



Gal Einai

Revealing the Torah's
Inner Dimension

BSD

Four Archetypical Crises

In the Torah portion of Noach, humanity suffers two great crises. The first is the flood – a holocaust that annihilates not only humanity but also all the animals, except for those that survived on Noah's ark. The second crisis was the Tower of Babel- the scattering of humanity to the four corners of the earth after the destruction of the Tower. In the Torah portion of *Bereishit*, we read about another crisis: the expulsion from the Garden of Eden as a result of the sin of Adam and Eve.

Moving out to catch a bird's-eye view, the Torah's all-encompassing story—the exile, slavery, and finally Exodus to and from Egypt—constitutes the fourth crisis. From the very beginning, this crisis was designed to attain the heights that came in its wake. Actually, the redemption from Egypt provided rectification for the three previous crises. On an inner level, all four crises were designed to ultimately achieve a more rectified reality.

These four crises are a model, an archetype, for four different types of crises in both our personal lives, in the history of the Jewish People and the history of all humanity.

A. The Expulsion from the Garden of Eden: Paradise Lost

The first crisis, the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, is the crisis of the lost dream. The Garden of Eden is not just an allegory, but rather, a tangible reality. Still, this reality existed in what could best be described as another dimension. From our perspective, it is a type of dream world, the gate to which has been blocked for us. Accordingly, before Adam's sin and the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the world as we know it did not exactly exist. It is only after the primordial sin that the picture changed, the Garden of Eden receded into the background and our dimension became reality.¹ The dream world is a utopia—a theoretical, ideal reality. But this dream was created and existed - and even today, it plays an important role in our consciousness.

¹ In the language of Kabbalah, in the words of the holy Ari, before Adam's sin, reality was fourteen levels higher than it is today. The pre-sin world is beyond the reach of our hand (14 is the numerical value of *yad*, hand).

We live in this world, but in truth, we are not from here. We were all expelled from the Garden of Eden. It is important to remember this, but we must not get too caught up in nostalgia and live in a dream world. Instead, we must work within existing reality, take action in the 'outside' that is now our place: "And *Havayah Elokim* sent him from the Garden of Eden to work the land from which he was taken." This is the rectification!

Our lives start after the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Our souls were expelled from the utopian, dreamlike world in which they existed, hurled to the depths of the difficult reality that we all know. From now on, our entire lives are dedicated to rehabilitation from the trauma of the shattering of the dream. In this story, as in the Garden of Eden, there is a catalyst for the expulsion: the snake, which is the evil inclination. When the snake succeeds in interfering, our initial innocence is broken. We are expelled to the arena of cruel and estranged life, and we must now work to deal with this world, know how to address the crisis and rectify it. (Similarly, we can say that childhood is the lost individual Garden of Eden in each person's life).

B. The Flood: Destruction

The second crisis, the flood, is the destruction of the world. As opposed to Adam, Noah was not expelled from a previous reality. Instead, his world was literally destroyed. True, before the flood, the world was not such a nice place to live in, certainly not a utopia, but it was settled. There were people, animals, vitality and sounds of life. After the flood, everything was desolate. A terrible quiet pervaded the air and all that was left was one small family to start everything anew.

This type of crisis is not something that is a necessary part of life, but it does happen to many people. For example, a person who lost his entire family and now, after his personal flood, he must begin anew. This is a very difficult task and he must enlist tremendous emotional strength to even begin. It is enticing to escape from this reality to alcohol and roll around inside our tents like Noah. But there is no choice. The old world has been destroyed and no longer exists. All that is left is to build the new world on the ruins of the old. The previous generation was broken and you, who were a part of that generation, are what is left to rectify it, as long as you manage to look forward.

We don't have to work hard to find people whose world has been destroyed. It is amazing to see so many Jews who endured the Holocaust and lost everything dear to them, but then recovered from the destruction and literally built everything once again.

C: Tower of Babel: The Scattering

The third crisis, the Tower of Babel was a crisis of scattering. At first, all people shared "one language and the same things." There was one large, concentrated society. The crisis—the punishment of the generation that constructed the Tower of Babel—was not the death and destruction of the world, but simply scattering: "And God scattered them from there over the face of all the earth."

Instead of one nation we now have seventy nations – each with its own language, its own land and its own culture. This crisis may seem easier than being expelled from the

Garden of Eden or surviving the destruction of the world. But it is not simple at all. The social framework completely changes and all societal codes have to be written anew.

The rectification of the scattered world begins with Abraham, who appears at the end of our Torah portion: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, (the scattering of the generation of the Tower of Babel, then) He set the borders of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.”² (According to the sages, Abraham lived in the time of the Tower of Babel as a lone revolutionary who opposed the tower’s construction³). “One was Abraham”⁴ – the entire world was on one side [the divided side] and he was at the other side [the united side]⁵. Abraham and his descendants bear the message of rectification of the divided world. The three patriarchs, from whom the nation of Israel was destined to rise, will bring about rectified unity—not the unity based on a false external peace lacking any self-nullification before God, but rather, unity at whose focal point is the chosen nation, which reveals to the entire world that “God is One and His Name is One.”⁶

The crisis of scattering repeats itself often in history: A united society begins to fragment into different political parties and instead of the positive, constructive communication that existed in the beginning, people begin to speak different languages until the only communication left is throwing stones at one another (precisely like the description of the destruction of the Tower of Babel).

In our personal lives, as well, we can discern scattering. A person who lived in internal peace enters a state of internal conflict. Having previously lived a life of relative harmony and unity, he suddenly finds himself in a state of confusion. We will often find him roaming the world, attempting to gather his own broken pieces. All of this must be rectified in reality in the form of a strong backbone of unity in society as a whole and in our individual lives.

D: The Descent to Egypt: Enslavement

At the end of the era of the patriarchs, the Children of Israel descend to Egypt and in the following generation, enslavement began. This is a new type of crisis. It is not the shattering of the dream, not the destruction of the world and not scattering. Instead, it is exile and slavery. An entire nation, 600,000 people, become a nation of slaves. The enslavement is total and all-encompassing in both body and spirit. Agonizing work that breaks the body and leaves no solace for the soul. It is impossible to breathe, for every drop of air and attention is unwillingly devoted to

² Deuteronomy 32:8.

³ *Avodah zarah* 18b: “Happy is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked.” This is Abraham, who did not accept the counsel of the people of the generation of the scattering. According to the sages, the generation of the scattering was at the end of the days of Peleg. If so, Abraham was 48 years old at the time, as is written in *Seder Olam*, c. 1. See also *Pirkei derabbi eliezer*, c. 24.

⁴ Ezekiel 33:24.

⁵ *Bereishit rabbah* 42:8.

⁶ Zechariah 14:9.

the enslaving master until the slave forgets who he is. Instead of being himself, he is completely swallowed up in a different, foreign mentality.

The rectification for this is the exodus from Egypt, and the greatest wonder is the actual exodus of “one nation from the midst of another nation.”⁷ The nation of Israel is born into the world from within the figurative Egyptian womb. This story requires the persona of the redeemer, Moses, who is sent to take Israel out of Egypt. There also has to be an ultimate goal and destiny for the entire process – the giving of the Torah, “When you take the Nation out of Egypt, you will serve God on this mountain,”⁸ – until the completion of the process with the entry into the Land of Israel.

Perhaps we consider ourselves free people. But in truth, in one way or another, we are all enslaved. The chief enslaver is not necessarily the big brother outside, but rather, the distractions of the mad world in which we live. Concern over making a proper living can turn a person into a slave. Even if an individual does not suffer from financial concerns, we are a worried generation. The constant pressure and stress weigh on us like an iron yoke (as the sages say, that the burden of government and the burden of routine life leave no room for the yoke of Torah). Our souls are incapable of finding true inner peace, breathing freely and taking care of the truly important things. In addition, we are all caught up in the limits of societal norms: the cheap culture that sustains us (consciously or unconsciously) and dictates our thoughts and behavior is a modern-day slave-master with a broad smile and golden whip. We certainly need redemption!

Crises in Jewish History in the Recent Era

The model of four types of crises fits the process that the Nation of Israel is experiencing over the recent generations:

Paradise Lost: The dream that used to be reality and has been lost is the Jewish world in the diaspora, the Jewish *shtetl*. The *shtetl* is like a utopian world with the scent of the Garden of Eden (although it certainly was not a perfect place). This dream was shattered even before the Holocaust, when spiritual destruction befell the Jewish villages and towns. The snake in this story is the Enlightenment that enticed Jews to taste the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge. Suddenly, Jews found themselves outside the Garden of Eden. The fragrance of the old *Yiddishkeit* had disappeared. The warm, protective nursery was broken and the evil winds entered through all the cracks. It is impossible to return to the Jewish *shtetl* as it was. The rectification is to work in today’s world.

Destruction: The destruction in our era came in the form of the Holocaust. An entire Jewish world was annihilated, entire communities were erased and the survivors had to start from nothing after the deluge. The rectification is not to despair and to understand that if I was miraculously saved (even if I do not know why I merited to be saved), my task now is to go forward and build a new world.

⁷ Deuteronomy 4:34.

⁸ Exodus 3:12

Scattering: Parallel to the processes that the nation of Israel endured in the Diaspora, the Jewish community in the Land of Israel began to grow. In spite of the wonder of the return to Zion and in spite of the role that the Jewish community in the Land of Israel has as a type of Noah's Ark able to provide a sanctuary for the Jews who managed to escape Europe, in spite of the clear Divine Providence, the state that was established bears an uncanny resemblance to a disappointing Tower of Babel. Instead of everything being declaratively built on the foundations of Torah and the chosen-status of the nation of Israel, with the explicit recognition that we are God's Nation, every effort is being made to create a state of all its citizens, while intentionally leaving God out of the picture. (This describes the revealed mentality of the majority of the "Builders of the Tower").

The next crisis followed close on its heels. After the first few years during which the feelings of solidarity between Jews were strong, years of disappointment followed and the national and social fabric began to unravel. The polarization between the different sectors of the people became more and more pronounced and the national crisis was expressed in the phenomenon of *yordim*, Israelis who choose to emigrate from Israel and are scattered throughout the world. This phenomenon reflects a sentiment of, "What do we need all of this for?"

The rectification is to maintain the path of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - to establish our homeland on the foundations of Jewish uniqueness and to unfurl the banner of Torah and faith in God as the banner of the rectified Jewish State.

Enslavement: The crisis of enslavement ultimately rears its head. We are currently in its throes. It is expressed by a Jewish admiration of foreign cultures. We do not always feel the enslavement. Sometimes that is the greatest problem of all because it means that we are internalizing a foreign mentality. We speak and think in concepts borrowed from a foreign, binding and enslaving culture. One of the most painful expressions of this problem is the fear of what the non-Jewish world will say, which seems to be the most consistent policy of all the Israeli governments since the state of Israel was established.

To rectify the current reality, we have to speak explicitly of a redeemer, of the king Mashiach, who opens all of our mouths to speak Jewish and think Jewish. The Mashiach is a redeemer who will take us out of all the enslavement and lead the true revolution—transforming us into a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

The exodus from the exile of Egypt was with an "uplifted arm" and in plain sight for all to see. This will be true of the future redemption, may it be speedily in our days. And as the rectification of this final crisis (which essentially brings about the rectification of all the crises) took place with the giving of the Torah, so shall it be with the true and complete redemption, may it be speedily in our days, when a deeper understanding

of Torah⁹ will be revealed and unveil the inner dimension and the essential nature of the eternal Torah that we received at Mount Sinai.

⁹ Referred to by the sages as a renewal of Torah; see *Vayikra rabbah* 1:3.