

"Contextual Reading": The Development of Peshat in Northern France 27

Jewish prayer and is a much-cherished ritual in rabbinic Judaism.³¹ However, its biblical antecedents are only suggestive and Rashbam claims as much in his commentary on Exod 13:9: וְהָיָה לָךְ לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ וּלְזִכְרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ: "And it shall be to you a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, in order that the Teaching of the LORD may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand did the LORD bring you out of Egypt."³² Rashbam interpreted what Rashi (and the rabbis of antiquity) had understood as the Torah's first reference to *tefillin*—as simply metaphoric language:

לאות על ידך: לפי עומק פשוטו, יהיה לך לזכרון תמיד כאילו כתוב על ידך.
כעין: שימני כחותם על לבך.

For a sign on your hand—according to the depths of its contextual meaning, it should be for you as a continuous memorial, as if it were written on your hand. This usage is similar to *place me as a seal upon your heart* (Song 8:6).

Rashbam's use of the expression "as if" (כאילו) is testimony to his interpretation that Exod 13:9 is an idiomatic, metaphoric expression that describes what the nature of the Israelites' remembrance of the Exodus ought to be, and is not a statement expressing concrete law or ritual observance.

Turning his eye to the biblical concept of "day and night," Rashbam interprets Gen 1:5 (וַיְהיֶיךָ יוֹם אֶחָד) "There was setting, there was dawning; one day"³³ as demonstrating that Scripture's day begins at sunrise. This is a bold departure from rabbinic teaching that, for Jewish calendric purposes, a day begins the preceding evening:

ויהי ערב ויהי בקר: אין כתיב כאן "ויהי לילה ויהי יום." אלא ויהי ערב, שהעריב יום ראשון ושיקע האור, ויהי בקר, בוקרו של לילה, שעלה עמוד השחר—הרי הושלם יום א' מן ה' ימים שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא בעשרת הדברות. ואחר כך התחיל יום שני: ויאמר אלהים יהי רקיע. ולא בא הכתוב לומר שהערב והבקר יום אחד הם, כי לא הצרכנו לפרש, אלא היאך היו ששה ימים, שהבקר יום ונגמרה הלילה, הרי נגמר יום אחד והתחיל יום שני.

31. See *b. Menah.* 32a–44a.

32. That this verse referred to *tefillin* was considered self-evident by Rashi, who commented: **והיה לך לאות:** יציאת מצרים תהיה לך לאות על ידך ולזכרון בין עיניך, שתכתוב: "And it shall be a sign for you—the Exodus from Egypt shall be a sign for you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes"—i.e., you should write these paragraphs, and fasten them on your head and arm."

33. So SB; NJPS renders, "And there was evening and there was morning, a first day."