

Precis:

Discovering the underlying nature of Avraham's life work in the double word לך לך. The need to accept one's own self as the essence of good and the basis of חסד, the only possible gift to God and therefore the only possible עבודה. The unity of Avraham's עבודה that in the nature of existence found monotheism, חסד and a detest of secondary explanations and externalized searches.

Approach

The parasha as a description of growth into אברהם
 The curious nature of a command to do things for yourself
 Seeing the entire parasha as structured around the achievement of the opening line:
 Money, fame, children
 The catastrophic history of חסד, love, and the Sake of Heaven
 The uniqueness of Avraham's life as revolving around his own fulfillment
 An analysis of the Rambam's explanation of Avraham's עבודה
 Understanding חסד and its opposite: חסד לאומים חטאת
 The relationship of חסד to Monotheism
 The only true לשם שמים, the gift for He who Has everything

OUTLINE**AVRAHAM THE SOURCE**

This is the parasha of the growth of אברם into אברהם

He is the source of everything that ישראל is

We trace the different aspects of the מדות ותפילות back to him: בך חותמים

מגן דוד ומגן אברהם

This parasha defines the basic elements of Jewish identity

נסיונות והליכה

The name לך לך defines the nature of Avraham and his growth

נסיון ראשון כנסיון אחרון [תנחומא ג]

It is achieved through לך לך and it is defined by לך לך

The נסיונות as growth

The differences between נח ואברהם are entirely defined by the quality of הליכה:

את--together with; לפני-- "in front of"

The difference between בני נח and בני אברהם are defined here

לך

The specific הליכה that allows the development of לפני is לך לך

It is the way that he "walks" that defines Avraham and כלל ישראל

הליכה בת נדיב appears specifically in terms of that הליכה

לטובתך

The fact that it must be לטובתך is the uniqueness of this הליכה

The rest of the parasha defines the nature of this לך

ואעשך לגוי גדול: בנים Children

ואברכך: ממון Money

ואגדלה שמך: שם Fame

לך לך is not a group of unrelated stories

Built of tree sections, each define one of these ברכות

THE THREE פרשיות*שרה ומתנות*

From מצרים comes money, and this was Avraham's *purpose*
 He tells her to say that she is his sister *in order that they give me gifts!*
 וחיתה נפשי does not mean survival – it means expansion
 The Zohar says that Avraham knew that ברכה can only come through a man's wife and this is why he did it this way

War

The First World War to establish Avraham
 This is the עמק שוה: All together they proclaimed Avraham king
 עוררם הקב"ה (את המלכים) למלחמה בעולם כדי להגדיל שמו של אברהם בעולם --זוהר פו
 מלכיצדק-ש"ם רבה--רש"י Malkitzedek was *Shem* i.e. "Name"
 ואגדלה שמך is the achievement of נשיא אלוקים אתה בקרבנו

Children

Yishma'el and the יצחק בשורה
 Repeating as a refrain לגוי גדול, to parallel the original ברכה

SEPARATE GIFTS OF ארץ ישראל

Each one of these parashot is accompanied by another commitment to ירושת הארץ
 Since each one defines Avraham, each step brings him closer to this מדרגה to לך

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN RASHI*Contradiction of the midrashim he brings*

First he implies that the berachot are what will come of לך לך
 And that you are more able to become famous by leaving
 But then he says that they are given *only* because
 הדרך ממעטת שלשה דברים
 Was this not meant to be the entire purpose of the ברכה not only to overcome the travel problems
 Is the "bottle of perfume" a problem or a solution?
 If this is what he meant, why does he leave out the רכוש
 Why does he say שאודיעו --that is the essence of the following פסוק

Two issues

(a) Leave and (b) Go
 He only comes to explain why you must leave--no reason for money
 The point here is only to explain that the הליכה per se must also be לך!
 So that if it was only getting there that made the difference there would be no התהלך as לך
 This is what you are *going* for, not only the getting there
 Why not say only that when you get there you will have it
 But the traveling per se has to be לך! For it is ל"ך לך
 This needs to be said because this is the entire definition of what changes אברהם and must lie within the quality of הליכה

EXCLUSIVELY חסד לטובתך AND*Avraham's approach*

Proof that this לטובתך is really what he did do: [יח-יט]
 This is God's own definition of what attracts Him to Avraham
 Rashi's explanation of Avraham's uniqueness
 Avraham set out to make sure that the nation as a whole has the same approach
 Never to say, "Let me do it not for myself, but לשם שמים"

לשם שמים and לך

But this runs against everything that we have been taught!
 Is חסד not the whole definition of Avraham

And is not **חסד** by definition “altruism” and caring for others?

LOVE AND THE NATURE OF **חסד**

Self

Even **חסד** itself must be **גומל נפשו איש חסד**

הלל who wanted to take a bath and calls it a **מצוה** of **גמילות חסדים**

This is more than an example, it is the essence of **חסד**

סתירות מהרמב"ם

First he says only children and fools would do **עבודה** out of ulterior motives

But how could it be for the sake of **למען**, does it not have to be **לא לשם ברכות**

If he would have said "For Love's sake" he would have failed?

But Rambam says that the essence of Avraham was Love, **עבודה מאהבה**,

He attributes the paradigm of such selflessness to Avraham

רמב"ם: היא מעלת אברהם אבינו

הפטרה: אברהם אוהבי

Solution part 1: The need for Self

History proves the danger of selflessness

The horrors of Christian “love” and sainthood for heaven’s sake

Our personal experience of the danger of someone who is involved in a **מחלוקת** as a **לשם שמים**

Is this coincidence of human failing and rationalization, or really an innate problem?

The very relationship of **ל"ך** to **ל"ך**

Selfishness is found only in one who is selfless

Motivation and objective

Understanding the Rambam: he is defining drives, not achievements

motivation vs. objective: examples

The *objective* must be only **ל"ך**

What *motivates* you towards that objective? only an internal drive

The **דיוק** that it cannot be for anything *external* **שבעולם**

עבודה מאהבה vs **עבודה מיראה**

Anything at all but yourself is **עבודה מיראה**

“What can I *get* out of this” is **יראה**

עושה את האמת מפני שהוא אמת

Attempting to derive significance is the worst stealing

Only one motivated out of love is motivated by himself

Either/or: outside is **דבר שבעולם** no matter how sanctified, even **עולם הבא** itself

The only thing “inside” is ones self

The moment one says he is “selfless” he is corrupt and dangerous

חסד לאומים חטאת בבא בתרא י

Defining God as well--which is why this is the essence of **עבודה זרה**

This is the essence of **עבודה זרה** itself

מעשה רבי יוסי ורבי חנניא בן תרדיון

The **מצוות** that you do for what you derive out of something else is not a **מצוה**

Therefore part of the essence of **עבודת אברהם אבינו** who was warring against **עבודה זרה**

But in order to be someone like **אברהם אבינו** you need **לך**

The only thing that is entirely internal is self

Solution Part 2: The need for an עבודה of Self

The paradox of **עבודה לשם שמים**

Whatever I do can only be done because I want to; whatever I do can only be done with something external

עולם **בשבילי נברא עולם** is the only way out

The only purpose of Creation is for you

One who gives **צדקה** because of the **עניים** is the **חוטא**; one who gives **צדקה** because **עניים** exist as

a way to give **צדקה** is the **עובד**

This is why the favor if anything is from the **עני** to the **בעל הבית**!

The other side of the coin: that **לשם שמים וחסד ואהבה** is only really possible if you are the **תכלית חסד** does not mean “doing good” but to be involved in what drives **מעשה בראשית**

No other existence but one’s own can be the source of this love for existence

מבשרי אחזה אלוק

If I can have **אהבה** then my **עבודה** must be based on the love of my existence

The **מסילת ישרים**

The deeper level of **מסילת ישרים** that explains the nature of **עבודה**

The **פרוזדור** and the external nature of the **שכר**

All he does is with reluctance

With externalization

He explains there **עולם הבא** and **עבודת השם** as part of the deeper connection to **נברא עולמי בשבילי** needed to know that the source of his work in life was to be dedicated to **חסד**

through myself

To be stuck with **חובתו בעולמו** alone is to be left without love

This is why Rambam has to say **סופו לבוא בגללה**

Why it is **אמת מפני שהוא אמת**

The only thing that saves a person from eternal externalization

THE FULL SPECTRUM OF AVRAHAM AS A SINGLE עבודה

The varied faces of Avraham and his work

They must all be one thing

The sharing of ultimate reality

The deeper way that it is the **עבודת אברהם**:

חסד can only be based on **מבשרי אחזה אלוק**

From the recognition of similar existential roots!

You can only love what you can share

Therefore Creation and Chesed and Selfhood and Monotheism are the same

תורת חסד-- תורה לשמה

What other **לשם שמים** could there be?!

The only thing in the world that one can give to **הקב"ה**

ברכה according to the Seforno

היה לי ברכה במה שתקנה שלמות

The only **חסד** that you can do for Me become what you can become