



Keep It Precious -by Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc

Sicha's Innovation: When the Torah tells us how much Jacob paid for a piece of land of Israel it is only for the purpose of telling us how much Jacob cherished the Land of Israel. Thus, the price must be speaking of something valuable.

The Torah-portion relates that when Jacob arrived to (-Genesis 33:18), "*the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan,*" he bought (ibid, :19), "*the field where he had pitched his tent... for a hundred kesita.*" Rashi quotes the word "*kesita*" and comments, "[This is a coin known as] *a ma'ah*. Rabbi Akiva said, 'When I traveled to the cities by the sea, they called a *ma'ah*, *kesita*.'" --then there is in parentheses, which is either from Rashi or from his student-- "(The Targum (Onkelos) renders it 'churpon - חורפון' (meaning) good, acceptable (charifim - חרפים) everywhere, like (-ibid, 23:16) 'accepted by the merchant'.")"

Rashi's need to define the word *kesita* is self-understood, being that the word is not widely used in the Torah at all. It is used once in the book of Joshua (-24:32), where the Torah simply repeats that which is told in our Torah -portion, "*in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought.. for a hundred kesita,*" and another time in the book of Job (-42:11), "*and they gave him, each one kesita.*" Thus, Rashi needs to explain to the "*five years is the age for the study of Scripture*" the meaning of the word "*kesita*" that it is "*a ma'ah*", and for this Rashi brings a proof from "*Rabbi Akiva said, 'When I traveled...'*"

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Question: Even though in "*the cities by the sea*" they call "*a ma'ah*" coin "*kesita*", nevertheless, our Sages give us other meanings to the word: (i) *Targum Yonosan*, and in *Targum Yerushalmi* the definition given is "*precious stones*", in which the etymology of *kesita* is from the terminology *keshutim* - adornments. (ii) *Eben Ezra* --on the verse in Job-- defines *kesita* to mean "*a small ewe*", and according to some commentaries this is the meaning of Onkelos's "*churpon*", as we find earlier in Genesis (-21:28-30) that Onkelos translates the words "*seven ewe lambs... seven ewe...*" as "*churpon*". Thus, what is Rashi's proof to explain the "*Simple meaning of the Scripture*" that *Kesita* is a *ma'ah*, as they call it in "*the cities by the sea*", and not as the translation of the Land of Israel --*Targum Yonosan*--, the city of Shechem --where Jacob bought this parcel of land for the 100 *kesita*-- included, as that of *precious stones**, or "*a ewe*" like the *Targum Yonoson*, *Targum Yerushalmi*, or Onkelos?

*Note: The Rebbe, in *Footnote 14* deals with a technical reason as to why Rashi might not want to use this translation. This translation is based upon the word *kesita* being from the etymology of the word *keshutim*. However, the word *keshutim* is with the letter *shin*, while the word *kesita* is with the letter *sin* --the two letters are the same, only defined whether the dot on top is on the right (*shin*) or on the left (*sin*). However, the Rebbe brings a proof that Rashi isn't bothered by this exchange of letters in his commentary of the "*Simple meaning of the Scripture*" from Rashi's comment to (-Genesis 1:8) in defining the word *shomayim* (heaven) as *soah mayim* (bear water). And Rashi does not define this explanation as one of homiletics (but as a *simple* meaning).

The question is especially so, since in the Bereishis Rabba (-Portion 79:7) --according to the version of the "*Ha'oruch*" (-Erech *Kesita*)-- the Sages learned from a woman *in the Arab market*, simply speaking, in the *city* of the Sages, that the meaning of the word *kesita* is precious gems or ewes, and not as the *cities by the sea*, as is brought from the proof of Rabbi Akiva --thus, if Rashi is driven by a practical proof of what people in the *city* call it, he could have used the meaning of precious gems or ewes.

Now, it is true that *in general* purchases/sales were made with money --and thus Rashi would choose to define that Jacob bought the land with *money* -*ma'ah* coins. Nevertheless: (i) In those days they would use *exchange* as a form of currency, as that of (-Deuteronomy 23:19), "*the price of a dog*" which Rashi explains, "*If one exchanged a dog for a lamb.*" (ii) In our case when we are speaking of an amount of 100 coins or the likes, the way of the Torah is to *always* use the the number *osd shkalim*, and not that of a smaller denomination coin. And in our case, being that the value of a *shekel* is 20 *ma'ah* --(-Exodus 30:13), "*twenty gerah equals one shekel*" and Rashi explains this, "*gerah is a word meaning a ma'ah,*" thus the verse should have stated "*five shekalim*" instead of "*a hundred kesita*"! More than this, The Torah's word for the *ma'ah* is *gerah*, thus the verse should have stated "*a hundred gerah*"? Thus, from all of this it is seemingly necessary to say that the meaning of the word "*a hundred kesita*" is not "*ma'ah*", but "*precious gems*", "*ewes*" or something similar to these.

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Magnifying the Question: On the verse --in the pursuing verses in our Torah-portion-- (-34:3), "*and (Shechem; prince, son of Chamor, king of the land) spoke to the girl's (Dinah's; daughter of Jacob) heart,*" Rashi comments, "*seductive words, 'Look how much money your father squandered for a small parcel of land. I will marry you, and you will acquire the city and all its fields.'*" Now, if the meaning of the word *kesita* is the *ma'ah* coin, and thus, Jacob paid for the entire parcel of land the total of *five shekalim*, how can Shechem say, "*how much money your father squandered*"?!

True, Rashi's source --to, "*seductive words, 'Look how much money your father squandered...*"-- is the Bereishis Rabba (-Portion 80:7), however, the Bereishis Rabba there (-Portion 79:7) has other homiletic interpretations to the word *kesita*, which according to all of them Jacob paid "*a lot of money*". However, according to Rashi's translation of *kesita* being a *ma'ah*, this is not at all a high price!

--[☞ The Rebbe negates --the answer of the *Melech HaKodesh*-- that the price of the verse refers only to the piece of land that Jacob bought for his own tent, while Shechem was talking about an exorbitant price that Jacob bought for the entire parcel of land:

It is extremely *pressing* to say that the intention of the verse's "*the field where he had pitched his tent*" is referring only to the limited space upon which Jacob pitched only his personal tent, while the far bigger parcel of land that he bought for his entire large camp, the tent of his wives, sons, servants, in addition to all his livestock, was indeed very expensive, for it isn't logical to say that the Torah would relate the purchase of the small piece for Jacob's tent, and not mention the acquiring of the large parcel of land that Jacob bought for his entire camp. Thus, the meaning to, "*the field where he had pitched his tent*" is to that of the entire camp.

And this which the verse speaks in the single sense, "*his tent*" Rashi already explained this at the beginning of the portion, when he explains on the verse (-32:6), "*And I have acquired ox - עֶזְרָא*" that "*It is customary to call many oxen 'ox'.*" Just as we find numerous times previously that the Torah states (-Genesis 12:8, and more), "*And he pitched his tent*" and the intention is not but to one tent, but to that of the entire camp.]-

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Questions on the Wording of Rashi: (i) Rashi should have used --as he does in numerous occasions when bringing proof-- the wording, "*a ma'ah, as we find in Tractate Rosh Hashanah*" --the tractate where the proof from Rabbi Akiva is found. However, here Rashi quotes the entire proof, "*Rabbi Akiva said, 'When I traveled...'*" Why?

(ii) In the version of the Talmud that we have, the text states, "*when I went to Africa*" (the RaDaK has the version "*to Arabia*"), while Rashi states, "*to the cities by the sea.*" It is certain that Rashi had such a version of the Talmud as well, and didn't *change* the wording of the Talmud! Nevertheless, we need an explanation as to why Rashi chose to use this version, and not the more spread version of "*To Africa*"?

(iii) Rashi quotes here the name of the Sage, "*Rabbi Akiva*", while in the absolute majority of Rashi's quoting a teaching from a Sage he quotes it without mentioning the name of the Sage?

(iv) The last question becomes even stronger when we find a commentary that is exceedingly similar in Deuteronomy (-2:6) in which Rashi is defining the word "*tichroo* - תִּכְרוּ" and Rashi says, "*This is an expression of purchase... For so, in the coastal cities, for 'selling' (מִכִּירָה) they use the word 'כִּירָה'.*" Meaning, that regardless of the fact that Rashi states on Tractate Rosh Hashana (the exact same discussion where our teaching concerning the *kesita* is from)* for this teaching Rashi, "*Says Rebbe (Yehudah HaNasi), when I traveled to the cities on the sea they would call selling 'kira'*" and likewise concerning the teaching of the meaning of the word "*Totafos* --the Torah word for the head-piece of the *Tefillin*" the Talmud quotes the name of the Sage being Rabbi Akiva (the same Sage of our teaching of *kesita*, where Rashi does mention his name), and in both these places Rashi does not quote the name of the Sage who defined the word?

*Note: The Rebbe points out that the source for this Rashi on the verse in Deuteronomy is actually Tractate Sotah (-13a): "*kira is nothing other than a term of a sale (mekhira), because in the cities overseas they call a sale kira*" which is the wording of Rashi in Deuteronomy, and not Tractate Rosh Hashanah (-26a): "*When I went to the sea towns they called a sale kira.*" However, Rashi doesn't quote the name of the Sage mentioned in Tractate Sota ("*Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yehotzadak*") either!

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☞ The Rebbe will now deal with the parenthesis at the end of our Rashi:

Concerning the parenthesis there are commentaries that say that these are not the words of Rashi, as we see in the first and second prints (editions) of Rashi these words are not there (In *Footnote 43* the Rebbe states that the words are also not found in a manuscript of Rashi that the Rebbe has). Rather, these commentaries say that these are the words of a student of Rashi, and that the words are in error. For how can we say that the intention of the word "*churpin*" --here in Onkelos-- means "*charipim* (good; accepted) *all over*" when Onkelos himself uses the word as the translation for "*ewes*" --as in Genesis 21:28-30, mentioned earlier?

Nevertheless, being that this parenthesis remained in the widespread print of Rashi, we must say also this interpretation to Onkelos' "*churpin*" here has validity.

More than this: Everywhere in Onkelos the word "*lamb is translated into Aramaic as 'imra*", thus, why does On-

kelos change this in this one instance in Portion Vayeira (-Genesis 21:28-30)? Thus, we need to say that in Onkelos' translation there, when he writes the words "*churpon d'aon*" it is the word "*aon*" that is the translation for "ewes" and his using the word "*churpin*" is as Onkelos will do, he added an adjective, saying that they word "*churpin*" good "*d'aon*" of the ewes, thus, even there "*churpin*" means good. And Onkelos' adding the adjective that these were special good ewes is to explain why these seven ewes were to represent a *testimony* between Abraham and Abimelech, in the story there (Portion Vayeira, Genesis 21:28-30).

However, what we need to understand is Rashi's comment here, what did the student (or Rashi himself?) want to add in understanding Rashi's point that *kesita* meaning a *ma'ah* coin with the addition of "and its (Onkelos') *translation...*" in the parenthesis?

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Explanation: Rashi's necessity to define *kesita* as a *ma'ah* coin --is not from the teaching of Rabbi Akiva, "when I traveled to the cities on the sea". This, as we will soon explain, is not so much a proof as it is an explanation to the proof, rather, the proof-- is from the content of the verses themselves.

When we were to learn the story that Jacob arrived in Shechem, that he bought the parcel of land where he pitched his tent, without any details, it would be logical to say that Jacob paid the normal price for the parcel of land, being that it was merely a regular purchase. And definitely the simple meaning of the text would have been contrary to say that Jacob had paid "*an enormous amount of money*".

That which Abraham paid the exorbitant amount of 400 Shekalim for the *Double Cave* he bought, is because he was buying it for an eternal burial plot, however, Jacob was in middle of his travels, "*to arrive to his father's home*" in Hebron, as Jacob had originally stated that his goal of his entire sojourning was "*And return me to the house of my father*". And the only reason that Jacob bought this parcel --specifically when he arrived to Shechem, where his was only for 6 months, and not previously in Sukkoth where he stayed for 18 months!-- was not for him to settle there, for he then went on to Hebron. Rather, the only reason that Jacob bought this parcel of land is in order to show how precious the Land of Israel is, that immediately upon arriving to the "*city of Shechem which is in the Land of Canaan*"* --unlike Sukkoth which was not in the future Land of Israel--, which G-d had promised him when he left his father's home (-Genesis 28:13-15), "*The land upon which you are lying* --Rashi: "*The Holy One, blessed be He, folded the entire Land of Israel under him. He hinted to him that it would be as easily conquered by his children as four cubits, which represent the area a person takes up*"--) *to you I will give it... and I will restore you to this land.*" This is why Jacob bought this parcel of land.

*Note: In *Footnote 54* the Rebbe explains that Rashi felt no need to explain that Jacob would purchase a temporary residence place in Israel just out of the preciousness of the Land that G-d had promised to give to him, for this is self-understood, as we already find by Abraham that G-d had told him (-Genesis 13:17), "*and*", which in the *Simple meaning of the Scripture* this was for the sake of showing ownership over the land. So too, we find by Jacob, as in the Rashi quoted earlier, "*The land upon which you are lying: The Holy One, blessed be He, folded the entire Land of Israel under him. He hinted to him that it would be as easily conquered by his children as four cubits, which represent the area a person takes up.*"

In a *Note on the Margin* to this *Footnote* the Rebbe negates within the *Simple meaning of the Scripture* approach of Rashi the explanations of other commentaries, such as Jacob's buying this parcel of land was for the purpose of building an altar to G-d upon it, for we don't find that Abraham and Isaac, and even Jacob himself, bought the land upon which they built an altar to G-d. However, there is a commentary that explains the difference being that the other altars were built on a mountain or on an ownerless piece of land, while this one was near the city of Chamor, who would have definitely destroyed.

So too, the Rebbe negates the reason as to why Jacob had to buy here --unlike in Sukkoth-- the land is because he wouldn't have been given permission to build his tent otherwise, being that in the *Simple meaning of the Scripture* we find no mention or even an alluding to such a sudden reason here in Shechem.

And being that Jacob was buying this parcel as a *temporary* dwelling place, and not a permanent one, thus, in the *Simple meaning of the Scripture* it is not logical to say that Jacob paid for it more than it is worth, and definitely not "*an enormous amount of money*". Therefore, Rashi cannot accept the translation of the *Targum Yonoson* that *kesita* means precious gems, for then we are saying that Jacob paid for the land 100 kesitas - precious gems, which is more than even the 400 Shekalim that Abraham paid for an eternal burial plot, for a temporary residence?! For this reason Rashi defines the word *kesita*, that Jacob bought this parcel of land for just 100 *ma'ah*, the amount of 5 *Shekalim*.

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☞ The Rebbe will now deal with, if the price was for a normal purchase of a temporary residence, then why at all does the verse need to specifically tell us the price that Jacob paid, and not that Jacob simply purchased the land due to the preciousness of the Land of Israel?

The question is, of what significance is it that the verse tells us the price that Jacob paid for the parcel of land? It is understood why by Abraham who paid "*an enormous amount of money*", the Torah tells us the amount that Abraham paid, because, the Torah is teaching us (i) The greatness of having burial place in the Land of Israel. (ii) The virtue of how Abraham behaved, that it was worthy to him that he should pay such a high price --400 Shekalim, and of international currency-- just to absolutely negate any ownership of Efron, or to negate anyone saying that it wasn't G-d, but that, "*It was I who made Abraham rich.*" However, in our case, what does it teach us to tell us that Jacob had bought his parcel of land for 400 *ma'ah*?

Thus, we must say that even though Jacob only paid 100 *ma'ah*, nevertheless, the payment carried an importance --which expresses the preciousness of the land-- and this is why the Torah tells us about this.

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☞ The Rebbe now explains that in order to understand the importance of these specific 110 *ma'ah* Rashi tells us of the story that Rabbi Akiva traveled to the cities of the sea:

And to explain what kind of an importance there can be in such a payment ("*100 kesita -ma'ah*") Rashi tells us the teaching of Rabbi Akiva, "*When I traveled to the cities by the sea, they called a ma'ah, kesita.*" *Kesita* is from the word *kishutim* - *adornments*, thus how is it that we call it *ma'ah*, the smallest denomination of coin, with the name *kishutim* - *adornments*?

Thus, we see that there is an instance in which even the is the smallest worth of coins in the coins of their own, they are however used as adornments, and they are called *adornments*. And this is what the verse is telling us: Due to the how much Jacob cherished the land, therefore he paid for a parcel of the land with special importance coins that were used as adornments -*kesita*, thus, the verse states that he paid 100 *kesita*.

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☞ And now the Rebbe answers the questions previously asked on Rashi:

- A) This is why Rashi doesn't use the wording of the more widespread version of the Talmud that Rabbi Akiva went to *Africa*, but the one in a manuscript that Rashi also had, "*to the cities by the sea.*" Being that the student knows nothing of Africa, and whether the place where they use the less-worth *ma'ah* coin as an adornment was a poor place, and this is why a *ma'ah* is considered an adornment. Therefore, Rashi tells the student that it was in the *cities on the sea* that called these coins *adornments*, which gives a proof of its "*big city*" importance of value.
- B) Why Rashi doesn't use the explanation that *kesita* means a ewe, because such a payment we can not extrapolate the uniqueness of its special importance, which would leave us with no purpose for the verse telling us of the price that Jacob paid for the parcel of land.
- C) In the *Simple meaning of the Scripture*, when there is a way of explaining that Jacob paid 5 Shekalim to there is not possibility to say that the worth of the field or that the payment was a 100 Shekalim or a 100 precious gems --It is contrary to a simple understanding that they were arguing in the value between one price 5 Shekalim or 20 times that, a 100 Shekalim.
- D) This also explains why the verse doesn't give the total of 5 *Shekalim* instead of stating 100 *Kesita*, or use the regular Biblical name for this coin, 100 *Gerah*, because the emphases of the price in the verse is not about the value of the land, but of what Jacob used to pay for the land, the precious 100 *Kesita* adornments.
- E) The intention of the one of the parenthesis (Rashi, or a student of Rashi?) with adding the "*And its Targum* (translation used by Onkelos here) *is Churpin, good and acceptable everywhere as that* (of the coins that Abraham used) *universally negotiable currency.*" With this he is emphasizing even more the importance of these coins that Jacob paid for the land with, that they have especially good coins --that not only were they adornments -- but that they were considered "*good everywhere*"! And with the closing of, "*universally-negotiable currency,*" he is not just giving a proof to the meaning of the word *kesita*, but to the context of the matter, that just as the Torah emphasizes when Abraham paid for the *Resting Place* of Sarah he gave coins that were "*universally-negotiable currency*" so too did Jacob give coins that were "*churpin... good and acceptable everywhere.*"
- F) This which Rashi explains later on that Prince Shechem told Dinah "*how much money he* (Jacob had to) *squander* (to buy the parcel of land)" --even though the amount of the price was only 5 Shekalim for the parcel of land: The emphases of that Rashi is "*squandered*", which denotes not necessarily that we are speaking of a large amount, but rather, that we it was a matter of squandering. Also a small number, if it is but completely unnecessary --meaning that one is paying completely out of comparison to that which is necessary for the object-- is called "*squandering*". And as such it is in our case: Being that Jacob was there only in a temporarily manner --being that he would be there only for 6 months-- therefore, by Prince Shechem --who did not understand the preciousness of the land for Jacob-- it seemed that paying "100 kesita" special valuable coins, for just a "*small parcel of land*" is "*squandering*"

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--[☞ The Rebbe uses this understanding to explain a totally different concept:

In Torah-portion *Vaeira* (-Exodus 6:4-9), when G-d is telling Moses of the faithfulness of the forefathers, that they did not question G-d when G-d promised to give them the land, Rashi comments: *"To Abraham... I will give the land in which you are sojourning... but when Abraham wished to bury Sarah, he did not find a burial plot until he acquired one at a high price... and similarly with Jacob, he purchased the parcel of land upon which he had pitched his tent."* Why is it that by Jacob Rashi does not mention *"high price"* nor even an *"etc."* to allude to the *"100 kesita"*?

The answer is as we just explained that Jacob did not pay a *"high price"*. In actual coin currency amount it was just 5 shekalim that he paid.]--

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☞ The Rebbe now deals with the question of why Rashi makes a point to state the name of the Sage of this teaching: Rabbi Akiva. The Rebbe's general rule is that when Rashi mentions the name of a Sage to a teaching, Rashi is specifically to the *"Sharpened* (lit. *Salted; Pickled*) *Student"*:

By the *"Sharp"* student the matter is still not *"smooth"*:

After the entire explanation as to the coins being especially important *"kesita"*, nevertheless, they were however only *money*, and it is self-understood that for the wealth of Jacob these were not of great importance. Thus, it is understood that the *primary* emphases in the verse is the *"And he bought the parcel of land"*, that the Land of Israel is by Jacob so precious that he immediately --upon entrance into the land-- bought a parcel in the land, even though his residence was by the place of *"my father's home"* in Hebron. Therefore, the question returns, why is it consequential to tell us that Jacob bought it for *"100 kesita"*. How much additional *"cherishing the land"* is expressed in this, that the verse should emphasize this?

Rashi explains this with quoting the name of the Sage, Rabbi Akiva: Concerning Rabbi Akiva the Talmud (-Sanhedrin 110b) tells that he behaved in a *"pious"* manner, that he was *"accustomed to* (find) *merit* (for) *Israel"*. With this we understand that this which the verse states *"100 kesita"* --which according to Rabbi Akiva who *"was accustomed to find merit for Israel"*-- we need to search for merits --even with that which is simple and *customary*-- upon Jews. Therefore, even though the payment of *"100 kesita"* is not such an amazing novelty, one needs to tell also of this *small* merit. Being that *"customary behavior forms a habit"* to speak meritorious of Jews --In other words, true, that the *primary* novelty to tell of how much Jacob cherished the land of Israel is that he immediately bought a parcel of the land, even though he would be there only temporarily, nevertheless, for one that is consistently accustomed to finding merits in Jews, he would also need to tell of the *small* merit of Jacob paying *100 kesita* of *adornment coins*, as well.

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☞ The Rebbe explains yet another detail in Rashi's comment:

With this we can explain --according the *Path of Remez* (*Allusion*) of studying the Torah-- the detail that Rabbi Akiva *himself went* to the *"cities by the sea"*: The Talmud relates there (-Sanhedrin 110b), *"The minor children of the wicked of the Jewish people..."* --while one Sage teaches that *"do not come into the World-to-Come"*,-- *Rabbi Akiva says: They come into the World-to-Come as it is stated* (-Psalms 66:6), *'The L-rd preserves the simple (peta'im - פְּתָאִים), as in the cities by the sea the residents call a child patya - פִּתְיָא.'* The Talmud is telling us that the piety of Rabbi Akiva was so much that Rabbi Akiva, in order to merit Jews it was worthwhile for Rabbi Akiva to travel to *"cities by the sea"* just to be able to merit Israel, and to be able to rule that *"The minor children of the wicked of the Jewish people... come into the World-to-Come."*

Rabbi Akiva's *"when I traveled to the cities by the sea"* of *"they called a ma'ah, kesita"* is the same travels in which he found out that they *"call a child patya"* in order to be able to rule *"The minor children of the wicked of the Jewish people... come into the World-to-Come"*. Thus, Rashi is telling us that when Rabbi Akiva went to find a meritorious rule for *"The minor children of the wicked of the Jewish people..."* Rabbi Akiva who *"was accustomed to find merit for a Jew"* merited to also yet another merit for a Jew, of how Jacob cherished the Land of Israel, in this which Jacob paid for the parcel of land --which was not his permanent place of residence-- *"100 kesita,"* to mean *keshutim* -coins that were *adornments*.