justice, Deuteronomy's regulation of judicial corruption also reminded readers of arbitrary injustice visited on them by feudal tribunals.⁶⁰ Deut. 16:19 enjoined judges to virtuous conduct of proceedings:

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons [in preference to others]; neither shalt thou take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Rashi denounced feudal justice both for denying a plaintiff a hearing when a lord was accused and for excusing the lord from judicial orders in the plaintiff's favor. Perhaps Rashi's readers found in his gloss on corrupt judicial behavior an antidote to arbitrary feudal justice. Even during the pleading stage, the judge is advised not to show himself too lenient toward one pleader or too severe toward the other, nor to let one of them remain standing while he invites the other to sit; for the former, observing that the judge has treated his rival more honorably, will lose his means of expressing his claims firmly (Num. 11:29; Deut. 29:19).

2 God a Prepossessing Champion (Exod. 20:5)

Medieval Jews yearned for protection from their "jealous" God. This English anthropomorphism fails fully to convey the image of a prepossessing champion who asserted sovereignty over his creation. Rashi's characteristic *laaz anprenement* (Deut. 4:24) routinely reassured his readers of God's role as a jealous champion. Chivalric medieval romances spoke often about a "Chevalier sage et empernant."⁶¹ Rashi used French terms besides *anprenement* to depict God as a zealous defender of his followers. For example, in Exod. 9:17, God harangued the Egyptians: "you still oppress my people" (i.e., you continue to hobble my people's feet).⁶² Deriving from the medieval French *chalchier* (calcar), the transliterated term signified a neatly hewn path. The term appeared in Chretien's Yvain:

60 Recoiling at the arbitrariness of seigneurial courts, Rashi denounced the confiscations of judges who behaved as "potentates." He also decried their arbitrary exaction of taxes that ruined Jewish merchants. Aryeh Grabois, *supra* n. 18, pp. 242–244.

61 A knight wise and bold. *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 3, p. 71. Deut. 4:24: God as a devouring fire. <http://micmap.org/dicfro/search/dictionnaire-godefroy/empernant>.

62 "Tu persistes a fouler les pieds de mon peuple." "You are blocking their path, hindering their departure."

Et ele [la pucele] erra droit a la voiz
Tant qu'ele vint a une croiz
Qui sor la *chauciee* ert a destre.⁶³

The meaning of *chauciee* has endured in the modern French *chaussee* (walkway).⁶⁴

Prefiguring invincible champions depicted in Chretien de Troyes's romances, several of Rashi's French glosses projected the nature of both divine and human leadership. Deut. 32:36 portrayed valiant soldiers under a leader who maintained them in formation ("maintained," שטארקאופהאלטן) before attacking an enemy. When Samuel saw Saul, God declared that "this man would "reign over my people ("regnera," *desetenir*, *detenir*) (1 Sam. 9:17). 1 Sam. 3:12 described God as persistently and thoroughly (*comencant et esplayant*) eradicating Eli's family for iniquity. The term *esplayant* likely derived from an Anglo-Norman root for *exploit* (*espleet*).⁶⁵ Other evocations of divine protection and bounty reassured Rashi's readers of God's benevolence. In Deut. 33:25, Rashi's gloss spoke at length of Israel's promised abundance; the land would exchange its bountiful fruits for other countries' precious metals. Transliterated in *laaz*: *escorlant*,⁶⁶ the French term is elusive. It may be *escordement*, according to Godefroy's dictionary, meaning accord, concord, or perhaps Anglo-Norman for "heartily" or "fervently."⁶⁷

63 Lines 4861–4863. Yvain ou le Chevalier au Lion. ("She made her way directly toward the voice until she came to a cross along the right side of the path.") DECT.

64 Partie d'une route ameenagee pour la circulation. [Part of a route managed for traffic circulation]. <http://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/chaussee/15005?q=chaussee#14872>.

65 *Anglo-Norman Dictionnaire*, <http://www.anglo-norman.net/gate/> [set le grant espleyt] *Rom* 15 249; Li vaslet s'en va, Gui remaint, Ki mult ad recoilli grant espleit *Gui War* 964 (the valet departs, Gui remains, who achieved great exploits).

66 Rashi rendered the term "had sold" in the *laaz* "delivrer" דליבר. Deut. 32:30:
Si leur protecteur ne les eut vendus . . . si l'Eternel ne les eut livres. (If their protector had not sold them, if the eternal had not delivered them).

67 *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 3, p. 425 ["et Deu priet escordement"]. Anglo Norman Dictionary.

IV Jewish and Christian Interactions

Champenois Jewry, like counterpart communities across medieval Christendom, had concluded with feudal officialdom a bargain that exchanged compliance with official demands for autonomous communal administration. This autonomy entailed Jewish regulation of marriages and divorces, wills, and an array of financial transactions. In matters of taxation and tolls, both Christian and Jewish subjects risked a temporal prince's reprisals if they flouted his rule and trifled with his officers. Champenois merchants figured in a quickening commerce of fairs and markets; in recognition of their economic importance for the Jewish traders, rabbinic synods were frequently convened in Champagne to coincide with the dates of the fairs.⁶⁸ Burgeoning trade also seems to have trumped bans on trade during Christian festivals such as St. John's day.⁶⁹

A Jewish merchant, like his Christian counterparts, had to respect standards for weights such as *centeniers*,⁷⁰ measures, and currencies. A *laaz* on Ezek. 45:12 rendered a percentage formula as *lo cent*. A *laaz* for Ezek. 45:14 translated the Hebrew for "ten measures" as *diz mesures*. In Ezekiel Rashi rendered the *homer*, a biblical grain measure, with an ancient French term, "muid." Jewish merchants surely would have recognized the *laaz bargain* in Rashi's gloss on Hos 3:2, "I bought her for fifteen pieces of silver and a *homer* of barley . . ."

IV.A *Rashi's Responsa Reflecting Jewish Transactions with Feudal Actors*

Without explicitly contrasting biblical and feudal experiences, Rashi's *laazim* frequently suggested keen observation of Christian actors who interacted with the Jewish community. In Rashi's responsa, Irving Agus identified unusual examples of Jewish feudal lords who held fiefs. In an isolated case, reported Agus, the Jewish lord dressed and acted a seigneur's part, likely had a retinue, and passed freely at toll gates.⁷¹ Rashi's responsa sometimes illustrated entanglements of Jewish lenders at the margins of the feudal framework. These entanglements typically arose from pledges of successive monetary obliga-

68 Rabinowitz, pp. 23, 44–45. See generally Wm. Kibler and Grover Zinn, eds., *Medieval France: An Encyclopedia* (1995), pp. 639–640. For a classical legal study of Champagne's fairs and markets, see P. Huvelin, *Essai historique sur le droit des marches et des foires* (Paris 1897).

69 Rabinowitz, p. 23.

70 For Rashi's *laaz Centeniers*, or hundred weights, see Gen. 23:16.

71 Irving Agus, *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe* (1965), vol. 1, pp. 83–84.

tions granted to secure advances made by Jewish lenders.⁷² Though we cannot know about enforcement of Rashi's opinions, they nevertheless provide information about all manner of loans and pledges among both Jewish and Gentile parties.

1 Collateral Security

Pledged successive obligations often involved tithes owed to church orders. In principle, church doctrine sought to exempt tithes from the category of loan security on the basis that these were spiritual assets akin to church relics and sacred vessels. But with the passage of time, church tithes came to be pledged and sold like commodities,⁷³ and even religious houses were found pledging their rights in tithes. As tithes entered commerce, Rashi confronted disputes in which Jewish lenders seemed to possess feudal incidents and spiritual assets. Ultimately, Jewish creditors could legally acquire these assets in pledge and foreclose them, even in competition against religious orders and feudal lords. The latter might resist a Jewish lender's claim on the basis that a Jew had no right to feudal incidents, and the former that as spiritual property the asset could not be lawfully pledged. Rashi correctly identified the tensions among these claims and their roles in the feudal framework.

About a dispute over a tithe pledged to a Jewish lender, Rashi opined, "B had no right to the land itself [author: because he could not hold land in the feudal hierarchy, or because the agreed collateral did not include the fee]; B bought that part of produce that Christians donate to their deity; the recipient has no right to the land, merely to the produce."⁷⁴ At the peak of its imperial ambitions, as reflected in its zealous crusading enterprise, the church jealously guarded its spiritualities and would have opposed Rashi's explanation on the theory that the church had a tacit lien on all tithes. Churchmen surely would have disapproved subinfeudating tithes, especially in favor of a Jewish lender, who in principle was outside the feudal hierarchy. But if the church enjoyed a tacit lien for tithes that could float over all tenements, there was no realistic limit to church priority in security, and a landed vassal would lose his capacity to borrow on his estate even to finance his crusade. Lacking jurisdiction over the church, Rashi's pragmatic familiarity with church doctrine stemmed from a need for doctrinal soundness. But equally important, his opinion was

72 Henri Pirenne, *Economic and Social History of Medieval Europe* [trans. E. Clegg; 1936], p. 66. For an extensive inquiry into tithes as commercial objects, see *Questions Intéressantes sur les dîmes inféodées appartenantes aux seigneurs laïques*, pp. 45–65.

73 Pirenne, p. 66.

74 Agus, p. 410, n. 92.

consistent with commercial realities for debtors, including crusaders and church orders. Rashi's analysis had much to recommend it even at the time he rendered it. In result, if not analysis, his opinion on the pledged tithe anticipated post-revolutionary canon law doctrine that reflected the state's curbs upon church claims.

2 Further Examples of Christian-Jewish Interaction

In a responsum suggesting an unusual Jewish-Christian interaction, Rashi denied a Jewish woman's request to accompany her Christian mistress on horseback on the fast of Esther, even if she fasted the next day. In another dispute, a Jewish lender distrained on a non-Jewish debtor's bake-house. In a gloss on Exod. 12:11 he seems consciously to have distinguished Easter, the Christian festival (*Paques*), from the Jewish Passover holiday. The shape of headwear (Ezek. 44:18) likely prompted Rashi to describe it as *chapel* (*capeel*) or *chapelier*, a hooded cape or perhaps more likely a halbert's protective covering of a knight's head beneath the helmet.⁷⁵ In Exod. 27:3–4, a *laaz crocins* evoked a Christian prelate's hook-shaped crozier for a hook.⁷⁶ Religiously disqualified from swearing an oath on the Christian Gospels, a necessary step for feudal investiture, the Jew nevertheless might have acquired a tenement by foreclosing his borrower's landed security. The lender would also have appreciated Rashi's translation of *arubatam* in 1 Sam. 17:18, probably from Greek *arrabo* (pledge, deposit). In Jeremiah "guarantee" was rendered picturesquely as "clasp" [*fermail*], in the sense of surety, pledge, or promise (עָרַב אֶת לְבוֹ-).⁷⁷

IV.B Feudal Assets: Land Measures

Champanois Jews likely negotiated over medieval land measures in their dealings with seignorial tax collectors. For example, Rashi's gloss on Gen. 48:7 translated a French land measurement as *caruede*: "Coming from Paddan, Rachel died in Canaan on the way some distance from Ephrath." The French *laaz caruede* (קִרְיָאֵד), a shorthand for *carue de terre* (Latin: *carrucata terrae*),⁷⁸

75 Lexique Godefroy p. 77.

76 Exod. 27:3. וּמִזְלָגָתָיו.

77 Grabois, p. 245. Because Jewish law opposed oaths, a guarantee could have consisted of a pledged asset or the promise of a third person who orally bound himself before a public official. "Emunnah or fides" in Rashi's responsa signified a promise, guaranteed by a third person, rather than a guarantee backed up by an oath. Grabois, p. 249. The *laaz* "Guarantee" appears at 1 Kgs. 10:15, Is. 38:14, Jer. 25:20, 50:37, Ezek. 27:9, 30:5, Ps. 119:122. Surety was translated in the *laaz* guarantee. "Be surety for thy servant for good."

78 Britton [French text revised with English translation] (F.M. Nichols, translation), vol. 2, p. 143. *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 2, p. 81. Another common feudal charge was the "corvee

designated a tract cultivable by an ox-drawn plow (*charrue*) during a single day. Rashi's gloss on 1 Sam. 13:20 referred to a *soc*, another *laaz* for a plow; the *soc* also appeared as a feudal charge (*socage*) akin to a *corvée de charrue*, in the sense that both constituted a vassal's monetary redemption of his service to a lord.⁷⁹

Rashi's glosses generically expressed an array of land measures and geographic sites. In 2 Kings 5:19 a land measure [*kivra*] was rendered as "arpent,"⁸⁰ a term that has endured in French surveying. In 1 Sam. 14:14–15, a furrow of cultivated land was translated as *reie* [*roie*].⁸¹ In Num. 34:6, "les îles de la mer" (islands of the sea) was translated as *insel*, and appurtenances and dependencies as "אֶפְנִי" (*laaz: appendices*).⁸² In Num. 34:7, "frontier" and "border" were translated as *merke* (*laaz: marches*). Rashi's gloss on Josh. 11:2 translated "regions" as "*contreds*;" *laaz: contrees*;⁸³ *Provençal: countrado*.⁸⁴

IV.C *Military Forces: Sentinels and Watchmen*

There is no reason to believe that Rashi interacted with military forces, except as an unwilling witness of the first crusades. Beginning in about 1075, Pope Urban directed papal legates to recruit Christian noblemen for a crusade against the infidel in the holy Land. As French crusaders traveled pilgrimage routes to the holy land, they pillaged the countryside, striking fear in the hearts of the Jewish communities, many of which were annihilated.⁸⁵ Though

de charrue," [a plow charge], owed the lord by the vassal; or redemption in money for this service."

79 *Lexique Godefroy*, p. 484.

80 Plus d'un *arpant* tot mesuré

A l'arrabi point et brochié

Einçois que l'autre ait aprochié

More than an arpent measured out/to the arrabi (a medieval measure)

precisely/thus that the other approached (*Cliges*. 3674–3677 in DECT.)

"Quant au bois on les mesure communement par arpens." "As for woodland it is measured commonly by arpens.") Coutume de Beauvoisis, quoted in LaCurne de Sainte Palaye, *Dictionnaire Historique de l'ancien langage françois depuis son origine jusqu'au siècle de Louis XIV*, p. 167.

81 *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 7, p. 223.

82 See *supra*.

83 Contradas [Spanish, Italian].

84 Provençal: "Countrado," Frederic Mistral, ed., *Lou Tresor dou Felibrige Dictionnaire Provençal Français* (1878), vol. 1, p. 633.

85 Yosef Greenberg, *Foreign Words in the Bible Commentary of Rashi* [*Laazay Rashi beTanach*] (Hebrew, English and French; 1980), p. 17.

the drama of the following verses from de Troyes's *Cliges* likely emboldened Christian witnesses. It probably drove French Jews to retreat into their homes.

Car les *eschargaites* les voient,
 Qui l'ost *eschargaitier* devoient,
 Si s'escrient par tote l'ost:
 Sus, chevalier, sus, levez tost!⁸⁶

A vestige of the italicized terms has endured in the modern French *eschauquette* (watch tower). Rashi's Hebrew transliteration of *eschargaites* and *eschargaitier*⁸⁷ appeared in a gloss for "guard" [sentinels] in 1 Sam. 14:16. For 1 Sam. 13:23, Rashi translated as "cembel" the "advance guard" of the Philistines⁸⁸ ("the cembel went out into the pass of Michmas").

IV.D *Metal Crafts*

Consisting largely of agricultural implements and ritual items for the Temple, an abundance of metal objects figured in Rashi's *laazim*. Evocative of scriptural leitmotifs of combat, Rashi's lexicon overlapped with that of chivalric romances, whose narratives made metal weaponry and armor indispensable for defense of self and kingdom. Medieval historians have reported an intensifying European fascination with metal handiwork that corresponded with a general rise in commercial activity. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, ambitious counts of Champagne commissioned silver- and goldsmiths to mint coins such as the denier and sou of provins.⁸⁹ As both merchants and lenders, Jews of Troyes traded metal wares in Champagne's markets and fairs.

1 Military Hardware

The prominence of military combat in Hebrew scripture and chivalric romances made for a shared lexicon of references to weaponry. References to scriptural weapons adapted for the exclusive use of crusaders and knights

86 *Cliges* 1691–1694. DECT. (The kings' sentinels see them; whom the army of the guard should, and throughout the host comes the cry: "up knight, arise, now.")

87 *Echargeites eschaugnette*; Watchman, guard; "Franz et quietes de tous guets et escharguets." *Dictionnaire Godefroy*, vol. 3, p. 369.

88 Translated as *cembel*, a small force of soldiers used to attract the enemy into an ambush. *Dictlonnaire Godefroy*, vol. 2, p. 11.

89 Véronique Terrasse, *Provins: Une commune du comté de Champagne et de Brie* (1152–1355), p. 289 [L'Harmattan;]. P Huvelin, *Essai historique sur le droit des marchés & des foires* [Paris, 1897], pp. 162–165.

likely reminded Jewish readers of their inferior status. The Bible frequently evoked swords, shields, and lances, and classified the weapons in 2 Sam. 21:16 as *mishkal kayno*. Rashi rendered a sword grip with an unusual French term, *arestuel*,⁹⁰ a word no longer in French usage. Sword (or javelin) in Josh. 8:18 was rendered in the *laaz epee*, a term that de Troyes's compositions used over one hundred thirty times and that remains in modern usage. According to Exod. 28:4, Aaron's sacred garments included a miter or conical hat (מִצְנֶפֶת), translated as *coife* (אֶקוּפִי). Commonly a protective coat of mail (*cotte de mailles*) for a knight's head, the term *coife* attributed military character to a priest. In a *laaz* on 2 Kings 25:17, *coife* designated a capitol or crown, an alternative reference for Aaron's headwear.

2 Arbalete; Mangonel

Rashi's gloss of "arbalete" (Ezek. 26:9, *arc balestre*) is surprising and even changes our comprehension of the history of this weapon in France. In its time, this cross-bow had a power and accuracy so fearsome that in 1139 the Second Lateran council condemned it. Historians have generally credited the arbalete's invention to Saracen warriors, who may have adapted it from Asian warriors. French soldiers supposedly did battle with the arbalete only after Rashi's death.⁹¹ But this date appears to be inaccurate; if Rashi could have described the arbalete, then it was already known near the end of the eleventh century. By Chretien de Troyes's era, the first decades of the twelfth century, the weapon was well known in France.⁹² Rashi also translated מַגֶּנֶן (Ezek. 4:2) as *mangonel*, a war machine for hurling heavy projectiles.⁹³

3 Ovens and Cookery

Exodus identified an array of metal implements for cleaning and maintaining the Temple altar. These implements consisted of shovels for removing ashes and tongs for moving items on the altar. Rashi's *laazim* turned scriptural instruments for the temple altar into implements for medieval communal ovens. This adaptation seems reasonable in light of medieval Jews' observance of dietary laws of kashrut, especially for communal ovens used for both Jewish

90 "de sa lance torna desriere/le fer, et l'arestuel devant." ("from his lance behind, the iron and handle in front.") De Troyes, *Erec* lines 4024–25; DECT.

91 *Dictionnaire historique de l'ancien Langage françois* (Niort, 1888), vol. 2, pp. 101–104.

92 qui tint de le plus d'une arbalestree (further than an arbalete could shoot). Vol. 2, Perceval le Gallois ou le Conte du Graal 2500–2501 lines. (23) (Belgian edition).

93 Li chastiax ne cremoit assaut/ De mangonel ne de perriere. [The castle did not fear attack from mangonel or stone launch.] Yvain, 3768–3770.

and Christian preparations. If a communal oven could be efficiently cleaned and purified, then Jews and Christians could alternately use the oven or compartmentalize it for concurrent preparation of Jewish and Christian products. If a shared oven figured in a lord's seigneurie, then its users—Christians and Jews alike—together incurred specified payments to him. According to a responsum, a Jewish lender distrained on the ovens of a delinquent non-Jewish borrower and eventually compromised with the debtor by agreeing jointly to use the oven on alternate days.⁹⁴

Num. 15:20 instructed Jews to “make a cake [*laaz: tourtel*] and give it to God as tribute. In Exod. 25:38: a gold rake or scoop for removing ashes (*laaz: escendrér*), from the altar was transliterated as *puisedoire*.⁹⁵ Vestiges of the word *puisedoire* have survived in the modern French *puiser* (drawing from, dipping into as a well). In Exod. 25:38, Rashi rendered as *tenailles* tongs or pincers to pluck wicks from oil used for Temple illumination.⁹⁶ In Exod. 27:5, a sieve or grate-like covering for the altar was rendered as *crible*, likely a cooking strainer or a guard over an open fire. In Num. 4, a brush or copper shovel for cleaning cinders from the altar was rendered as “*vadil*,” and hooks, וּמַזְלֵגוֹתָיו, as “*קרוצני*” (*crocin*), a reminder for French readers of a prelate's hooked crozier.

4 Metal Artisanry

Highly prized among ancient Jews, precious metals figured in the construction of the Temple and its furnishings. Exodus explained proper fabrication of the Temple menorah. In Exod. 25:31, artisans were instructed to fashion the menorah in several pieces (*laaz: calices*; chalices),⁹⁷ *maderne* (cup) מְדִרְיָן⁹⁸ a stem, a base, flowers, and apple-shaped finials (*pommels*).⁹⁹ Then the metal-smiths (Exod. 25:31) were to solder them, קָשׁוּלָה, together into a unit for Temple service.¹⁰⁰ Rashi's *laaz* on Exod. 25:32 rendered engraving as *neeler*.¹⁰¹ A number of Temple implements were made of hammered metals. Rashi's

94 Rabinowitz, p. 48.

95 “Puisete a puisier eaue” [scoop for dipping into water] Dictionnaire Godefroy, vol. 6, 462. Exod. 25:38; “raking wicks from ovens.”

96 Tongs for plucking [*tseva*] *tenaill* 23es. Dictionnaire LaCurne, vol. 10, p. 23.

97 “Tous les fait boire a son calice” (Everyone should drink from his own chalice.) Histoire des Trois Maris, in Dictionnaire Historique de l'ancien langage françois ou Glossaire de la langue françoise depuis son origine jusqu'au siècle de Louis (1887), p. 187.

98 *maderin* = drinking glass. Godefroy Lexique, p. 312.

99 *pommels*, ball in the form of a small apple, Dict. Godefroy, vol. 6, p. 268.

100 to solder, to weld into a single piece. Dict. Godefroy, vol. 7, p. 447.

101 “Chiseling, engraving,” Dict Godefroy, vol. 5, p. 484.

laaz on Exod. 25:20 rendered “hammering” metal as *batedeetz*, עֲבַטְטִי (French: batter; English: to beat). Its cognate appeared in Chretien de Troyes’s Erec:

as poinz et a la cheveçaille
 avoit sanz nule devinaille
 plus de.ii.c. mars *d’or batu* (*italics added*).¹⁰²

In Num. 17:4, Eleazar directed artisans to laminate precious metal into a cover for the Temple altar. Rashi translated the term “laminate” (flatten like a blade) as *estender*.¹⁰³ The medieval sage Rashbam’s description of a goldsmith’s mold suggested an enduring fascination with precious metals;¹⁰⁴ but if precious metal objects were figurative or used in church worship, they might be deemed idolatrous. Rashi’s references to the sacred uses of metals perhaps warned readers against their drift toward the profane.

Rashi’s daily activities must have brought him into contact with carriers and draymen. In 1 Kings 7:28, his gloss *belaaaz* for axle (*misgorot*) was rendered as *aisil* or *essieu*, a term anticipating the modern French. Several *laazim* poignantly reminded readers of their exclusion from working the land. A gloss on 1 Sam. 13:21 rendered as a *laaz lime*, a metal file for sharpening implements for cultivation. A gloss on 1 Sam. 13:20 rendered מַחֲרֶשֶׁת, an ax or mattock, as *besaigue*, a sharp, two-sided instrument.¹⁰⁵ Is. 30:24 translated plowshare as *coultre*. Rashi’s repeated references to tools of cultivation confirm the acuteness of his observation of his surroundings. Jewish farmers likely constituted a modest segment of Champenois Jews, and Rabinowitz has shown that some were skilled in viticulture.¹⁰⁶ But most Jews, according to Liber, dwelled in urban centers, where they forged religious solidarity and practiced professions.¹⁰⁷

102 “To the wrist and collar, I’d guess there was a half mark of beaten gold,” Chretien de Troyes, Erec 1577–1579 DECT.

103 *Dict. Godefroy*, les bras elargir extender. Roman de la Rose). Also in Exod. 27:3.

104 Rabinowitz, p. 41.

105 1 Sam. 13:20. *Dictionnaire Lacurne*, vol. 2, p. 467.

106 Rabinowitz, p. 44.

107 See n. 17, *supra*.

V Coda: A Theodicy Seen through Prisms of Scripture, *Laazim*, and Chivalric Romances

A crosscheck of Rashi's *laazim* against French databases confirms his impressive command of the medieval French dialect and feudal institutions prevailing in his era and place. Neither merely ornamental nor haphazardly chosen, many of Rashi's *laazim* seem animated by the Israelites' narrative of human obedience and divine allegiance. Indeed, a Christianized version of the Israelites' narrative experienced a remarkable career across European Christendom. A rationale for the crusaders' rescue of the Holy Land and a key to the church's Gregorian reforms, the Israelites' narrative contributed to the themes elaborated in Chretien de Troyes's romances. If Rashi's commentaries constituted a spiritual pilgrimage for a marginalized Jewish in-group, then the *laazim* attest to his awareness of verbal landmarks that could relieve their gloom.

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