

Midrashim on the Weekly Parsha: Noah

Genesis 8:16:

צָא מָן־הַתָּבָה אַתָּה וָאִשְׁתִּךְ וּבָנֵיךְ וּנְשֵׁי־בַנֵיךְ אָתַּךְ:

Go out of the ark, together with your wife, your sons, and your sons' wives.

Zohar, Parshat Noah, 67b

נֹחַ לֹא הַגִּין עַל דוֹרוֹ וְלֹא הִתְּפָּלֵל עֲלֵיהֶם כְּאַבְרָהָם, דְּכֵיוָן דְּאָמַר קוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְאַבְרָהָם (בראשית י״ח:כ״ג) זַעֲקָתּ סְדוֹם וַעֲמוֹרָה כִּי רַבָּה מִיָּד וַיִּגֵּשׁ אַבְרָהָם וַיֹּאמֵר וְגוֹ' וְהִרְבָּה תַּחֲנוּנִים לְפְּנִי הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עַד שְׁשָׁאל שְׁאָם יִמְאָא עֲשְׂרָה צַּדִּיקִים שֶׁיְכַפֶּר לְכָל הַמָּקוֹם בַּעֲבוּרָם... אַחַר כַּךְּ בָּא מֹשֶׁה וְהִתְּפָּלֵל וְהַגִּין עַל דוֹרוֹ כֵּיוָן שֶׁאָמֵר הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא (שמות ל״ב:ח׳) סָרוּ מָהֵר מָן הַדֵּרֶך. מִיָד עַמָּד מֹשֶׁה בַּתִּפְּלָה וַיְּחַל משֹה וְגוֹ'...

Noaḥ did not defend his generation, nor did he pray for them, as Abraham did. When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham [that He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah] ... immediately Abraham began to pray before the Holy One, blessed be He, to the extent that he asked whether, if ten good people could be found, would God forgive the entire place because of them ... Later, Moses came, prayed for, and defended his generation. When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "They have strayed quickly from the way [in which I commanded them]," immediately, Moses stood and prayed.

Tanḥuma (Buber), Noach 15:1

אמרו לו בניו נצא לנו, אמר להם חס ושלום ברשותו של הקב"ה נכנסנו וברשותו של הקב"ה נצא, וכיון ששמע הקב"ה כך, מיד נתן להם רשות, שנאמר וידבר אלהים אל נח צא מן התבה.

"Let us go out." [Noaḥ] said to them, "Heaven forbid! At the behest of the Holy One we entered, and at the behest of the Holy One we will leave." When the Holy One heard [these words], He immediately gave them permission, as it is written, "And God spoke to Noaḥ, saying, Go out of the ark."

Tanhuma, Noah 9

אָמֵר רַבִּי לֵוִי, כָּל אוֹתָן שְׁנֵים עָשָׁר חֹדֶשׁ לֹא טָעַם טַעַם שֵׁנָה, לֹא נֹחַ וְלֹא בָנָיו, שֶׁהָיוּ זְקוּקִין לָזוּן אֶת הַבְּהֵמָה וְאֶת הַחַיָּה וְאֶת הָעוֹפוֹת. רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר, אֲפָלוּ שְׁבִשְׁתִּין לְפִילִין וּזְכוּכִיּוֹת לְנַעֲמִיּוֹת הָכְנִיסוּ בְיָדָן לְזוּן אוֹתָן. יֵשׁ בְּהֵמָה שָׁאוֹכֶלֶת לִשְׁתִּי שָׁעוֹת בַּלַּיְלָה, וְיֵשׁ אוֹכֶלֶת לְשָׁלשָׁה.

Rabbi Levi said: For the entire twelve months [in the ark], they didn't taste the taste of sleep – neither Noaḥ, nor his sons. For they were obliged to feed the animals, the beasts, and the birds. Rabbi Akiva stated that they even brought into the ark tree branches for the elephants and glass beads for the ostriches. Some of the animals had to be fed at the second hour in the night and others at the third hour of the night.

Star of Redemption, Franz Rosenzweig

Can love be commanded? Isn't love destiny and being deeply touched...? And now it is being commanded? Surely, love cannot be commanded; no third party can command it or obtain it by force. The commandment of love can only come from the mouth of the lover. Only the one who loves... can say and does say: Love me. From his mouth, the commandment of love is not a strange commandment, it is nothing other than the voice of love itself.

Translated by Barbara Gallie (Madison: University of Wisonsin Press, 2005), pp. 190-191

Tanhuma, Noah 9

צֵא מִן הַתֵּבָה. זֶה שֶׁאָמֵר הַכָּתוּב: הוֹצִיאָה מִמַּסְגֵּר נַפְשִׁי לְהוֹדוֹת אֶת שְׁמֶךּ בִּי יַכְתִּרוּ צַדִּיקִים כִּי תִגְמֹל עָלָי (תהלים קמב, ח). הוֹצִיאָה מִמַּסְגַּר נַפְשִׁי, שֶׁהָיָה נֹחַ סָגוּר בַּתֵּבָה.

Go forth from the ark (Gen. 8:16). Scripture says elsewhere in allusion to this verse: "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Thy name; the righteous shall crown themselves because of me; for Thou wilt deal bountifully with me" (Ps. 142:8). Bring my soul out of prison refers to Noah, who was imprisoned in the ark.