

THE MAPS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL IN RASHI'S COMMENTARY ON THE TORAH AND THE STATUS OF MS LEIPZIG I

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Rashi includes two maps of the Land of Israel in his commentary on the Torah: one shows the neighboring countries; the other indicates border-sites in the Land of Israel itself. These maps appear in several manuscripts of Rashi's commentary, including the important MS Leipzig I, which was written in the 13th century by a scribe named Makhir.

Makhir worked with a copy of Rashi's commentary that had belonged to Rabbi Shema'ya, Rashi's disciple, and he comments on this copy extensively. In the Book of Numbers, chapter 34, Makhir writes that one of the pages of Rabbi Shema'ya's book was torn (יִקְרַע זֶה הַקֶּרֶךְ), and therefore he had to consult a different copy of Rashi's commentary.

Avraham Grossman – and, following his lead, Elazar Touitou as well – understood this statement as referring to Rashi's commentary on Numbers 34:7-9. If that were the case, we could conclude that, with this exception, Makhir copied Rashi's entire commentary on the Torah from the book of Rabbi Shema'ya. However, I argue that Makhir refers only to Rashi's map of the land and the verses inscribed on it, and that we should not extrapolate from this comment concerning the body of the commentary.

At the end of the article I discuss two map fragments which were written upside down in the book of Rabbi Shema'ya, and the reason for this special way of writing.