Was Rashi a Corporealist?

By: NATAN SLIFKIN

Views of God in Medieval France

Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki of France (1040-1105), better known by the acronym Rashi, is revered for his lucid commentaries on the entire Scriptures and most of the Talmud. His writings have probably been more widely studied than those of any other rabbinic scholar in history. But in this essay, we will address a question that has never been comprehensively and methodically investigated before: Was Rashi a corporealist? Did he believe that God possesses form?

Most Orthodox Jews living in the last few hundred years would be shocked and offended at the question. They would immediately—and indignantly—answer that, of course, Rashi never believed any such nonsense. A simple chain of logic produces this conclusion:

1. It is heretical to believe that God possesses form.
2. Rashi was a Torah scholar of inconceivable greatness.
3. Hence Rashi could not have believed that God possesses form.

However, the huge number of manuscripts available to us today reveals that in medieval Europe, and especially in Rashi's homeland of France, it was by no means unthinkable to believe that God possesses form. The Tosafist R. Moshe Taku asserts that God sometimes takes on human form, and considers it heretical to deny—as Rambam does—His ability to do so.[1] Rabbi Isaiah ben Elijah of Trani (known as Riaz, 1235-1300, grandson of Rid) speaks of scholars who believed in a corporeal God. He notes that they do not be-

1 *Kesav Tamim*, in *Otzar Nechmad* (Vienna, 1860).

Natan Slifkin teaches at Yeshivat Lev HaTorah in Ramat Bet Shemesh. He is the author of several works on the interface between Torah and the natural world. His work can be found at <www.zootorah.com>.

lieve that He is made of flesh and blood, but rather that He is made of a more ethereal substance, in gigantic human form.[2] While he disputes this view of God, he argues that those who possess this belief cannot be termed heretics, since even some of the holy Sages of the Talmud possessed this belief.[3] Ra'avad famously disputes Rambam's categorization of corporealists as heretics, stating that "greater and better people than Rambam" were corporealists.[4] Rambam himself writes that he met someone rated as a great Torah scholar who had serious doubts concerning God's incorporeality, and adds that he met others who insisted that God is corporeal and that it is heretical to believe otherwise.[5] R. Shmuel ben Mordechai of Marseilles claims that the *majority* of Torah scholars in northern France believed in a corporeal God.[6] Ramban (Nachmanides), writing to the Torah scholars of France, expresses his dismay at reports that these scholars condemned Rambam's *Sefer HaMadda* for its denial that God possesses any form or image. He argues with them that Scriptural and Aggadic references to God's form should not be taken literally.[7] Numerous other sources attest to the existence of Torah scholars (not laymen) who believed in God's corporeality.[8] Thus, it is certainly

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2 Cited by Yisrael M. Ta-Shma, *Sefer Nimukei Chumash leRabbi Yeshayah di Trani*, *Kiryat Sefer* (5753) 64, p. 752. This view is also described by Rambam in *Moreh Nevuchim* I:1 as that possessed by those with mistaken beliefs.

3 *Sanhedrei Gedolah le-Maseches Sanhedrin* (Jerusalem, 1972), volume 5, section 2, p. 118. My thanks to Prof. Marc Shapiro for this reference. See too Alon Goshen Gottstein, "The Body as Image of God in Rabbinic Literature," *The Harvard Theological Review* 87:2 (April 1994), pp. 171-195.

4 Comment to *Hilchos Teshuvah* 3:7.

5 *Treatise Concerning the Resurrection of the Dead.* Rambam himself never mentions Rashi, but his son R. Avraham speaks highly of him.

6 Vatican Library MS Neofiti 11, fol. 219v, cited by Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz: The Case of Anthropomorphism," Daniel Frank and Matt Goldish eds., *Rabbinic Culture and Its Critics: Jewish Authority, Dissent, and Heresy in Medieval and Early Modern Times* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2008).

7 *Kisvei Ramban*, vol. I, p. 345.

8 See Marc Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology* (London: The Littman Library 2004), p. 61. See too David Berge, "Judaism and General Culture in Medieval and Early Modern Times," J. J. Schachter ed., *Judaism's Encounter with Other Cultures* (Northvale NJ: Aronson 1997) pp. 93-96.

conceivable that Rashi was part of this group. In fact, according to the testimony of Ramban and R. Shmuel ben Mordechai of Marseilles regarding the prevalence of this view in France, the onus of proof would perhaps be upon one claiming that Rashi was *not* a corporealist.

On the other hand, R. Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel has recently pointed out that most such evidence of anthropomorphic views amongst the medieval Torah scholars of France comes from detractors rather than proponents, which therefore creates an exaggerated picture of its popularity.[9] Instead, he argues, a range of views existed, with even the most extreme—that of R. Moses Taku—rejecting outright corporeality (God is not *always* corporeal, merely that He is *able* to assume form).

Rashi's position is thus not only important, but also far from obvious. As an introduction to our analysis, it is worthwhile to review several different potential conceptions of God as contrasted to man:

Man:

- Has physical form, moves, rests, can suffer pain, experiences emotions

God:

- Possesses human form (and moves), albeit not human limitations, and is not made of flesh and blood (this is the view described by Riaz)
- Sometimes chooses to take on human form (R. Moses Taku; he also claims that this is the view of Rashi's disciple Rabbi Yaakov bar Shimshon)
- Has no form, does not move, does not rest, does not have emotions (Maimonidean view). According to some, He sometimes creates a humanlike representative for prophets in their visions.[10]

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9 Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz: The Case of Anthropomorphism." But cf. Berger loc cit.: "Some of these attacks may well be exaggerated, but they pay too prominent a role in the discussion for them to have been invented out of whole cloth."

10 Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, *Perush Sefer Yetzirah*, also cited by Ramban in *Kisvei Ramban* vol. 1 p. 345.

Which of these views did Rashi espouse? Amazingly, we find diametrically opposed answers given to this question, each presented with certainty. In this paper, I intend to show that the arguments advanced by both sides are deeply flawed, and present new arguments which strongly favor one side.

An Actual Hand

Several recent academic works have proposed that Rashi was in fact a corporealist.[11] One of the primary pieces of evidence presented for this claim is Rashi's commentary on an anthropomorphic verse:

> And Pharaoh shall not listen to you, and I shall give My hand upon Egypt, and I shall take out my host, my people, the Children of Israel, from the land of Egypt, with great judgments. (Exodus 7:4)

Rashi comments:

> "My hand"—An actual hand (*yad mamash*), with which to smite them.

In popular discussions and scholarly works,[12] this is cited as straightforward evidence that Rashi believed in a corporeal God. Some others, who wish to avoid this idea, interpret Rashi's comment to mean that God created a huge hand with which to smite the Egyptians, as a separate entity, just like the hand which wrote on the wall for Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-6).[13]

However, if Rashi's goal was to teach his readers that Scripture was speaking of an actual rather than a metaphoric hand, writing *yad mamash*, "an actual hand," would suffice. Why the additional words, "to smite them?" And why did Rashi not make this comment in ref-

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11 Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Hand of God: A Chapter in Rabbinic Anthropomorphism," G. Sed-Rajna (ed.), Rashi 1040-1990: *Hommage a Ephraim E. Urbach, Congres europeen des Etudes juives* (Paris: CERF 1993), pp. 321-335, also available online at <http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm-/handofgd.html>; Marc Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, p. 57; Israel M. Ta-Shma, *HaSifrut HaParshanit LeTalmud B'Europa U'Ve'Tzaphon Afrika*, (Jerusalem 1999), Vol. II, p. 194.

12 Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, p. 57.

13 Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim, "God's Hand," *Jewish Times*, vol. IV no. 16 (January 21, 2005).

erence to the earlier verses which mention God's hand? In fact, although this comment is brought as a straightforward proof of Rashi's belief in corporealism, it is actually no proof whatsoever. This becomes clear when it is compared with other, related comments of Rashi. Just a few chapters later, Rashi explains the background to such interpretations:

> "The great hand" – the great [acts of] power that God's hand performed. Many terminologies fit with the word "hand," but they are all with the meaning of an actual hand, and the interpreter adjusts the terminology in accordance with the context. (Rashi to Exodus 14:31)

Rashi's goal is to present an approach in translation different than those of other commentators, namely, to reduce the number of meanings attached to words. In contrast, Ibn Ezra, for example, translates *yad* in Exodus 7:5 as "blow" (*makkah*). Rashi thereby explains that *yad* here (Exodus 7:4) is not an idiom referring to a blow, but rather is to be literally translated as a hand.[14] This does not prove or disprove whether or not God has a hand; it is merely a matter of translation. Rashi mentions "an actual hand" in one other instance in the Tanach, and there it is absolutely clear that he does not refer to a bodily hand, but rather a literal meaning of the word used in an allegorical sense:

> "*Al yad ha'ye'or*" (Exodus 2:5)—By the side of the river, as in "See Joab's field that is on my hand (i.e. "next to mine") (I Sam. 14:30). And it is a terminology of an actual hand (*yad mamash*), for a person's hand is close to him.

In other words, Rashi explains that the phrase is to be translated as "By the hand of the river" – the word literally means "hand," even though, of course, rivers do not have hands in the conventional sense. His explanation of the "hand of God" as referring to "an actual hand" likewise has no bearing whatsoever on the issue of God's corporeality.

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14 For a full discussion, with the example of *yad* explained at length, see Richard C. Steiner, "Saadia vs. Rashi: On the Shift from Meaning-Maximalism to Meaning-Minimalism in Medieval Biblical Lexicology," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 88, No. 3/4 (Jan. - Apr. 1998), pp. 213-258.

Man in the Image of God

Another source brought in support of Rashi's position as a corporealist comes from his comments on the account of the creation of man in the image of God:

> "In our image" – With our mold (*defus*). "As our form" – To understand and to comprehend. (Rashi to Gen. 1:26)

Some interpret this to mean that Rashi understood that man's physical image is modeled on God.[15] But there are other interpretations of Rashi. Mizrachi and *Sifsei Chachamim* explain Rashi to mean that God is saying He will create man with the mold that He made for him; in the mold of *His*, not in the mold of *Him*.[16] *Maskil LeDavid* offers another alternative: Rashi is differentiating between the latter word "as our form," *k'dmusenu*, where the prefix letter *kaf* clearly refers to a likeness, and the first word, *betzalmenu*, with a *beis* prefix. The discrepancy in prefixes leads Rashi to propose the different meaning of "by way of." This explanation of Rashi is not presented for apologetic reasons; *Maskil LeDavid* points out that, in any case, Rashi speaks about man possessing the form of God in the following verse, which requires explanation (as we shall see). Furthermore, explaining Rashi's comment to mean that God created man by way of a mold also serves to explain the connection between the two parts of the following Rashi:

> "And God created the man in His image" – with the mold that was made for him. For everything [else] was created via an utterance, and he was created by hand, as it says, "And You put Your hand upon me" (Psalms 139); made with a stamp, like a coin that is made via an impression… (Rashi to Gen. 1:27)

The connection between the two parts of this Rashi, and the message of Rashi, is that God created man with His mold, rather than with an utterance.

As noted, a more significant question is raised by the next phrase, "In the image of God He Created him." Rashi explains that the mold which was used to form man was in the appearance of God:

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15 Shapiro, p. 57.

16 Mizrachi, *Sifsei Chachamim*.

> "In the image of God He created him" – It explains for you that that image which was established for him was the image of the appearance of his Creator (*tselem dyukan yotzro*). (Rashi to Gen. 1:27)

Yet, while this is cited by some as emphatic proof of Rashi's belief in corporeality, the fact is that Rashi merely cites a statement of the Talmud:

> When he reached the cave of Adam HaRishon, a Voice came out and said, "You have looked at the likeness of My appearance (*demus dyukni*); do not look at My appearance (*dyukni*) itself!" (Talmud, *Bava Basra* 58a)

The Talmud is stating that Adam is in the very appearance of God, and everyone else is modeled after Adam i.e. is in the likeness of the appearance of God. Rashi is merely quoting the Talmud's terminology. True, there are those who, like R. Isaiah de Trani, see such passages from the Talmud as evidence that (at least some of) the Sages of the Talmud were themselves corporealists. But others are satisfied with explaining such passages as having mystical or other non-literal meanings.

In fact, in Scripture itself there are statements which, at least on a superficial level, refer to God's appearance, such as in Ezekiel's vision of the Divine Chariot:

> Above the firmament that was over their heads was the appearance of sapphire stone in the likeness of a throne, and upon the likeness of the throne there was a likeness like the appearance of a man upon it, from above. (Ezekiel 1:26)

In commenting on the aforementioned words of Rashi, *Sifsei Chachamim* explains that Rashi refers to such "appearances" of God when He revealed himself to prophets.[17] Thus, at least taken on their own, Rashi's comments regarding man being created in the image of God do not prove his views on God's corporeality.

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[17] Interestingly, Taz states that it is unthinkable for God to have an appearance (*dyukan*), and man is only made "*like* an appearance" (*demus dyukan*); but he is apparently working from a corrupted text of Rashi in which the additional term *demus* appears.

French Literalism

Another argument implying Rashi's position on God's corporeality comes from his comments on several passages in the Talmud. For example, in one place the Talmud discusses the Torah scroll seen by Zechariah in a prophetic vision, which it describes as measuring forty by twenty cubits.[18] In light of the fact that the Talmud proceeds to explain how this scroll was many times greater than the universe, Rashi explains that the cubits of which it speaks are God's cubits. This is clearly the intent of the Talmud, as it makes its calculation based on a verse describing God's hand as spanning the world. It is thus claimed that Rashi is viewing God as being of gigantic human form. Another such argument is advanced from Rashi's comments on the Talmud's account of God wearing Tefillin.[19]

There are certainly many medieval Torah scholars who interpret these passages of the Talmud in a non-literal, anti-anthropomorphic manner, even if they elucidated the plain meaning. However, Rashi's literal *elucidation* of these passages is seen to represent a literal *understanding*. It is claimed that the Torah scholars of Northern France consistently took a literalist approach to aggadah. "The one surviving polemical letter from French anti-rationalists equates non-literal interpretation of aggadah with rejection."[20] Rashi even adopted this approach in cases that offended the sensibilities of others. For example, a recent careful study concludes that Rashi took a literal interpretation of the account of Adam mating with all the animals, despite the efforts of many (but not all) to explain his words differently.[21] Rabbi Meir Abulafiah, famed author of *Yad Ramah*, vehemently opposed Rashi's literalist explanations of certain aggadic passages, considering

18 Talmud, *Eruvin* 21a.

19 *Berachos* 6a.

20 Bernard Septimus, *Hispano-Jewish Culture in Transition: The Career and Controversies of Ramah* (Harvard, 1982), citing a manuscript printed in *Zion* 34 (1969) p. 139.

21 Eric Lawee, "The Reception of Rashi's *Commentary on the Torah* in Spain: The Case of Adam's Mating with the Animals," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (Winter 2007) pp. 33–66.

them disrespectful to God.[22] Thus, it is claimed that Rashi did understand Talmudic anthropomorphisms of God in their literal sense.

However, Prof. Ephraim Urbach and R. Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel are of the view that such literal elucidations do not necessarily mean that the Talmudic passages were understood to be truly relating such messages. Instead, Rashi saw it as his goal to elucidate the plain meaning of the text, and did not concern himself with the philosophical or mystical depths. "…The fact that the Tosafists (and Rashi) do not seem to have been particularly troubled in their Talmudic commentaries by anthropomorphic statements in the *aggadah* should not be taken as proof that they endorsed this position."[23]

We have thus seen that all the arguments commonly advanced for Rashi's corporeal view of God are sorely deficient. Let us now turn to the arguments that are brought to show that Rashi both held and strongly advocated an incorporeal view.

Rashi's Anti-Anthropomorphic Interpretations

The claim has long been made that Rashi, just as Rambam many years later, insisted on God's incorporeality. This was first argued by a Provencal rationalist, Rabbi Asher b. Gershom,[24] and it has carried through to modern times in works dedicated to Rashi and his meth-

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22 Rashi to *Sanhedrin* 103a, s.v. *Middas haDin*, states that God made a tunnel in the firmament through which he accepted the penitence of Manasseh without the attribute of Judgment knowing about it; Rabbi Meir Abulafiah condemns such a literalist approach as disrespectful (presumably because it implies that God was forced to act surreptitiously). The Talmud in *Sanhedrin* 98b speaks of "the possessor of all might" clutching his loins in distress; Rabbi Meir Abulafiah explains this as referring to mighty humans, and states that the one who explains otherwise is destined to stand in judgment for it. As Hacham Yosef Chai in *Ben Yehoyada* points out, he is referring to Rashi, who explains the Talmud as referring to God.

23 Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Varieties of Belief in Medieval Ashkenaz: The Case of Anthropomorphism," p. 118. See note 8 there.

24 Ms. Cambridge Add. 507. 1, fols. 75r–v and 78v, transcribed in Joseph Shatzmiller, "Les Tossafistes et la Premiere Controverse Maimonidienne," *Rashi et la culture juive en France du Nord au moyen age,* ed. G. Dahan et al. (Paris: E. Peeters, 1997), pp. 75, 79-80.

odology.[25] Proponents of this view cite certain cases where Rashi states that the Torah is allegorically anthropomorphizing:

> "And He rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 20:11) – He wrote about rest concerning Himself, as it were, to teach *a fortiori* to man, whose work is by way of exertion and effort, that he should rest on Shabbos.

Rashi later reinforces this message, taking no chances that someone may forget what he wrote eleven chapters earlier:

> "And He was refreshed (*vayinafash*)" (Exodus 31:17) – In accordance with the Targum, "and He rested." Every terminology of *nofesh* is one of *nefesh* (soul), that one's soul and breathing is restored upon resting from the exertion of work. And with the One about Whom it is written, "He does not become tired or weary" (Isaiah 40:28), and all of His work is by utterances, He writes "rest" about himself to direct[26] the ear with that which it is able to understand.

Rashi's explanation of the verse discussing the sin of the generation of the Deluge, makes a similar claim, albeit less explicitly. The verse translates literally as "And God reconsidered having made man on the earth, and He was pained in His heart" (Genesis 6:6). Here, the problem is the implication that God can suffer actual pain. Rashi, partially following Onkelos, explains that "God was consoled, for He made man on earth (rather than in Heaven where he could incite the angels to rebellion), and he (man) was caused pain in His heart (i.e. that God decided in His heart to make man suffer)."

Rashi employs this concept in other contexts, where, though there is no issue of anthropomorphism, there are seemingly inappropriate comparisons, especially if they degrade God:

> "The smoke [of Mount Sinai] arose like the smoke of a furnace" (Exodus 19:18) – of lime. One might think that it was as such a furnace, and no more – therefore it states, "burning with fire to the

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25 Isaiah Wolfsberg, "*Mishkelo Hamachshavto shel perush Rashi al HaTorah,*" in Rabbi Yehudah L. Fishman, ed., *Sefer Rashi: Kobetz Torani-Mada'i* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook 1941) p. 527; Eliezer Meir Lifschitz, "Rashi," in Rabbi Y. L. Maimon, ed., *Sefer Rashi* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook 1965) p. 280; Pinchas Doron, *Biur Setumos b'Rashi* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav) vol. I pp. 13-14.

26 *Lesabber*, as in "the eyes of all are directed (*yesaberu*) towards You" (Psalms 145:15). Some read it as *leshabber*, "to break the ear."

> heart of the heavens" (Deut. 4:11). And why does it state "like a furnace"? To direct the ear with that which it is able to hear, giving people a familiar image. Similarly, "He shall roar as a lion" (Hosea 11:10) – but who gives power to the lion, if not Him, and yet Scripture compares Him to the lion?! Rather, it is describing and comparing Him to His creations, so as to direct the ear with that which it is accustomed to hearing. And similarly, "And His voice is as the voice of many waters" (Ezekiel 43:2)—but who gives voice to the waters, if not Him, and yet you describe and compare Him to His creations, so as to direct the ear. (Rashi to Ex. 19:18)

Another instance is cited to prove that Rashi explains the "hand" of God to have metaphoric meaning:

> "For I lift My hand to the Heavens" (Deuteronomy 32:40) – (Rashi introduces this as being according to Rabbi Nechemiah's view in the *Sifri*:) It refers to the place of My Divine Presence, just as [the word *yad*, "hand," appears in] "each man at his place (*yado*)" (Numbers 2:17).

And another comment is brought to show that he takes the same approach with God's "face":

> "I shall direct My face" (Leviticus 17:10) – [It refers to] My attention; I turn aside from all my concerns and deal with him.

Here it is claimed that Rashi not only seeks to avoid the anthropomorphism of God possessing a face, but even wants to avoid the semi-anthropomorphic view of Onkelos who renders "My face" as "My anger."[27]

The aforementioned cases are cited as evidence that Rashi was not a corporealist and battled against anthropomorphic views of God. However, upon closer inspection, they prove precisely the opposite position.

Evidence #1: The Conspicuous Absence

In the aforementioned cases, Rashi employs the method of non-literal interpretation in order to avoid a specific class of anthropomorphism: the portrayal of God as being subject to exhaustion, physical toil, or being secondary in power to His creations. In each case,

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27 Pinchas Doron, *Biur Setumos b'Rashi* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav) vol. II p. 92.

Rashi stresses that Scripture is speaking "as it were" in order to "direct the ear." Yet with the multitude of verses describing God as possessing bodily form, he does not raise this principle. Scripture speaks of God's arm,[28] hand,[29] finger,[30] back,[31] face,[32] eyes,[33] and feet,[34] and Rashi does not comment that Scripture is speaking "as it were" in order to "direct the ear."

Even the two verses we cited above speaking of God's hand and face—where Rashi explained these terms figuratively—provide arguments in the opposite direction. There are several earlier instances where Scripture mentions God's hand and face without Rashi explaining that Scripture is speaking figuratively. And even in these instances, Rashi does not state that Scripture is speaking "as it were" in order to "direct the ear"; instead, he is giving an explanation as to why, in these particular instances, the context indicates that the term is being used figuratively. Such cases have nothing to do with God being corporeal or incorporeal; just as Rashi's comment of *yad mamash* related to translation, so too those are cases of translation. They are not proofs of God's incorporeality.

Not only does Rashi never state that anthropomorphic descriptions of God's body are written "as it were" in order to "direct the ear," Rashi sometimes, cites Midrashic expansions and even elaborates upon them:

> "You tilted Your right hand" (Exodus 15:12)—When the Holy One tilts His hand, the wicked are destroyed and fall. For everything is given into His hand, and falls when He tilts it. Likewise, it states, "And God shall tilt His hand and the helper will stumble and the helped will fall" (Isaiah 31:3). A parable: glass vessels are placed in a person's hand; if he tilts his hand a little, they fall and smash. (Rashi ad loc., elaborating upon *Mechilta* 9)
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> "For the Hand is on the throne of God" – The Holy One's hand is raised to swear by His throne, that He will have eternal war and ha-

28 Exodus 6:6, Deuteronomy 4:34.
29 Exodus 3:20, 13:9.
30 Exodus 8:15.
31 Exodus 33:23.
32 Exodus 33:20.
33 Deuteronomy 11:12.
34 Exodus 24:10.

> tred against Amalek. (Rashi to Exodus 17:16, elaborating upon *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Ki Tetze* 11)

And there are cases where Scripture does not mention anthropomorphisms, but Rashi independently introduces them in citing additional Midrashim:

> Abraham took a knife, seized his foreskin, and wanted to cut, but he was afraid as he was old. What did the Holy One do? He stretched out His hand and grasped it with him, as it says, "And He cut a covenant with him"; it does not say "for him" but "with him." (Rashi to Genesis 17:24, citing *Midrash Bereishis Rabbah* 49:2)

> …From where did Moses merit the rays of glory? Our Rabbis said: From the cave, where the Holy One placed His hand upon his face, as it states, "And My Hand shall cover you." (Rashi to Exodus 34:29, citing *Midrash Tanchuma,* Exodus 37)

Had Rashi never in any place discussed the notion of reading verses non-literally in order to avoid anthropomorphisms, we could say that he does not deal with such issues. But from the fact that he takes pains to stress this lesson in certain instances, the glaring omission in others leads to the conclusion that he interpreted such anthropomorphisms literally (later we will explore potential counter-arguments). This matches R. Isaiah de Trani's report of how many Torah scholars conceived of God – possessing human form, but not subject to human weaknesses such as exhaustion.

There is only one context where Rashi seems as though he might be saying that the idea of God possessing a body is metaphorical, but careful consideration reveals otherwise:

> "And with the breath of Your nostrils" (Exodus 15:8) – which emerges from the two holes of the nose. Scripture speaks of the Divine Presence, as it were, by a parallel to a king of flesh-and-blood, so as to enable people's ears to hear in accordance with their understanding; when a person becomes angry, wind emerges from his nostrils.

Rashi again takes pains to repeat this when Scripture later mentions it:

> "The anger (literally "nose") of God is smoking" (Deut. 29:19) – Through anger, the body heats up and steam emerges from the nose. Likewise, "smoke has arisen in his nose." And even though this is not the case with God, Scripture enables the ear to hear that

> which it is accustomed and which it can hear in accordance with the way of the world.

One might think that Rashi is telling us that the "nostrils" are allegorical; that God has no nose and thus no human form. However, careful reading indicates that the emphasis appears to be on the breath emerging from the nostrils, not the nostrils themselves: "when a person becomes angry, wind emerges from his nostrils." Furthermore, if Rashi wished to tell us that God does not possess actual nostrils, why does he not make the same point when the Torah speaks of God's hand, feet, face, back, etc? It therefore seems that Rashi does not say that the nose is figurative; rather, he says that the idea of breath emerging from the nostrils, as with a flesh-and-blood human, is figurative.[35]

Evidence #2: Euphemisms Rather Than Clarifications

Aside from the evidence from Rashi's silence regarding Scriptural anthropomorphisms, there are independent lines of evidence that Rashi maintained a corporeal view of God. One of these is based on how Rashi interprets certain comments of Targum Onkelos:

> "And it shall be when My Glory passes, that I shall place you in a cleft in the rock, and I shall cover you with My Hand until I have passed by." (Exodus 33:22)

Targum Onkelos renders "I shall cover you with My Hand" as "And I shall shield you with My word." We would assume that the Targum is intending to clarify the true explanation, that God only needed to order the harmful forces away, whereas Scripture "eases the ear" by giving an anthropomorphic fiction. But, despite the assumption of many that Rashi gives this explanation, he actually states something very different:

> "I shall cover you with My Hand"—From here [we see] that permission was granted to harmful forces to cause harm. And the Targum is "And I shall shield you with My word" – this is a euphe-

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35 According to Rambam (*Guide* 1:36-37), even the idea of God becoming angry is only figurative, since God is not subject to such emotional states.

> mism (*kinnuy*), by way of honor for the Above, who should[36] not need to cover him with an actual hand. (Rashi ad loc.)

Rashi explains that the account given by Scripture—that God had to physically intervene to protect Moses, rather than simply ordering the destructive forces to leave him alone—lacks respect. According to Rashi, the Targum is not giving a clarification, but instead is using a euphemism; a polite fiction instead of the description recorded by Scripture.[37] (In other places, Rashi states that the Sages actually changed the words of the Torah in order to make it more respectful vis-à-vis God.[38]) But the reality stated by Scripture, according to Rashi, is that God used an actual hand, not a command.

(This Rashi has been entirely misinterpreted by some who assume it to be evidence that Rashi argued against corporeality. They read it as stating that it is Scripture using the *kinnuy* of hand to ease the ear, and the Targum modifying it in order to prevent anthropomorphic conclusions. However, Rashi states that the *kinnuy* is being performed out of respect i.e. the reference is to the Targum using a *kinnuy*, not Scripture.)

A similar instance where Rashi interprets Onkelos in a novel manner occurs earlier:

> "I carried you on the wings of vultures" (Exodus 19:4) …Onkelos translated "and I carried you" as "and I transported you" as though

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36 The phrase could also be translated as "does not need" or "did not need." However, if God does not need a hand, why did Scripture state that He used His hand? If Rashi was of the view that God did not need to use His hand, we would surely expect him to explain why Scripture describes Him as using it.

37 See Rashi to II Samuel 12:14 and 14:9.

38 See the last words of Rashi to Genesis 18:22: "This is an emendation of scribes, that our Sages of blessed memory changed the words of Scripture to be read in this way." In some editions of Rashi, these final words do not appear, but Mizrahi endorses these as the actual words of Rashi (see too Mizrahi to Numbers 11:15). Strangely, in the ArtScroll Sapirstein edition of Rashi, which claims to include variant texts, there is no mention of this text. For further discussion, see Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, p. 98 footnote 52, and Avrohom Lieberman, "Tikkun Soferim, an Analysis of a Masoretic Phenomenon," *Hakirah* 5 (Fall 2007) pp. 231-233.

> [it had said] "and I made you travel," amending the text by way of respect to the Above. (Rashi ad loc.)

The idea of God carrying someone does indicate His possessing form. Onkelos thereby altered its meaning to avoid the anthropomorphic implications. He considered this anthropomorphism to be essentially false, and believes that it was only written in Scripture to make it more meaningful to the simple reader. But Rashi has a different reason for the alteration: Because it is *disrespectful*.[39] He does not explain that Scripture altered matters to "direct the ear," but rather that *Onkelos* altered matters out of respect. Again, this is consistent with Rashi's understanding of how the Sages would alter texts, sometimes even Scripture itself, out of respect for God.[40]

Evidence #3: Descent to Babylon and Egypt

Another argument emerges from Rashi's comments regarding the Tower of Babylon:

> "And God descended to see the city and tower which the sons of man built" (Genesis 11:5).

Onkelos renders that God "revealed Himself" rather than "descended," since, as explained by Rambam, only a corporeal being can move. But Rashi takes a different approach:

> "And God descended to see"—There was no need for this, but it was to teach judges that they should not convict the defendant until they see and understand [the situation]. (Rashi, citing Midrash Tanchuma)

Rashi is citing the Midrash, which may well have understood Scripture non-literally, but Rashi does not show any concern (as does Onkelos) that one may interpret it literally. While some insist that Rashi must mean that the Torah wrote it this way in order to teach a

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39 Cf. *HaKesav VeHaKabbalah*, who states that the word can mean "elevated" and would thereby be non-offensive.

40 See note 34 above.

lesson,[41] not that God actually descended, the language of Rashi implies that God actually descended in order to teach it.[42]

Furthermore, Rashi makes no comment to Genesis 46:4 where God states that He will descend to Egypt. As we saw in the case of Shabbos rest and smoking anger, when Rashi feels that a phrase is dangerously anthropomorphic and needs to be explained non-literally, he does so each time that it appears, and does not rely upon an earlier explanation. The same is true of the account of how God was *pasach* on the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. Onkelos, consistently with his avoidance of anthropomorphisms, translates this as meaning that God had mercy upon the houses of the Israelites. Rashi cites the view that *pasach* refers to having mercy, which cites a verse from Isaiah 31:5 as a source,[43] but states that he prefers to translate it as referring to passing over, and traces the usage of it in Isaiah 31:5 to that meaning too. Rashi shows no concern for the motivation behind Onkelos' translation, which was clearly to avoid the theological implications of ascribing movement to God.

Thus, Rashi appears to be of the view that God can move. As Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam points out, anything that can move is necessarily corporeal, even though not everyone realizes this. Later, we shall see that Rabbeinu Tam objected to another instance where Rashi portrayed God as moving.

Consistent with this is Rashi's view of a Midrash found in some editions of the Passover haggadah:

> When the Holy One descended to Egypt, He descended with ninety billion angels of destruction… They said before Him: "Master of the Universe! Surely when a king of flesh and blood which You created in Your world wages war, his servants and ministers surround him so that he does not suffer any pain to his body? All the more so with the King, the King of Kings – it is proper that we, Your servants, and Israel, the children of Your covenant, exact vengeance from Egypt!" He responded to them: "My Mind will not be settled until I Myself go down and wage war with Egypt."

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41 Isaiah Wolfsberg, "Mishkelo Hamachshavto shel perush Rashi al HaTorah," p. 528; Pinchas Doron, Biur Setumos b'Rashi, vol. I p. 14.

42 Astonishingly, this explanation is to be found in the Sapirstein edition of Rashi (New York: ArtScroll/Mesorah 1995).

43 This view and source is found in Ibn Ezra to Exodus 12:27. Both translations of *pasach* are found in the *Mechilta*, *parashas Bo* 7.

As Rabbi Yosef Albo notes, this Midrash is theologically problematic: God does not descend somewhere as an individual, surrounded by others; He is everywhere.[44] But Rabbi Simchah of Vitri, a disciple of Rashi, gives a different reason as to why his rebbe Rashi did not recite this text: Because God is impervious to damage.[45] This would fit with Rashi's comment about God descending to Babylon; Rashi is not bothered by the idea of God descending and being spatially surrounded, only by the idea of His being vulnerable to harm.

Evidence #4: Talmudic Anthropomorphisms

Earlier we noted Rashi's lack of comment concerning several Talmudic statements of *aggadata* that, at least at a superficial level, refer to God as being corporeal, such as the description of the size of God's hand and cubit, and of God wearing Tefillin. We quoted scholars who stated that one cannot draw conclusions from this, as the French Tosafists (and Rashi) simply did not concern themselves with such things. But while that may be true with the Tosafists, it does not appear to be the case with Rashi. For there is one instance where Rashi does indeed concern himself with this. The Talmud cites a verse, "Who is it that comes to Edom with dyed garments from Batzrah?" (Isaiah 63:1), as referring to the angel Samael. Rashi comments:

> "Dyed garments" – from the blood of Samael. And even though the angels are not of flesh and blood, Scripture speaks of it as though with the slaying of man, to direct the ear with what it is able to hear. (Rashi to *Makkos* 12a)

Here Rashi does see fit to explain that this anthropomorphism is not to be understood literally because beings such as angels do not bleed.[46] Yet with regard to Talmudic anthropomorphisms concerning

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44 See Kuzari III with commentary of *Otzar Nechmad* (Pressburg). *Archi Alay* queries that many Midrashim and even Scripture speaks of God descending. However the problem here is the more extreme and explicit talk of God being surrounded.

45 *Siddur Rashi* p. 193.

46 Louis Ginzberg, in "Anthropomorphism," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, argues that this proves that Rashi did not view angels as being corporeal, and thus could not have viewed God that way either. However, the fact that angels are not made of flesh and blood does not mean that they are

God's form, Rashi makes no comment. This means that explaining anthropomorphisms non-literally falls within Rashi's jurisdiction as a commentator; the fact that he does not do so with Talmudic passages speaking of God as possessing form and moving indicates that he interpreted such descriptions literally. There are two Talmudic passages in particular where there is an especially strong inference of corporealism, as we shall now see.

4a. The Hanging Man

The Torah prohibits leaving an executed man hanging upon a tree overnight, stating somewhat cryptically that "the hanging is a curse of God" (Deuteronomy 21:23). The Talmud explains this phrase as follows:

> Rabbi Meir said: A parable; to what is this comparable? To two brothers, twins, who lived in the same city. One was appointed king, and the other went off to banditry. The king commanded that he be hanged, but everyone who saw him said, "The king is hanged!" The king therefore commanded that he be taken down. (Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 46b)

This passage has obvious anthropomorphic implications, and several authorities take pains to establish that it should not be read in this way. Rabbi Meir Abulafia explains that the reference is to "the form of man's intellect," which is modeled after that of God. Accordingly, it is a disgrace to God for a man, who resembles Him in this way, to be left hanging.[47] Ben Ish Chai and others argue that the twins in this account refer to man's soul and body; it is man's soul that is in the image of God, and his body is the physical counterpart.[48] But Rashi explains simply that man is "likewise made in the form (*dyukno*) of his Creator."[49]

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not corporeal; as Rabbi Yosef de Trani explained, the view was that such beings are made out of an ethereal substance instead. See Shapiro, *The Limits of Orthodox Theology*, p. 57 note 68.

47 *Yad Ramah* ad loc.

48 *Ben Yehoyada* ad loc.; Seforno and *Toldos Yitzchak* to Deut. 21:23.

49 In his commentary to Deuteronomy 21:23, Rashi elaborates that "Adam was made in the form of His appearance, and Israel are his descendants," following *Bava Basra* 58a.

The simple reading of Rashi is certainly that man physically resembles God.[50] In fact, this has the advantage of accounting for why the resemblance even exists while the man is hanging dead. If the resemblance is in man's spiritual aspects, it is more difficult to explain why he resembles God after these have disappeared with his death. While one could contrive a different explanation, Rashi makes no attempt whatsoever to dissuade his readers from such an interpretation, and the word *dyukno* in other contexts always refers to a physical appearance.

4b. God's Two Eyes

The Talmud invokes an exegesis to prove that a person who is blind in one eye is exempt from appearing at the Temple for the festival pilgrimages. It is based on the verse stating that "Three times a year, every male shall be seen to the face of God, the Master" (Exodus 23:17). The word *yei'ra'eh*, "shall be seen," can be read as *yireh*, "shall see," leading to the following exegesis:

> Yochanan ben Dehavai said in the name of Rabbi Yehudah: Someone who is blind in one eye is exempt from appearing, as it says, "shall see" "shall be seen"—in the way that he comes to see, so he comes to be seen; just as he sees with two eyes, so too he is to be seen with two eyes. (Talmud, *Chagigah* 2a; see also *Erechin* 2b and *Sanhedrin* 4b)

The Talmud, however, does not state to whom the various mentions of "he" refer. Rashi explains that it to be refers to God, reading it as follows: Just as God comes to see man with His two eyes, so too He is to be seen by a man with two eyes.

Does this mean that Rashi believed God to possess eyes? One could instantly point out that the Torah itself (Deut. 11:12) speaks of God's "eyes" being upon the land. Just as one can understand the Torah as speaking allegorically, one can also understand Rashi that way. But it is not so straightforward. Scripture is speaking in the abstract, not in the concrete halachic. Translating the poetic, abstract idea of God's eyes being upon the land into the concrete halachic statement that a person must likewise possess two eyes certainly

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50 The unusual interpretation of the parable in *Maskil leDavid* to Deuteronomy 21:23 has no bearing on this issue.

sounds more like a literal interpretation of Scripture, especially in the absence of any disclaimer otherwise.

It is presumably for this reason that we find other Rishonim preferred not to explain the passage in this way. Rabbi Meir Abulafiah[51] admits that it can be read as referring to God, but he does not explain it as God possessing two eyes. Instead, he explains it to mean that God possesses perfect perception; when translated into a parallel requirement for the (human) pilgrim, this means that he must be able to see with both eyes. However Rabbi Abulafiah prefers to read the exegesis as referring to the eyes of a priest, not God: just as a priest sees the pilgrim with his two eyes (for a one-eyed priest may not serve in the Temple), so too the pilgrim is to be seen as possessing two eyes, and thus someone blind in one eye is exempt from appearing at the pilgrimage. Rambam also appears to avoid any anthropomorphic basis for this ruling, giving an entirely different Scriptural verse as the source, which enables him to avoid any anthropomorphic implications.[52]

Even more revealing than the different explanations of the Talmud adopted by some is the criticism that Rabbeinu Tam levels upon Rashi's explanation. Rabbeinu Tam protests that when the Talmud states that "he comes to see," one cannot say this means "God comes to see," since God does not travel anywhere. He therefore reads the Talmud as follows: "Just as man comes to be seen by God with His two eyes, so too he comes to see God with two eyes." Now, if Rabbeinu Tam understood the "eyes" of God figuratively rather than literally, surely Rashi could equally be speaking figuratively when he refers to God "coming." Yet Rabbeinu Tam understands Rashi as speaking literally, and objects that Rashi is explaining God as needing to travel to places (which would be consistent with Rashi's apparent view of God actually descending to Babylon). Rabbeinu Tam thus apparently interprets Rashi as referring to God's literal eyes.

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51 *Yad Ramah* to *Sanhedrin* 4b.

52 *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Chagigah* 2:1. See Israel Ta-Shma, "The Person Blind in One Eye is Exempt from Appearing – A Cryptic Tannaic Exegesis and Its Explanation" (Hebrew), *Bar-Ilan* 30-31 for extensive discussion.

Evidence #5: The Decomposing Face

Perhaps the most explicit evidence of Rashi's corporealist view emerges from a ruling in the Talmud relating to the concept of man being in the image of God:

> A mourner is obligated to overturn his bed, as Bar Kappara taught, [God said,] "I gave them the likeness of My appearance (*demus dyukni*), and they overturned it with their sins." (Talmud, *Mo'ed Katan* 15a-b)

Adam's sin brought mortality upon mankind and overturned the "likeness of God's appearance." The Talmud could be referring to Adam damaging his divine image with his sin, or to people in general losing their divine image when they die as a result of Adam's sin. Even if it means the latter, this can be interpreted in a number of ways, which would avoid anthropomorphic implications, such as referring to people losing their free will, spiritual creativity, and so on; it is no different from the aforementioned passage in *Bava Basra* 58a which likewise speaks of man possessing the "likeness of God's appearance." A look at the side of the Talmudic text shows that Rashi, also cited by Maharsha, gives the entirely innocuous reference to the Scriptural account of man being created in the image of God.

However, it has recently become known that the commentary printed at the side of the Talmud in tractate *Mo'ed Katan* is not actually that of Rashi. The real commentary of Rashi to *Mo'ed Katan* was only published a few decades ago,[53] and in it, Rashi's comment to this passage is very different and highly significant:

> For when a person dies, his face becomes overturned and changes…

Rashi interprets the deceased's loss of the image of God as referring to his *facial decomposition*. Although the Talmud could easily have been explained differently, Rashi explains it as man being made physically in the image of God.

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53 The manuscript was published by Rabbi Ephraim Kopfer in 1961, and the commentary can be found printed today in the Schottenstein Talmud, in the margin.

Rejoinders and Counter-Arguments

At this stage we must consider counter-arguments to the idea that Rashi was a corporealist, and alternate explanations of the citations that we brought as evidence.

One significant argument against Rashi being a corporealist is that his student Simchah of Vitry states explicitly that "God has no likeness or form."[54] However, since corporeal views of God had become extinct, it is likely that all those transmitting corporeal views ultimately had their students reject their approach. It is therefore not implausible to posit that Rashi's student rejected his approach.

What of the arguments that we brought? Let us deal with the first set of evidence, that Rashi is silent about anthropomorphisms concerning God's form and only comments on anthropomorphisms concerning His weaknesses. Could it be argued that Rashi took it for granted that his readers would understand that God does not have a body, and only saw it necessary to teach that He does not grow weary and so on? This seems very difficult, for two reasons. First, if people knew that God does not possess a body, then all the more so would they know that He is not subject to fatigue. Second, Rambam and others, who lived in a very sophisticated philosophical environment, had to stress and explain at great length that God has no physical form. Rashi, on the other hand, lived in northern France, where according to the testimony of several Rishonim, corporealism was rampant. He could not possibly have taken it for granted that his readers would automatically know that Scriptural anthropomorphisms are not to be interpreted literally. And in any case, such an argument does not deal with all the other sets of evidence for Rashi's corporealist views.

Could it be suggested that Rashi subscribed to the view of God described in the controversial work *Shiur Komah*, which uses seemingly physical descriptions to allude to mystical concepts?[55] This is likewise difficult: even if Rashi himself supported such a position

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54 *Machzor Vitry* 514.

55 Assuming that this is indeed the nature of *Shiur Komah*; there is also the possibility that it reflects a genuinely corporealist perspective. Rambam initially accepted the authority of this text, but later denounced it as a Byzantine forgery.

(which lacks evidence and seems unlikely), how could he assume that his readership did too? And this rejoinder likewise fails to account for all the other arguments that we listed above.

How is it that nobody else ever suggested that Rashi held corporeal views, and such an anti-corporealist as Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam held Rashi in high esteem? Perhaps because none of the evidence is overt; if one assumes that Rashi maintained a view of God as being incorporeal, as many living in the post-Rambam era do, one would read these sources and not notice anything particularly amiss. Only when considering the possibility that Rashi was a corporealist, and surveying all Rashi's comments in light of that possibility, does a powerful case emerge.

Conclusion

We began by noting that the commonly advanced arguments that Rashi advocated a corporealist understanding of God have little or no validity. But we then noted that the arguments supporting the opposite position in fact have the reverse effect. It is clearly of utmost importance to Rashi to tell his reader when Scripture is speaking allegorically vis-à-vis God's power. However, he does not do so with all the mentions of God's physical form, including those that he himself initiates. Given the time and place in which he lived, Rashi could not possibly have taken for granted that his readers would automatically understand these as non-literal. We further brought a diverse range of arguments showing that Rashi maintained a corporeal view of God.

Someone who is *a priori* opposed to the idea that Rashi was corporealist will devise rejoinders to all these arguments. But with the testimony of Ramban and other Rishonim that there were many great Torah scholars in France who were corporealists, one cannot dismiss the fact that one of those scholars could easily have been Rashi. His view of God appears to accord with that described by Rabbi Isaiah de Trani as held by many Torah scholars, including even some of the Sages of the Talmud: that God is of gigantic human form, but made of an ethereal substance and not subject to human frailties or limitations. Note that this may mean that Rashi was a more extreme corporealist than Rabbi Moses Taku, who only took the view that God can assume human form when He wishes. We have seen no evidence of Rashi believing that it is only when God so desires that He assumes human form.

This essay should not be misunderstood: I do not believe it acceptable for a person to believe in a corporeal God. In a future essay, I hope to explain why even if Rashi maintained this view, it can still be rated as heretical to believe it today. Rashi said it, but we cannot. ☙

Letter to the Editor

Regarding Rabbi Natan Slifkin's "Was Rashi a Corporealist?", in *Hakira*:

I thank Rabbi Slifkin for providing this fascinating article, and I commend him for the courage of writing something which is as controversial as I am sure this is. I found the article's thesis to be absolutely incredible.

One comment: Rabbi Slifkin notes at the very conclusion that though (according to his thesis) Rashi was a corporealist, we cannot believe this today anymore, and Rabbi Slifkin says he hopes to write an article in the future on why.

However, I find this difficult. My following comments will be based chiefly on Professor Marc Shapiro's The Limits of Orthodox Theology:

Is truth time-conditioned? Why could Rashi believe something we cannot? Did the truth change? There is no paskening on issues of hashkafa, and so we cannot pasken here, and we cannot say that corporeality was kosher once but no longer. Only in halakhha is there paskening, and not because the view is no longer valid anymore, but rather, only because a binding norm is necessary; the rejected halakhic view remains theoretically valid, and is only practically "dead" - *elu v'elu*. But in hashkafah, no binding norm is necessary, and all we have is the enduring theoretical validity.

On the other hand, in issues of dogma, there is only one truth, and thus, there is no ability to pasken, as there is only one option to begin with. But if there is only one truth, that truth is everlasting and eternal, and it will never change. If the sole one option was incorporeality, then Rashi's belief in corporeality was just as invalid then as it is today; or, vice versa, if his belief was valid then, it is no less valid today.

Either way, we cannot pasken; either both views are kosher, were kosher, and will always be kosher; or one and only one view was, is, and will be kosher.

Michael Makovi

The author responds:

I am grateful for Michael Makovi's praise, but I cannot agree that my thesis was "absolutely incredible." What people may find incredible is that some of the great Rishonim were corporealists, but that is not my thesis; it is the explicit description given by Rambam, Ramban, Raavad, R. Shmuel ben Mordechai of Marseilles, R. Moshe Taku, R. Isaiah de Trani, and many others. Given the testimony that many of the Torah scholars in northern France were corporealists, the question of whether Rashi was part of that group is relatively insignificant. It is interesting that while my article on Rashi apparently caused quite a stir, not a single counter-argument was offered by anyone. I have only studied a small portion of Rashi's entire commentary on Tenach and Talmud, and it would have only taken a single citation to counter all the arguments that I presented. Yet none was offered.

It also turns out that the single counter-argument that I raised, that Rashi's disciple R. Simchah of Vitry was not a corporealist, is invalid. Shamma Friedman, in his article "*Tzelem, Demus VeTavnis*," *Sidra* 22 p. 105, notes that one of the people quoted by the corporealist R. Moshe Taku to support his case is R. Yaakov Bar Shimshon, who attacks those that are trying to avoid the idea of God possessing an "image." (It is possible that R. Taku misunderstood the meaning of R. Yaakov's statement, but unlikely.) R. Taku stresses that R. Yaakov bar Shimon was a disciple of Rashi as well as a teacher of Rabbeinu Tam. This shows that corporealism was present in

Rashi's school of thought, and R. Simcha of Vitry would therefore be one of the first to break away from that.

There is another minor correction to my article: the first statement from Rabbi Isaiah of Trani that I cited, as describing the nature of the belief in a corporeal God as referring to belief in His possessing gigantic human form made of an ethereal substance, was not made by Riaz as I claimed, but rather by his grandfather, Rabbi Isaiah de Trani I (Rid). Friedman (pp. 99-100 note 46) points out that he is simply citing Rambam in the *Guide for the Perplexed*, although Yair Lorberbaum, in *Tzelem Elokim: Halacha v'Aggadda* (Schocken, 2004) p. 86 note 5 (see too p. 31 note 18) still assumes it can be used as independent testimony. The second statement from Rabbi Isaiah of Trani that I cited, which states that some of Chazal themselves believed in a corporeal God, is from Rabbi Isaiah of Trani II, known as Riaz.

Michael Makovi's questions concerning the final paragraph of my essay are precisely those that I address in my follow-up to the essay. It was not ready in time for publication of this issue, but I hope to be able to submit it for the forthcoming issue.

Natan Slifkin