

Fill Your Own Cup 5786

Fall Series – Session Four – Arguing with God, Finding Ourselves

1) Professor Elie Wiesel, Words from a Witness, p. 48

One day a Tzadik came to Sodom; He knew what Sodom was, so he came to save it from sin, from destruction. He preached to the people. "Please do not be murderers, do not be thieves. Do not be silent and do not be indifferent." He went on preaching day after day, maybe even picketing. But no one listened. He was not discouraged. He went on preaching for years. Finally someone asked him, "Rabbi, why do you do that? Don't you see it is no use?" He said, "I know it is of no use, but I must. And I will tell you why: in the beginning I thought I had to protest and to shout in order to change them .I have given up this hope. Now I know I must picket and scream and shout so that they should not change me".

2) Genesis 18:16 - 33

- 16) The men set out from there and looked down toward Sodom, Abraham walking with them to see them off.
- 17) Now the LORD had said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,
- 18) since Abraham is to become a great and populous nation and all the nations of the earth are to bless themselves by him?
- 19) For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is just and right, in order that the LORD may bring about for Abraham what God has promised him."
- 20) Then the LORD said, "The outrage of Sodom and Gomorrah is so great, and their sin so grave!
- 21) I will go down to see whether they have acted altogether according to the outcry that has reached Me; if not, I will take note."
- 22) The men went on from there to Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the LORD.
- 23) Abraham came forward and said, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?
- 24) What if there should be fifty innocent within the city; will You then wipe out the place and not forgive it for the sake of the innocent fifty who are in it?
- 25) Far be it from You to do such a thing, to bring death upon the innocent as well as the guilty, so that innocent and guilty fare alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth act justly?"
- 26) And the LORD answered, "If I find within the city of Sodom fifty innocent ones, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."
- 27) Abraham spoke up, saying, <u>"Here I venture to speak to my Lord, I who am but dust and ashes:</u>
- 28) What if the fifty innocents should lack five? Will You destroy the whole city for want of the five?" And God answered, "I will not destroy if I find forty-five there." 29) But he spoke to God again, and said, "What if forty should be found there?" And God answered, "I will not do it, for the sake of the forty."

<u>בראשית יח:טו-לג</u>

וַיָּקֶמוּ מִשָּׁםֹ הֲאֲנָשִׁים וַיַּשְׁקֵפוּ עַל־פְּנֵי סְדָם וּאַבְרָהָם הֹלֵךְ עִמָּם לִשִּׁלְחָם:

יז וִיהֹוָה אָמֶר הָמְכ*ּסֶ*ה אָנִי^י מֶאַבְרָהָׁם אָשֶׁר אַנֵי עשֵׁה:

יח וְאַבְרָהֶּם הָיוֹ יְהְיֶה לְגִוֹי גָּדָוֹל וְעָצְוּם וֹגָבִרכוּ בֹוֹ כָּל גּוֹיֵי הָאַרְץ:

יט כִּי יְדַעְתִּׁיו לְמַעַן۠ אֲשֶׁר יְצַנֶּה אֶת־בָּנֵיו וְאֶת־ בִּיתוֹ אַחֲלִיו וְשְׁמְרוּ דֶּרֶךְ יְהוָה לַעֲשְוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפֵּט לְמַעַן הָבֵיא יְהוָה עַל־אַבְרָהָם אֵת אַשֵּר־דָבֵּר עָלִיו:

כ וַיּאֹמֶר יְהוָֹה זַעֲקֶת סְדָֹם וַעֲמֹרֶה כִּי־רֶבְּהּ וַחַּטָּאתֶּם כֵּי כָבָדָה מִאָּד:

כא אֲרֵדָה־נָּא וְאֶרְאֶׁה הַפְּצַעֲקְתֶהּ הַבָּאָה אֵלָי עשׂוּ וֹ כָּלָה וְאָם־לָא אֲדֵעָה:

> כב וַיִּפְנָוּ מִשֶּׁםּ הֶאָנָשִׁים וַיֵּלְכָוּ סְדֻּמְה וָאַבְרָהָם עוֹדֵנוּ עֹמֵד לְפָנֵי יִהוָה:

ָּכֹג וַיִּגַּשׁ אַבְרָּהָם וַיֹּאמֵר הַאַף הָּסְפֶּה צַדָּיק עם־רַשַּׁע:

כד אוּלֵי יֵשֶׁ חֲמִשֶּׁים צַדִּיקֵם בְּתְּוֹךְ הָעֵיר הַאַף תִּסְפֶּה וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא לַמָּלְוֹם לְמַעַן חַמִשִּׁים הַצַּדִּיקִם אֲשֵׁר בִּקְרָבָּה:

כה חָלֵּלָה לְּךְּ מֵעְשָׂת / כַּדָּבֶר הַדֶּה לְהָמֵית צַדִּיקֹ עִם־רָשָׁע וְהָיָה כַצַּדִּיק כְּרָשֵׁע חַלְּלָה לְּךְ הָשׁפֵט כָּל־הָאָרֶץ לָא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפֶּט: כו וָיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אִם־אָמְצֵא בִסְדֶּם חֲמִשִּׁים צַדִּיקִם בְּתְוֹךְ הָעֵיר וְנַשֵּׂאתִי לְכַל־הַמְּקוֹם בַּעָבוּרֵם:

כז ויַעַן אַבְרָהָם וַיּאֹמֵר <u>הנּה־נֵא הוֹאֵלתִּיֹּ</u> <u>לדבּר אַל־אַדנֹי וִאַנֹכִי עַפֵּר וַאָפָר:</u>

כח אוּלֵי יַחְסְרוּן חֲמִשֶּׁים הַצַּדִּיקְםּ חֲמִשָּׁה הָתַשְׁחִית בּחֲמִשָּׁה אֶת־כָּל־הָעֵיר וַיּאמֶר ּ **לַא אַשְׁחִית** אִם־אֶמְצֶא שָׁם אַרְבָּעֶים וַחֲמִשְּׁה: כט וַיּסֶף עוֹד לְדַבֶּר אֵלָיוֹ וַיּאמֵר אוּלֵי יִמְּצְאָוּן שָׁם אַרְבָּעֵים וַיּאמֶר **לֵא אֵעשַׂה** בַּעֲבָוּר הָאַרְבָּעִים:





30) And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I go on: What if thirty should be found there?" And God answered, "I will not do it if I find thirty there."

- 31) And he said, "I venture again to speak to my Lord: What if twenty should be found there?" And God answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the twenty."
- 32) And he said, "Let not my Lord be angry if I speak but this last time: What if ten should be found there?" And God answered, "I will not destroy, for the sake of the ten."
- 33) When the LORD had finished speaking to Abraham, God parted; and Abraham returned to his place.

ל וַּיֹאמֶר אַל־נָّא יֶחַר לֲאדֹנָיׁ וַאֲדַבֵּׁרָה אוּלָיִ יִמְצְאָוּן שָׁם שְׁלֹשֵׁים וַיֹּאמֶר **לֵא אֵעשֵּׁה** אִם־ אֵמְצֵא שָׁם שְׁלֹשֵּים:

לא וּיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה־נֶא הוֹאַלְתִּיֹ לְדַבְּר אֶל־אֲדֹנְי אוּלָי יִמָּצְאָוּן שָׁם עֶשְׂרֵים וַיֹּאמֶר **ׁלֵא אַשְׁחִית** בַּעֲבָוּר הֵעֵשָׂרֵים:

לב וַֿיּאֹמֶר אַל־נֶّא יֶחַר לֵאדֹנֶי וַאֲדַבְּרָה אַךְ־ הַפַּעַם אוּלַי יִמְּצְאָוּן שָׁם עֲשָׂרֶה וַיּאֹמֶר ׁ <u>לָאׁ</u> **אַשְׁחִית** בַּעַבְוּר הָעֲשָׂרָה:

ַלָּג וַיָּלֶךְ יְהֹּוֹה כַּאֲשֶׁר כִּלְּה לְדַבֵּר אֶל־אַבְרָהֶם וְאַבְרָהָם שָׁב לִמִּקֹמִוּ:

3) Midrash Rabbah Genesis 49:9

R. Levi commented: Shall not the judge of all the earth act justly? (Genesis 18:25)

[Abraham said:] If You desire the world to endure, there can be no *Din* (strict judgment), while if You desire *Din* the world cannot endure, yet You would hold the cord by both ends, desiring both the world and absolute judgment! **Unless You let go a little, the world cannot endure!**

Said the Holy Blessed One to Abraham: 'You have loved righteousness' (Psalms 45:8): you have loved to justify My creatures; 'and hated wickedness': you have refused to condemn them. 'Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows.'

From Noah to you there were ten generations, and out of all of them I you are the only one I spoke to as it says "And The LORD said to Abram, 'Lech Lecha - Go forth"

בראשית רבה מט:ט

אָמַר רַבִּי לֵוִי (בראשית יח, כה): *הֲשׁפֵּט כָּל הָאָרֶץ לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מִשְׁפָּט,*

אָם עוֹלָם אַתָּה מְבַקֵּשׁ אֵין דִּין, וְאָם דִּין אַתָּה מְבַקֵּשׁ לֵית עוֹלָם, אַתְּ תָּפֵיס חַבְלָא בִּתְרֵין רָאשִׁין, בָּעֵי עָלְמָא וּבָעֵי דִינָא,

אָם לֵית אַתְּ מְּוַתָּר צִּבְּחַר, לֵית עַלְמָא יָכֵיל קָאֵים. אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אַבְרָהָם (תהלים מה, ח): אָהַבְתָּ צֶדֶק וַתִּשְׂנָא רֶשַׁע, אָהַבְתָּ לְצַדֵּק אֶת בְּרִיּוֹתֵי, וַתִּשְׂנָא רֶשַׁע, מֵאַנְתָּ לְחַיִיבָן, (תהלים מה, ח): עַל כֵּן מְשִׁחַךְּ אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֶיךְ שֶׁמֶן שָׁשׁוֹן מֵחָבֵרֶיךְ, מַהוּ מֵחֲבֵרֶיךְ, מִנֹּחַ וְעַד אֶצְלְךְּ עֲשָׂרָה דוֹרוֹת וֹמְכַּלְּם לֹא דִּבַּרְתִּי עִם אֶחָד מֵהֶם אֶלָּא עִמֶּךְ (בראשית יב, א): וַיִּאֹמֶר ה' אֶל אַבְרָם לֶךְ

4) The Righteous with the Wicked, Rabbi Avital Hochstein,

https://www.hadar.org/torah-tefillah/resources/righteous-wicked

What all of Avraham's arguments share is that their focus is not Sodom—it is God. Avraham turns the spotlight on God's decision, God's conduct, and their consequences. In a sense, Avraham asks God to turn God's gaze inward—to look at Himself—and, in doing so, to see that there is reason to reconsider Sodom's fate.

Avraham is, in effect, asking God: Do You wish to govern Your world in such a way that the righteous perish with the wicked, rendering free will and moral choice meaningless? Do You want to allow wickedness and the wicked to dictate Your actions? Do You wish to act out of anger—a force that blinds from seeing justice? Do You wish to remain a neutral judge, or to engage in the world and tip the scales toward the righteous?

Avraham's essential demand is that, when faced with evil, we must not forget to turn the spotlight on ourselves—lest we allow wickedness and the wicked to dictate our behavior. His fourfold call, then, is this: in the face of great evil, search for the good that surely exists, do not let anger rule, do not let wickedness define your actions, and have the courage to draw near—to join with the righteous who are surely there.



5) Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirch, Genesis 18:28 - 33

In any case, Abraham was granted, by God's grace, understanding of the ways of divine providence; and his descendants were also privileged to know and recognize the duty and importance of the minority within the majority. They are destined to wander as a minority among all nations for thousands of years. And even among themselves, many times—in the past and also in the present—the good was the lot of only a minority. Even if there had been only ten righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, God would not have despaired of the wicked and sinners. Out of hope for a better future, God would have spared the entire community for the sake of that future. But where God does not lose hope, a person must also muster courage and remain confident, doing their part to stand in the breach for the ultimate victory of good—even if they are but a single individual standing against an entire wayward generation; even if victory can only be expected in the distant future, long after they have passed away.

This entire dialogue, if it can be called that, between Abraham and the Judge of all the earth—in which a creature of dust dares to address God, relying on the sense of justice in his heart, and receives God's agreement—is a faithful guarantee of the divinity of the voice within us that seeks justice. Even though we are but dust and ashes—a human's origin is dust and their end is dust—not everything within us is dust and ashes. In this body, formed from dust and ashes, lives a spark of the Creator of the universe, and an echo of God's spirit. Humanity, justice, and all the spiritual and moral virtues of the human race received their eternal validation from that divine echo in the human heart, and they are assured and stand above all the "dust and ashes" doctrines of physicality.

רש"ר הירש בראשית יח:כח-לג

מכל מקום לאברהם ניתנה, בחסדי ה׳, הבנה בדרכי ההשגחה האלקית; וצאצאיו זכו אף הם לדעת ולהכיר את חובתו וחשיבותו של המיעוט בתוך הרוב. עתידים הם לנדוד כמיעוט בין כל העמים במשך אלפי שנים. ואף בקרבם, הרבה פעמים – בעבר וגם בהווה – היה הטוב נחלת המיעוט בלבד.

גם אם היו נמצאים רק עשרה צדיקים בסדום ועמורה, לא היה הקב״ה מתייאש מהרשעים והחוטאים. ומתוך תקוה לעתיד טוב יותר, היה חס על כל הציבור למען אותו עתיד. אולם במקום שהקב״ה אינו מאבד תקוה, גם האדם חייב לאזור אומץ ולהשאר בטוח בעצמו, תוך שהוא עושה את חלקו לעמוד בפרץ למען הנצחון הסופי של הטוב; אף אם אינו אלא יחיד בודד העומד מול דור שלם סורר; ואפילו אם ניתן לצפות לנצחון רק בעתיד הרחוק, זמן רב לאחר שיילך לעולמו.

כל הדרשיח הזה, אם ניתן לכנותו כך, בין
אברהם לבין שופט כל הארץ – בו מעיז
יצור עפר לפנות אל ה׳, על סמך חוש הצדק
שבלבו, וזוכה להסכמת ה׳ – הוא ערובה
נאמנה לאלקיות הקול שבקרבנו המבקש
אחר הצדק. אף שאין אנו אלא עפר ואפר –
אדם יסודו מעפר וסופו לעפר – לא כל
הנמצא בנו הוא עפר ואפר. בגוף זה, הנוצר
מעפר ואפר, חי ניצוץ של בורא העולמים,
ובת קול מרוחו. האנושיות והצדק וכל
הסגולות הרוחניות והמוסריות של המין
האנושי, קיבלו את אישורן הנצחי מאותה
האנושי, קיבלו את אישורן הנצחי מאותה
בת קול אלקית בלב האדם, והן מובטחות
ועומדות מעל לכל תורות העפר והאפר של

6) Genesis 19:27 - 29

27) Next morning, Abraham hurried to the place where he had stood before God. 28) and, looking down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and all the land of the Plain, he saw the smoke of the land rising like the smoke of a kiln. 29) Thus it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain and annihilated the cities where Lot dwelt, God was mindful of Abraham and removed Lot from the midst of the upheaval.

בראשית יט:כז - כט

וַיִּשְׁבֵּם אַבְּרָחֶם בַּבִּּקֶר אֶׁל־חַמְּלְוֹם אֲשֶׁר־ עֲמֵד שָׁם אֲת־בְּנֵי יְהֹנֵה: וַיַּשְׁלֵּף עַל־בְּנֵי סְדֹם וַצְמִרָּה וְעֵל־כָּל־בְּנֵי אֱרֶץ הַכִּבֶּר וַיִּהְי וְּשָׁלֹהָים אֶת־אַרֶץ כְּקִיטִׁר הַכְּבְּשׁן: וַיְחִי בְּשַׁחֵת אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עָרִי הַכְּבָּר וַיִּיְלְּכָר אֱלֹהָים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח הָכְּכָּר וַיִּיְלְכִר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־אַבְרָהָם וַיְשַׁלַּח הָעָלִים אֲשֶּר־יָשַׁב בָּהָן לְוֹט:

7) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Berachot 26a

It was taught in a *baraita* in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi, son of Rabbi Ḥanina: Abraham instituted the morning prayer, as it is stated when Abraham came to look out over Sodom the day after he had prayed on its behalf: "And Abraham rose early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord" (Genesis 19:27), and from the context as well as the language utilized in the verse, the verb standing means prayer, as this

תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות

<u>.13</u>

תניא כוותיה דרבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אברהם תקן תפלת שחרית שנאמר וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום **אשר עמד שם** ואין עמידה אלא תפלה שנאמר **ויעמד** פינחס ויפלל





language is used to describe Pinhas' prayer after the plague, as it is stated: "And Pinhas stood up and prayed and the plague ended" (Psalms 106:30).