

Learning With Rashi

*Rashi, Bible scholar, poet, (1040-1105 CE),
lived in Troyes, France*

I was visiting with Rashi the poet
on a hillside in eastern France,
it was winter. Snow on the ground.
We were sitting on bales in a circle
as the sun began to make its way home in the west.
Rashi lit some candles. He also gave us grapes about then,
they were translucent dark, blue-black,
almost lapis,
I had never seen such grapes.
During our discussion, Rashi's daughter,
I think her name was Miriam,
was speaking in quiet tones from behind a screen
to her father.
"My daughter reminds me,"
Rashi used a word in medieval French for reminds,
"that the first light, created day one,
the light that sustains --
is hidden away for the future."
The candles had burned all the way down,
there were none left.
Rashi asked me to collect some icicles
from across the field.
I brought back four or five icicles,
Rashi put them in the candle holders,
lit them, and we continued learning.
As he spoke, he gathered light with his hands,
like he was moving air around above the flames,
as if he was gathering light into his arms.

james stone goodman