



Rashi

My name is Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, but you can call me by my nickname, Rashi - it's an acronym for my name (do you know what an acronym is? Look it up!) I was born on February 22, 1040 in Troyes, France and I lived until July 17, 1105. I was an only child and my parents were Yitzchak and Leah. My father was a descendant of Rabbi Akiva, a very, very wise and famous Rabbi.

I started studying Torah when I was 5 years old. My father was my main teacher until he died. When I was 17 years old I got married but my wife and I couldn't live together because I was studying at the Yeshiva in Worms (that's a place) and I only saw my wife when my semesters were over. I spent many years learning Talmud - that's a special book in which very wise rabbis wrote about the stories, rules and laws in the Torah to help us understand them better.

When I was 25 years old my mother died and I was asked to join a *Bet Din* in my home town (a *Bet Din* is a rabbinical court where people go to get legal rulings and settle disputes). In 1070, I founded a Yeshiva and many young men came to study there with me. My wife and I never had any sons, but I did have three daughters, Yocheved, Miriam and Rachel, and they all married Talmudic scholars.

I am best known for my commentary on the Babylonian Talmud (did you know there are two Talmuds? The other is the Yerushalmi Talmud). I wrote explanations about almost every phrase in the Talmud. My explanations were often easy to understand because I used many examples and analogies - I related it to things that people would understand such as professions, crafts and sports. I translated difficult Hebrew and Aramaic texts into French so everyone could understand them. If you look at a printed copy of the Talmud today, you will see the Talmud text in the middle, and you will find my commentaries on the inside edge of the page, near the binding.

I also wrote commentaries on the Tanakh (do you remember what that is? It combines the Torah, writings of the Prophets and other writings into one book), especially on the Chumash (the 5 books of Moses - we call that the Torah). And the first known Hebrew book to ever be printed in Italy was my commentary on the Chumash in 1475. When I wrote, I used a very special way of lettering that I made up and it is now called "Rashi Script." It looks something like this:

אבגדוהזחטיכךלמם
ןסעפףאןקרשת

You know, I died over 600 years ago, but people are still studying the things that I wrote and consider them important. Pretty cool, huh?