Class # 3–Parshat Vayeira and Pushing Back on Hashem

Advanced Fellowship Parsha Class - Sponsored in memory of Alice Toby Barbanel Z”l

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y7RXmrlGe-k>

**28 Days – [2000**] After stealing a limousine and crashing it into a house while drunk, Gwen [Sandra Bullock], a big-city newspaper columnist, is *forced* to enter a drug and alcohol rehab center. She considers it a complete waste of time and she thinks the people there are a bunch of losers. So Gwen awaits the completion of her one-month confinement so she can continue her party lifestyle. But slowly she comes to realize that she indeed does have a problem and begins embracing (and caring for) those around her.

1. Why was Gwen initially resistant to going and engaging with rehab program?
2. Why did she think she did **NOT** have a problem?
3. What type of personal defects are difficult to change?
4. What principles of living life did she lack and ultimately gain?
5. In what sense is she is different person?

Pirkai Avot 2:5

(ה) הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, אֵין בּוּר יְרֵא חֵטְא, וְלֹא עַם הָאָרֶץ חָסִיד, וְלֹא הַבַּיְשָׁן לָמֵד, וְלֹא הַקַּפְּדָן מְלַמֵּד, וְלֹא כָל הַמַּרְבֶּה בִסְחוֹרָה מַחְכִּים. וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אֲנָשִׁים, הִשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ.

"He (Hillel) used to say, a boor cannot fear sin, nor can an unlearned person be pious. A bashful person cannot learn, nor can an impatient one teach. Those who are involved excessively in business will not become a scholar. In a place where there are no men, endeavor to be a man.

**Rambam’s commentary**: A boor (*bur*) is one who does not have wisdom nor [proper] traits. And an ignorant person (literally, a man of the land - *am haarets*) is one who does not have intellectual virtues but he would have some character virtues. And [the meaning of] a person prone to being ashamed is known. And an impatient person is one who is impatient about everything and gets angry. And the matter of striving is to accustom your soul and lead it to acquire the virtues. And since there are no wise men [there] to teach you, you should teach yourself.

Avraham negotiating with Hashem

18:16 The strangers got up from their places and gazed at Sodom. Abraham went with them to send them on their way. 18:17 God said, 'Shall I hide from Abraham what I am going to do? 18:18 Abraham is about to become a great and mighty nation, and through him all the nations of the world will be blessed. 18:19 I have given him special attention so that he will command his children and his household after him, and they will keep God's way, doing charity and justice. God will then bring about for Abraham everything He promised.' 18:20 God [then] said, 'The outcry against Sodom is so great, and their sin is so very grave.

18:21 I will descend and see. Have they done everything implied by the outcry that is coming before Me? If not, I will know.'

18:22 The men turned from where they were, and headed toward Sodom. Abraham was still standing before God.

18:23 He came forward and said, 'Will You actually wipe out the innocent together with the guilty?

18:24 Suppose there are fifty innocent people in the city. Would You still destroy it, and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty good people inside it?

18:25 It would be sacrilege even to ascribe such an act to You - to kill the innocent with the guilty, letting the righteous and the wicked fare alike. It would be sacrilege to ascribe this to You! Shall the whole world's Judge not act justly?'

18:26 God said, 'If I find fifty innocent people in Sodom, I will spare the entire area for their sake.'

18:27 Abraham spoke up and said, 'I have already said too much before my Lord! I am mere dust and ashes!

18:28 But suppose that there are five missing from the fifty innocent? Will You destroy the entire city because of the five?' 'I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there,' replied God. 18:29 [Abraham] persisted and said, 'Suppose there are forty there?'

'I will not act for the sake of the forty.' 18:30 'Let not my Lord be angry, but I [must] speak up. What if there are thirty there?' 'I will not act if I find thirty there.'

18:31 'I have already spoken too much now before my Lord! But what if twenty are found there?' 'I will not destroy for the sake of the twenty.' 18:32 'Let my Lord not become angry, but I will speak just once more. Suppose ten are found there?'

'I will not destroy for the sake of the ten.' 18:33 When He finished speaking with Abraham, God left [him]. Abraham then returned home.

Sephorno

האף תספה צדיק עם רשע, Avraham felt that the way God had worded the decree with the word כי רבה, that what God might have meant was that as long as the majority of the people were guilty this would justify eliminating the entire city, including the innocent. In that event God would not be perceived as meting out justice.

?האף תספה ולא תשא למקום, even though You are justified in destroying the wicked on account of the righteous, far be it from You to kill the righteous.

והיה כצדיק כרשע, subject to chance, being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

השופט כל הארץ, seeing that You are the judge of the whole earth, if You will judge people based on the conduct of the majority You would eventually be forced to destroy mankind, seeing that most people everywhere are wicked.

אם אמצא בסדום, now that I will examine them individually, having sent My angels, if I find 50 righteous men of the type that will protest and try to stop the wickedness of the remainder of the people in Sodom, the leading city of the valley, ([compare Ezekiel 15,46](https://mg.alhatorah.org/Yechezkel/15#46))

ונשאתי לכל המקום, I will save everyone, not only to the righteous people alone.

הנה נא הואלתי לדבר, to ask questions concerning doubts in my mind regarding divine justice;

ואנכי עפר ואפר, seeing that I am but dust and ashes I have not been able to think the subject through to its logical conclusion, I depend on Your answer.

התשחית בחמשה את כל העיר, let me know if it is a definite rule of Your system of justice that unless there is a minimum of ten righteous people in any one town You will destroy all these cities on account of the five missing righteous men, (each city having only 9 each)? If You were to do this, the result would be that all five cities will be wiped out on account of five missing people!a

ויאמר..לא אשחית, I will not destroy (all five)

לא אעשה, I will not do any harm at all to the three cities which are less guilty than Sodom.

לא אשחית בעבור העשרים...בעבור העשרה. By destroying 3 out of the five cities the other two will not escape the retribution completely, seeing that the satellite towns are by definition largely dependent on the major urban center. Its destruction will cast its shadow on the satellite towns, as we know from Berachot 58, i.e. נתקללה בבל נתקללה בנותיה, when Babylon is cursed so are its satellite towns. (according to Rashi there: אוי לרשע אוי לשכניו, when the wicked experiences woes, so do his neighbours.”)