

Pattern of dialogue in Genesis 18.23-33

Then Abraham came near and said, "Will you indeed sweep away the just with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty just within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty just who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the just with the wicked, so that the just fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?"

And YHWH said, "**If I find at Sodom fifty** just in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake."

Abraham answered, "**Let me take it upon myself to speak to YHWH**, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty just are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?"

And he said, "**I will not destroy it if I find forty-five** there."

Again he spoke to him, "**Suppose forty are found there.**"

He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

Then he said, "**Oh do not let YHWH be angry if I speak.**

Suppose thirty are found there."

He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

He said, "**Let me take it upon myself to speak to YHWH.**

Suppose twenty are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

Then he said, "**Oh do not let YHWH be angry if I speak** just once more.

Suppose ten are found there."

He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And YHWH went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.