

בס"ד

THE RASHI OF THE WEEK

Week of

Parshas Chayei Soroh

27 Cheshvan, 5781 – November 14, 2020

Compiled from the works of
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An Outline of the Rebbe's Explanation of Rashi
Parshas Chayei Soroh
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Rashi in His Own Words

בראשית כ"ג, ט': וַיִּתֵּן־לִי אֶת־מַעְרַת הַמַּכְפֵּלָה אֲשֶׁר־לִּוּ אֲשֶׁר בְּקֶצֶה שְׂדֵהוּ בְּכֶסֶף מְלֵא יִתְּנֶנָּה לִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם לְאַחֲזוֹת־קִבְרִי:
רש"י ד"ה בכסף מלא: אשלם כל שווייה, וכן דוד אמר לארונה (דברי הימים א' כ"א, כ"ד) בכסף מלא:

Bereishis 23:9: That he may give me the Machpelah (double) cave, which belongs to him, which is at the end of his field; for a full price let him give it to me in your midst for burial property."

Rashi Heading - for a full price: (meaning) its total value. So did Dovid say to Aravnoh, "for the full price" (Divrei Hayomim I 21: 24).

Synopsis

In this week's Parshah, Chayei Soroh, we learn of the passing of our Matriarch Soroh. Avrohom sought to buy the Me'oras Hamachpelah from the children of Chais to serve as her burial place. At first, they responded that they would be happy to give it to him for free. He then requested that they ask Ephron ben Tzochar¹ "that he may give me the Me'oras Hamachpelah, which belongs to him, which is at the end of his field, for a full price. Let him give it to me in your midst for burial property." Rashi cites the words "for a full price." He explains that it means that he would pay "its full value." He continues by saying that we also find that Dovid Hamelech said to Aravnoh², 'for the full price.'"

In telling us that Avrohom would pay the "the full value," Rashi does not seem to add to our understanding of the Torah's words. What is Rashi adding that we did not already know? Furthermore, Rashi's comments on this mean that the Torah's words present us with a question. What is the question that Rashi is answering? Rashi's words answer the question. How does he answer this question? Additionally, why does Rashi need to prove his statement by quoting King Dovid's words to Aravnoh?

The answer to the above is quite simple. One might have thought that the expression "full price" describes the money with which Avrohom would pay. After all, full can only describe something which could be empty. He planned to pay for this burial site with large coins. Rashi explains that this is not the meaning of the word full. Instead, "full" means that he would pay the total price, regardless of how high

1. Our Parshah, Bereishis 23:9.
2. Divrei Hayomim I, 21:24.

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it may be.

Rashi derives this explanation by looking at the context in which the Torah uses this phrase. First, Avrohom asked for the field. The children of Chais then responded that they would give it to him as a gift. The only explanation that fits in for Avrohom's answer is that he would not accept it as a gift; instead, he would pay the full price.

Rashi proves this from Dovid Hamelech's exchange with Aravnoh. King Dovid wanted to buy his threshing floor. He planned on using this land as the place where his son Shlomoh would build the Mizbe'ach – the altar, in the Bais Hamikdosh. There we find an explicit explanation for his refusing to accept Aravnoh's threshing floor as a gift. The nation would use this as the place to offer sacrifices to Hashem. He did not want Aravnoh to remain attached to this location. Aravnoh could not retain any connection with this location. Therefore, he insisted on paying the full price.

From this, we understand that the same applies here. Avrohom did not want the children of Chais to have any part of the burial of the great Tzaddeikes Soroh.

Rashi's Explanation

In the weekly Parshah, Chayei Soroh, we learn of the passing of our first Matriarch, Soroh. Avrohom sought to buy the Machpelah Cave from the children of Chais as her burial place. At first, Chais' children responded that they would be happy to give him the cave as a gift. He then requested that they ask Ephron ben Tzochar³ "that he may give me the Me'oras Hamachpelah, which belongs to him, which is at the end of his field, for a full price. Let him give it to me in your midst for burial property." Rashi cites the words "for a full price." He explains that it means "its full value." We also find that Dovid Hamelech said to Aravnoh, 'for the full price⁴.'"

Difficulties in Understanding Rashi

The words "for a full price" appear to be straightforward. What difficulty do they pose? If these words did not present a difficulty, Rashi would not have offered any explanation. The fact that he does comment on these words means that they pose a question. He answers the question by saying that when the Torah teaches us that when Avrohom said that he wanted to buy the Me'oras Hamachpelah for its full price, it meant that he would pay "its total value." What is the question that we would ask without Rashi's

3. See footnote 1.

4. See footnote 2.

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comments, and how do his words answer this question? Additionally, why does Rashi need to prove his statement by quoting King Dovid's words to Aravnoh?

Some explain the reason that Rashi adds Dovid's words to Aravnoh as follows⁵. Avrohom used the word "full – מלא" to describe the price that he would pay Ephron. How can the word "*full*" modify the word *price*? One could only use the word *full* to describe that which can be empty, i.e., the opposite of full. Rashi cites the conversation between Dovid and Aravnoh to answer this question. It provides another instance where the word "*full*" modifies the word *price*.

However, this explanation is untenable. If Rashi only wanted to show us another example of using the word *full* to describe the phrase *price*, he could have written: "likewise regarding Dovid." We find something similar elsewhere, where Rashi writes,⁶ "likewise regarding Yonah."

The Explanation

The answer to the above is quite simple. One might have thought that the expression "full price" means that Avrohom planned to pay for this burial site with large, full coins. He would use coins which were not missing any silver. In other words, the word *full* appears to modify the word *money*. The Torah seems to be describing the sort of money with which Avrohom would pay. Rashi explains that the word "full" does not explain which type of funds Avrohom would use in this instance. Instead, it modifies the payment. "Full" means that he would pay the total price, regardless of how high it may be.

How does Rashi deduce the meaning of the word full in our verse? He understands this from the context in which the Torah uses this word. First, Avrohom asked for the field. The children of Chais responded that they would give it to him as a gift. Avrohom answered that he would not accept a present; instead, he would pay full price. The above clarifies that the word full does not tell us the type of money he would use. Instead, it must mean that he would pay the entire cost.

Although this does not seem clear from the words, Rashi proves this from Dovid Hamelech's exchange with Aravnoh. There we find the same words, yet they mean that Dovid Hamelech would pay full price. King Dovid wanted to buy his threshing floor. He wanted this land to serve as the location of the Mizbe'ach – the altar, in the Bais Hamikdosh, which his son would build. He refused to accept it as a gift. He insisted on paying the full price.

Why does Rashi add the words, "so did Dovid say to Aravnoh? This phrase seems to be

5. See the comments of the Mizrachi and the Be'er Mayim Chaim to this Rashi.

6. See Rashi's commentary to Parshas Vayeiro, Bereishis 22:2.

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unnecessary. The explanation is as follows. One can ask *why* Avrohom wanted to pay the top-price for the Me'oras Hamachpelah. Rashi already told us that Avrohom could⁷ "take the land legally, for the Holy One, blessed be He said to him⁸, 'To your seed, I will give this land.'" Hashem had already promised him the *entire* land of Israel, obviously including this cave! Rashi answers this question by saying that "So did Dovid say to Aravnoh, 'for the full price.'"

King Dovid conquered Jerusalem from *King* Aravnoh. According to Peshat, the conquest of one nation's land by another is a proper acquisition. Because of this conquest, Yerushalayim came into Dovid Hamelech's possession (and, consequently, the possession Jewish nation). Nevertheless, the fact that Dovid conquered the land did not suffice. Even Aravnoh giving it to him as a gift was not enough. He insisted on buying the land "for the full price." The land was his property on two different grounds, because of his conquest and because Aravnoh gave it to him. Why did Dovid insist on paying for it, moreover paying its full price? We can find the answer in the conclusion of the above-cited verse⁹; "No, for I will buy it for the full price *because I will not take what is yours for Hashem, and offer up burnt offerings for nothing.*"

As mentioned above, this means that taking and using the land because of conquest would not fully negate the connection that Aravnoh had to it. Furthermore, the earth would have remained, at least to a certain extent, "what is yours." Therefore, Dovid bought the land "for its full price." In this manner, he removed any connection Aravnoh may have had to it.

The same is true of Avrohom's insisting on paying full price for Soroh's burial place¹⁰. Otherwise, the Me'oras Hamachpelah would have retained a connection to Ephron; this would be true at least to the extent of it being called by his name.

A Deeper Lesson from Rashi

The holy Zohar teaches us that one may not perform Mitzvos "for free." We must fulfill Mitzvos with excitement. One must exert effort to observe a Mitzvoh. Kelipah enjoys receiving something for nothing. It likes taking the easy way out. However, in the realm of holiness, we must exercise the appropriate effort. That is the way to draw down the G-dly light into this world.

7. See Rashi, Our Parshah, Bereishis 23:4.

8. Parshas Lech Lecho, Bereishis 12:7.

9. See footnote 2.

10. Please note, that this was not to be the burial of Soroh alone. Rather the of the patriarchs and matriarchs of the Jews were to be buried there.

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From the above, we can learn an essential lesson. When it comes to Torah and Mitzvos, we must exert the necessary effort. We must learn from Avrohom Avinu and Dovid Hamelech to pay the full price, never looking for a way out. By learning and living this lesson, we will certainly create Hashem's dwelling place in this world. As a result of this, we will bring the complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach now!

(Adapted from a talk given on Shabbos Parshas Chayei Soroh, 5729 and 5719)

I hope that you gained as much by reading this as I did by translating and adapting it.

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