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Report on rabbinic thesis of John Davidson

Bible Reading with the Psychiatrists and the Literati:

A Search for Personality in the Case of Isaac

This referee approaches the task of conveying to his colleagues
a sense of this study's content and worth bidhilu vrehimu,
with a sense of humility (inadequacy, to be precise) and pride to
have had a hand, or a finger or two, in its conception and production.
'Adif koah habben mikkoah ha'av! After several readings of
the final submission, I still am mystified by the concentration of
so much thought and expertise in the three areas of psychology, religion
and literary criticism in little more than a hundred pages. My
own reactions, appreciations and criticisms in terms of agreements
and demurrers, methodological convergence and divergence and reflections
on the congruence or discrepancy between the three approaches to a
literary text would require more print than is devoted to the thesis itself.
This last observation reflects two aspects of Mr. Davidson's style
which coexist in a rare and happy complementarity. The
density of the writing, at little or no expense of clarity, owes in large
measure to the author's command of the specialized languages
of psychiatry and poetics which we would term jargon or argot
but for the deprecation often read into these terms for useful linguistic
short cuts. Mr. Davidson entered our school in possession of the
idioms of psychology and psychiatry; his acquisition of the
vocabulary of literary criticism is a tribute to his capacity to
read and digest the effluents of a newly opened and open

contentious discipline; and the faculty may be proud of their contribution to a third accomplishment: a capacity for handling texts in Hebrew, an ability frequently and notably lacking in academicians purporting to be critics and interpreters of the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet for all this, Mr. Davidson's fine, often elegant, style often takes exhilarating wing — as the author, physician and rabbi and littérateur, becomes integrated into the one and undifferentiated observer, participant, fellow-sufferer and victim-hero of that uniquely human experience: the romance of the family.

That I recommend a perusal, at the least, of this fine effort to my colleagues goes without saying. Need I add that it is with gratification that I solicit the acceptance of this dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for ordination?

Herbert Chanan Brichto

Feb. 24, 1994

Bible Reading with the Psychiatrists and the Literati:

A Search for Personality in the Case of Isaac

John Davidson

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination.

Hebrew Union College-
Jewish Institute of Religion

1994

Referee, Professor Herbert Chanan Brichto

To the memory of Veda Halbert Davidson (1901-1993) and Bernard Saltzberg (1919-1989), the Bible reader and the mathematician, who made our souls in Texas.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a fruit of the partnership between Norma Jean Dowdy Bledsoe Davidson and John Halbert Davidson. It was conceived in the fifteenth year of our marriage. It was born in the fifteenth year of our lives as Jews.

We are especially grateful for the gifts of friends during the decade and a half of our travels together -- Betty Benjamin, Norman and Berne Black, Norman Bock, Chanan and Millie Brichto, Deborah Bronstein, T. Carmi, Bill and Thelma Cooper, Theodore Dinerstein, Neil and Laurie Dubin, Ken Ehrlich, Harold Falik, Morris Glesby, Ed Goldman, Harvey and Sandy Gordon, Maurice Hirsch, Adam Kamesar, Sam and Joan Karff, Nancy Kudler-Flam, Jacob Rader Marcus, Michael Meyer, Kenneth Midlo, Gene and Cecile Mihaly, Gale Miller, Al Mortensen, Jo Odasz, Jakob Petuchowski, Bernie and Ev Saltzberg, Hannah Shenhar, Hyman Judah and Barbara Schachtel, Alan and Annie Schneider, Ben Zion Wacholder, Mark Westheimer, David Whiman and David Wolff. Their suppers, their support, and their love have sustained us.

J.H.D.
February 24, 1994

Digest

Present-day readers of the Bible come to its texts with many expectations. Among these expectations are skepticisms regarding the value of searching for any biblical witness to psychiatric truths that have gained common acceptance in our time, and regarding the value of explicating biblical lines with an eye and ear for the poetic devices that are welcomed in any deliberate narrative.

These skepticisms are answered here by a study that provides a rationale and method for reading the Bible in a way which is indebted to both the psychiatrist and the literatus. The study also includes a demonstration of this collaboration by means of an analysis of the Genesis stories that have direct bearing on an understanding of Isaac's personality.

The psychiatric reading of Isaac seeks "enduring patterns" of his relating to himself, others, and the world, as well as evidence of psychoanalytic tenets such as "the unconscious," "psychic determinism," "transference," and "life cycle crises." The reading is guided in this search by the "listening and inferring" process of a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, which has been transplanted to this new territory. The

accompanying literary reading of the chapters is built upon the consideration of markers such as type-scenes, variegated repetitive elements, allusion, point of view, direct discourse, setting, plot development, wordplay, and overall compositional principles.

Together, the psychiatric and literary approaches are considered to achieve a truth of "connection," in which a "slip of the tongue" or a variegated repetitive element can both contribute to a unique appreciation of the biblical narrative's workings and, in this case, of Isaac's multi-dimensional personality.

Table of Contents

Introduction

The title begs for questions. Why should the psychiatrists and the literati read the Bible? Why should their readings be aligned? Why should others give attention to such an alignment? Why should a primary concern of both be that of the biblical view of personality? Why should Isaac be taken as a case for consideration? And, how is all this to be done? How might the psychiatrist or the literatus read? How can both of their insights be appreciated best by the nonprofessional? In the pages that follow, these issues will be addressed.

This thesis proposes that the psychiatrists and the literati of our time should read the Bible. They should do so because its prominence, in the past as well as the present, has been associated with much of the enduring inspiration and fractiousness that has spurred Western culture onward. The Bible's words and wisdoms have left trailings, if not edifices, of truth in their wake. Any reflective individual who is concerned with these matters does well to consider the biblical vein's gold.

Further, it is likely that any reader will find more by way of inclusive, shared views than is expected. It is possible that the

"connections" of which physicist Richard Feynman speaks will present

themselves even to a psychiatrist or literatus whose fancy is atheism and

whose reading is only occasionally biblical. For, as Feynman suggests,

each of us seeks Deity in some way:

> Which end is nearer to God; if I may use a
> religious metaphor. Beauty and hope, or the
> fundamental laws? I think that the right way,
> of course, is to say that what we have to look at
> is the whole structural interconnection of the
> thing; and that all the sciences, and not just the
> sciences but all the efforts of intellectual
> kinds, are an endeavour to see the connections of
> the hierarchies, to connect beauty to history, to
> connect history to man's psychology, man's
> psychology to the working of the brain, the brain
> to the neural impulse, the neural impulse to the
> chemistry, and so forth, up and down, both ways.
> And today we cannot, and it is no use making
> believe that we can, draw carefully a line all the
> way from one end of this thing to the other,
> because we have only just begun to see that
> there is this relative hierarchy.
> And I do not think either end is nearer to God.
> To stand at either end, and to walk off that end
> of the pier only, hoping that out in that direction
> is the complete understanding, is a mistake.
> And to stand with evil and beauty and hope, or to
> stand with the fundamental laws, hoping that
> way to get a deep understanding of the whole
> world, with that aspect alone, is a mistake. It
> is not sensible for the ones who specialize at
> one end, and the ones who specialize at the other
> end, to have such disregard for each other. (They
> don't actually, but people say they do.) The great
> mass of workers in between, connecting one

step to another, are improving all the time our
understanding of the world, both from working
at the ends and working in the middle, and in
that way we are gradually understanding this
tremendous world of interconnecting hier-
archies.[1]

With this vision, the psychiatrists and the literati of our time

should read the Bible with pen in hand. They should allow its witness to

join that of their science or art. This should be done in the service of

discovering a truth of "connection." And lines should be drawn carefully

between whatever points seem to be related if not contiguous. Bible

reading, psychiatry, and literature can be better for it.

It is also of note to observe that the readings, the interpretations of

these two disciplines, psychiatry and literature, can be profitably brought

together in a way unlike those of others. They share certain techniques

and a potential philosophical starting point that are not so easily

established among mathematicians, political scientists, sculptors, or

physical chemists, who might want to compare notes for an analogous

procedure.

If the Bible merits consideration, why should we especially bring

together, for comparison and collaboration, the Bible readings of the

psychiatrists and the literati? Why these two fields? Because it is

arguable that some of the literati's methods and presuppositions are not

so different in the first place from the mode of psychiatric listeners in

consulting rooms. And because both of them are engaged from the start in

an enterprise resembling Spinoza's "interpretation of Nature" -- the one in

the realm of nonfiction, the other in that of fiction. 2   In a phrase, the

psychiatrists and the literati are close kin.

For example, Sternberg has described well the sensitivities and

intent that the literati bring to a biblical analysis:

> Gaps, ambiguity, redundancy, exposition,
> temporal ordering, omniscient viewpoint,
> reading process, patterns of analogy, alternative
> forms of reference, indirect characterization
> and rhetoric: such concepts show signs of
> generating a powerful discourse about the
> Bible,which traditional scholarship must come
> to terms with.   I for one am now more
> convinced than ever that here lies the future of
> biblical studies as a whole. 3

These "concepts" are distinctly related to some of the cognitive

ways of psychiatrists.   Attention to "gaps, ambiguity, redundancy,

exposition, temporal ordering," and other phenomena within a patient's

oral report is an obvious ingredient of any skillful listener's method.

Literature has no monopoly on these variables. The patient who stops and

starts, who skips and repeats, who offers mostly too little or too much

information, or who recalls and reorders events in a sequence that defies

chronology or expectation, raises questions in the mind of the psychiatrist that are analogous to those which the literatus confronts while reading a text, biblical or otherwise, that is constituted by arresting asymmetries. And so, it is reasonable to posit that the common ground between psychiatry and literature can serve as a basis for a unique and insightful biblical understanding.

This commonality is appreciated even more in noting that psychiatric and literary explorations often share a philosophical starting point which seeks to interpret only the text of person or word that is at hand. Undue influence from other quarters is not welcome. The psychiatrist seeks the internal consistency of the patient's speech and behavior. The literatus seeks the internal resonance of the work's ways and message.

If one also concedes that the psychiatrist is an observer of nature, then the juxtaposition of these two specific disciplines, in the single realm of biblical study, is lent added credence by recalling Spinoza's clarion call in the seventeenth century for the critical interpretation of the Bible. It was one of the first summons for striving toward the "connections" that Feynman 4 mentions above, and its stage was undeniably biblical. Here a literary effort was linked to a scientific one.

Spinoza wrote:

> ... the method of interpreting Scripture does not
> widely differ from the method of interpreting
> Nature -- in fact, it is almost the same. For as
> the interpretation of Nature consists in the
> examination of the history of Nature, and
> therefrom deducing definitions of natural
> phenomena on certain fixed axioms, so
> Scriptural interpretation proceeds by the
> examination of Scripture, and inferring the
> intention of its authors as a legitimate
> conclusion from its fundamental principles. [5]

It is fitting that a latter day science, psychiatry, should once more
find itself linked to a literary enterprise on biblical territory. Psychiatry
and literary criticism are kin by virtue of historical precedent, from at
least the time of Spinoza forward, as well as sharing certain similarities
of technique and philosophical starting points.

Nonetheless, the layperson is justified in asking why those outside
the realm of psychiatry and literature should take particular interest in
their conjoint reading of the Bible -- apart from a general desire to learn
from others. The answer begins with Auden's well-known, widely cited,
still applicable lines from 1939:

For one who lived among enemies so long;
If often he was wrong and at times absurd,
To us he is no more a person
Now but a whole climate of opinion.

(W.H. Auden, "In Memory of Sigmund Freud") [6]

The answer continues in acknowledging that this "climate of opinion" remains with us all and is amply reflected in most of the corners of our lives -- especially those of psychiatry and literature, but also those of the culture at large. The layperson should take an interest in the conjoint reading that psychiatry and literature bring from the Bible because these outlooks are more shared among us than is oft assumed.

Moreover, for those who doubt this state of affairs, the prominence of Freud specifically and of psychiatry generally is demonstrated, if in no other way, by the fact that the largest body of clinical practitioners under Freudian influence, American psychiatrists, has come to realize in recent days that its flagship scholarly periodical, The American Journal of Psychiatry, "has the highest circulation of any peer-reviewed journal in the world." [7]   The psychiatrists read and write deftly there of neurotransmitters, brain imaging, and psychodynamics. In doing so, they continue to walk in Freud's wake and to constitute partially his "climate of opinion." The rest of the clime comes from others, including laity, who

apparently read, walk, and subscribe with the doctors.

Yet with this in mind, it remains reasonable to question what might be the best territory for any aligned Bible reading with the psychiatrists and the literati. What concern do they most share between themselves and with the Bible? Arguably, the common concern is that of the growth process and ever-changing content of the human personality -- one that seeks to address "the raw universe in terms of meaning," [8] throughout the decades of a life. Psychiatrists are filled with case studies. Literati are collectors of characters and characterization. And, the Bible is populated by those Faulkner calls "perfectly ordinary normal heroes and blackguards," who are "all trying to get something for nothing or ... to be braver than they are." [9] Personality in its variety comprises a common landscape for all of them -- psychiatry, literature, and the Bible.

But what characters should be examined? What personalities fit this common landscape? Certainly there are several. Yet here, Isaac is chosen. He is chosen because he is assumed to be the weakest, most unidimensional, least well-developed figure of the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). To seek his personality is, without a doubt, to search for it. Thus, the choice and the task.

But finally, how is all this to be done? How do we conceive that a

psychiatrist or literatus might read a biblical text for a view of personality? In the chapters ahead, psychiatric and literary approaches to this question will be proposed and delimited. No claim of exhaustiveness will be made, but guidelines will be offered by way of sample questions that each approach might bring to a reading. These will then be demonstrated to varying degrees by a specific consideration of the biblical treatment of Isaac.

Therein, Isaac will be viewed in a threefold division of general, psychiatric, and literary readings. The general reading will be the most extensive of the three with a chronological review and interpretation of the narrative. The psychiatric and literary readings will then be presented with specific focusings on various aspects of the text that lend themselves to more extensive analysis by virtue of their relevance to the guideline questions identified earlier. It is assumed that a reader must begin with an overall appraisal of the text that serves as a foundation upon which to build any further consideration. Relatively greater weight is given here to the initial, general reading. The psychiatric and literary readings flow from it and do not stand alone.

In sum, the thesis to come will offer a rationale and means by which to read the Bible with a measure of the insights of both psychiatry and

literary criticism. These insights are held to be uniquely complementary and relevant from the outset. Second, the thesis will demonstrate this proposed reading method through an examination of the texts related to Isaac. And last, the thesis will address the notion of a biblical view of personality as an offshoot from this case.

Chapter 1

A Psychiatric Approach

Within defined parameters, a psychiatrist can approach the biblical narrative with a reasoned hope of discerning there a view of personality that is both informed by the perspectives of present-day psychiatric practice, and is appreciative of the witness of a millenia-old religious testament. This can be accomplished by a conservative assent to certain useful standards of principle and technique.

These standards do not include a wholesale adoption of particular meta-psychological systems, which themselves often bear the weight of considerable speculation and uneven clinical utility, nor do they require an ideological conversion to specific theocentric doctrines. Instead, these standards include only an acceptance of a general textbook definition of personality, of continued psychoanalytic centrality, of basic psychoanalytic tenets and relevant departures, and of specific psychoanalytic, psychotherapeutic methods.

Klerman has formulated a concise definition of personality that is consistent with contemporary psychiatric views. His words can serve as both a starting point and a mooring:

> Personality refers to relatively enduring patterns of relating to, perceiving, and thinking about the self, significant others, and the environment. [1]

From this beginning, a reader is left with the task of first searching for these "patterns" within biblical story lines, and then allowing their designs and textures the possibility of a mostly new, more unfettered consideration than before. The reader must make an honest attempt to discern "enduring patterns of relating" to the self and the world by given biblical characters. The hypothesis should be entertained that these individuals are often portrayed with a consistent depth which goes beyond simplistic, moralistic caricature.

With the above definition and process in mind, it is also well to recall with Meissner that the role of psychoanalysis remains "central" in current psychiatry, and that its basic concepts of the mind still compel. [2] The psychiatrist-reader is obliged to own up to the givens of this aspect of his milieu as he seeks to enter another. In Meissner's judgement, the task of the psychiatrist is to root any consideration of personality in the essential "theoretical contributions of Sigmund Freud." [3] It is to begin with Freud's notion that "unconscious ideas persist in the mind" which have notable effects upon a person's "actions and behavior," while the

individual remains "totally unaware of such influence." [4] The task is to continue with a consideration that these unconscious ideas, fears, and desires are actively repressed from within, and are only incompletely released by the crises of a moment, by the dysinhibitions of hypnosis, dreams, or freely associative thinking, or by the labored reflection of an individual upon recurrent relationship problems of his life, as eventually experienced and explored with a neutral therapist. [5] And, the task is to recognize that a catalytic center of the unconscious mind is in a person's childhood sexual development from infancy onward, and that the center's focus is on identification with the same-sex parent, and with the prohibitions and prescriptions which this entails. [6]

Meissner's views are shared and amplified by others like Marmer [7] and Nicholi, [8] who emphasize not only the major import of unconscious mental activity in psychoanalytic thinking, but also other derivative elements. These include particularly the phenomena of "psychic determinism" and "transference."

The former holds "that all mental events" are "causally linked to others in an associative network." [9] This results in recurrent patterns of thinking and doing that are propagated throughout our lives. We are

conceived as having only a residue of freedom within this perimeter.

"Transference," on the other hand, is a specific example of this insight as

applied to the sphere of relationships. It is well-described by Nicholi:

> All feelings in relationships as we now
> understand them run on a double track. We react
> and relate to another person not only on the
> basis of how we consciously experience that
> person in reality, but also on the basis of our
> unconscious experience of him in reference to
> our experiences with significant people in
> infancy and childhood -- particularly parents and
> family members. We tend to displace our
> feelings and attitudes from these past figures
> onto people in the present, especially if someone
> has features similar to a person in the past. [10]

Thus, after acknowledging his psychoanalytic centeredness, the

psychiatrist can identify the givens of his way in terms such as: "the

unconscious," with its dynamic, sexual nature; "psychic determinism,"

with its qualifications of human freedom in general; and "transference,"

with its implications for particular interpersonal alliances. While

adhering to these tenets, the reader can appreciate the biblical text in yet

another way. In any number of cases, the reader may seek evidence of

unconscious acting or thinking, of determined behaviors, or of recurrent

relationship styles that suggest the canniness of the biblical voice.

Relevant continuations and departures within the century-old

psychoanalytic stream are also fundamental to a psychiatric reading.

These include, at a minimum, an awareness of Erikson's thought [11] and

that of those who have most substantively challenged Freud's view of

religion, per se. [12, 13, 14]

Erikson has made a noted contribution beyond Freud's stated

vision. [15] He has expanded the cast of players in "the unconscious" to

include "life cycle" dependent yearnings, which are contextually

responsive to the society at large, and vary from infancy to childhood to

adolescence to adulthood. He has conceived of at least eight nodal points

of development within an individual's life where various critical

emotional as well as cognitive tasks are addressed -- from an infant's

acquisition of "basic trust," to a grandparent's realization of "integrity" at

life's end. These nodal points and their psychosocial polarities are:

infancy (trust vs. mistrust); early childhood (autonomy vs. shame, doubt);

play age (initiative vs. guilt); school age (industry vs. inferiority);

adolescence (identity vs. identity diffusion); young adult (intimacy vs.

isolation); adulthood (generativity vs. self-absorption); and mature age

(integrity vs. disgust, despair).

Erickson has introduced a means by which to appreciate "the

unconscious" without relegating its events only to the intrapsychic

trailings left from dramas in the first five or six years of life. And, as a

result, this continuation of the Freudian way leaves a psychiatrist with

another question for any biblical text -- does it depict any inkling of

Erikson's full-fledged, mindful development of personality over the course

of a character's narrative life?

Additionally, while proceeding in this psychoanalytic line, the

reader must face Freud's almost wholly negative view of religion, and by

logical extension, of its accouterments -- including biblical texts.

Although certain latter-day clinicians have taken unflinching departures

of dissent, it must be conceded with Coles that religion "excited" Freud to

"truculence," as is evident in his The Future of an Illusion, where he refers

to "'the fairy tales of religion'" which are "mere illusion" and "'derived

from human wishes.'" [16] Coles recalls Freud's characterizing "'religious

thinking'" as being like a "'narcotic'" and as being descried "'like the

obsessional neurosis ... out of the Oedipus complex, out of the relation to

the father.'" [17] So also, Rizzuto cites Freud's unequivocal negation:

> "Psychoanalysis has made us familiar with the
> intimate connection between the father complex
> and belief in God; it has shown us that a
> personal God is, psychologically, nothing other

than an exalted father." [18]

Yet, as the negations abound and stand, so do the stances of challenge which come from this same trio -- Erikson, Rizzuto, and Coles. Each of them contends that the psychiatrist, and any other observer of religious doings, is well-advised to allow more tolerance and greater possibility for the value of religion, whether in text or deed. Bible reading surely comes under this purview.

Erikson's position is conceived in relation to his idea of trust as being the first and most basic task in human growth, and the standard by which to measure any religious reality:

> It is not the psychologist's job to decide whether religion should or should not be confessed and practiced in particular words and rituals. Rather the psychological observer must ask whether or not in any area under observation religion and tradition are living psychological forces creating the kind of faith and conviction which permeates a parent's personality and thus reinforces the child's basic trust in the world's trustworthiness. The psychopathologist cannot avoid observing that there are millions of people who cannot really afford to be without religion, and whose pride in not having it is that much whistling in the dark. On the other hand, there are millions who seem to derive faith from other than religious dogmas, that is, from fellowship, productive work, social action, scientific pursuit, and artistic creation. And again, there are millions who profess faith, yet in practice mistrust both life and man. With all

of these in mind, it seems worthwhile to speculate on the fact that religion through the centuries has served to restore a sense of trust at regular intervals in the form of faith while giving tangible form to a sense of evil which it promises to ban. All religions have in common the periodical childlike surrender to a Provider or providers who dispense earthly fortune as well as spiritual health; the demonstration of one's smallness and dependence through the medium of reduced posture and humble gesture; the admission in prayer and song of misdeeds, of misthoughts, and of evil intentions; the admission of inner division and the consequent appeal for inner unification by divine guidance; the need for clearer self-delineation and self-restriction; and finally the insight that individual trust must become a common faith, individual mistrust a commonly formulated evil, while the individual's need for restoration must become part of the ritual practice of many, and must become a sign of trustworthiness in the community.

Whosoever says he has religion must derive a faith from it which is transmitted to infants in the form of basic trust; whosoever claims that he does not need religion must derive such basic faith from elsewhere. [19]

Rizzuto extends and supplements Erikson's developmental thinking.

She argues forcefully that "the very pressure of living makes us rework,

over and over again, consciously and unconsciously, the memories of those

we encountered at the beginning of our days -- the time of the heroic

mythic reality of childhood." [20]   She continues that it is "out of this

matrix ... in the exchanges with those incredible beings called parents,

that the image of God is concocted," [21] and she insists that the process of

revision never ends. She also contends that the "complexities of object

representations" weigh against the acceptance "that the paternal image

only is used to form the representations of God." [22]

At this point, she does not seem too far-removed from Freud's

general position. She goes on, however, to leave no doubt that there is a

"possibility of a more mature relationship with God," [23] which is

engendered as "each new phase in the identity cycle" brings a "specific

religious crisis" that can be adaptively met. [24] She sees this adaptation

of a "complex representation" [25] to be inevitable, if health is to be

maintained. Her own words summarize the view best:

> Freud considers God and religion a wishful
> childish illusion ... I must disagree. Reality and
> illusion are not contradictory terms. Psychic
> reality -- whose depth Freud so brilliantly
> unveiled -- cannot occur without that
> specifically human transitional space for play
> and illusion. To ask a man to renounce a God he
> believes in may be as cruel and as meaningless
> as wrenching a child from his teddy bear so that
> he can grow up. We know nowadays that teddy
> bears are not toys for spoiled children but part
> of the illusory substance of growing up. Each
> developmental stage has transitional objects
> appropriate for the age and level of maturity of
> the individual. After the oedipal resolution, God
> is a potentially suitable object, and if updated

during each crisis of development, may remain
so through maturity and the rest of life. Asking
a mature, functioning individual to renounce his
God would be like asking Freud to renounce his
own creation, psychoanalysis, and the "illusory"
promise of what scientific knowledge can do.
This is, in fact, the point. Men cannot be men
without illusions. The type of illusion we
select -- science, religion, or something else --
reveals our personal history and the transitional
space each of us has created between his
objects and himself to find 'a resting place' to
live in. 26

Coles has even more recently echoed these concerns. He applauds

Rizzuto as a "phenomenological psychologist" who considers "religious

ideas" to be "part of our cultural life, like music, art, literature, or, for

that matter, formal intellectual reasoning and scientific speculation." 27

With her he claims to be heir to the psychoanalytic legacy, but does not

concur with its view that "faith in received legends, handed down in

homes and places of worship," is "to be construed necessarily or

arbitrarily as a lie or as a form of self-delusion." 28   He points out that:

Freud constructed his own story, a story of the
human mind, its battles, its protagonists and
antagonists, its victories and defeats. When he
talked of a 'metapsychology,' he admitted as
much. 29

Overall, Coles calls for "a psychoanalytic approach toward religious

and spiritual thinking" that "can forsake ideological targets, conceptual

ambitions, in favor of a phenomenological acceptance of the immediate, the every day." [30] He cautions against turning persons into "reductive putty," [31] and against becoming psychoanalytic "conquistadors" who "have a way of becoming wanton imperialists at times." [32]

Undeniably, the psychiatrist-reader of the Bible is faced with a challenging mandate. He must bear in mind Erikson's openness to religion as a purveyor of the world's trustworthiness, Rizzuto's insistence that religion is potentially as culturally preferred and variously derived as art and music, [33] and Coles' call for a more tolerant, phenomenological approach to religious expression. The reader must pay attention in a way that neither dismisses Freud's skepticism of God as nothing more than an "exalted father," nor overlooks the founder's articulate progeny. He must inhabit a space of enlightening friction.

A final element for the psychiatrist-reader to bring to Bible reading is that of the listening and inference-making process which is used in psychoanalytic psychotherapy. As previously mentioned, the similarity between confronting an oral text, as offered by a patient, and studying a written text like the Bible is obvious. It is, therefore, appropriate for a potential reader to be reminded of this and to be encouraged in the

crossover.

Luborsky has encapsulated these processes in a highly regarded volume. There he suggests that a therapist listens [34] and infers [35] in three different ways. He may listen with the "evenly suspended" posture of one trying mostly to maintain "an openness to hearing what the patient is presenting" in a nonemergent situation. This is analogous to a first reading where preconceptions are hopefully minimal. The therapist may also listen with the more "pressing," hypothesis-generating posture of one facing a crisis situation. This parallels a reader's discovery of a discrepancy or inconsistency in a text, and his attempt to provide an explanation for it. And, the therapist may listen with the hypothesis-checking posture of one trying to "affirm, discard, or revise" postulates as to the roots of a patient's difficulties. This resembles the reader's efforts at confirming the validity of his explanation for a textual difficulty by considering its applicability to a series of related pericopes.

Inference-making during and after the therapeutic listening process is also threefold. It may entail an "attending to redundancy," in which a similar problem is stated by a patient several times, but in different contexts. A reader, too, might begin to infer meaning from the "redundant" appearance of similar words, phrases, or episodes. A biblical example of

such redundancy is found in the repeated association of Isaac with isolated environs. Clinical inferences may also come from an "attending to temporal contiguity," in which one assumes a possible causal connection between a patient's juxtaposed remarks. A reader of the Bible may similarly infer that an incident such as Sarah's death and burial was placed purposefully after the Moriah event. The task is to discern a reasonable explanation. Finally, a therapist may infer from an "attending to shifts in state," in which a patient is suddenly confused, anxious, angry, or otherwise disturbed. And, once more, a reader may at times take special note in cases such as an authorial voice's switch from dialogue to third person narration, or from one point of view to another.

In sum, a psychiatrist may fruitfully read the biblical text. At the least, he can do so for an appreciation of its view of personality, a territory of common concern. This effort can be profitable even if it is undergirded only by the tools and perspectives of his discipline alone. These tools may include a textbook definition of personality, a recognition of the still extant centrality of psychoanalytic concepts in current psychiatric thought, a recalling of several of these basic tenets, a consideration of psychoanalytic criticism and affirmation of the religious enterprise overall, and an entertaining of the relevance of psychoanalytic,

psychotherapeutic techniques as analogues for the interpretative ways

and means of Bible reading.

In the following questions, a practical synthesis of these ideas is

suggested as a guide to the psychiatrist-reader:

1. Does a given biblical figure exemplify "enduring patterns"
   of interacting with self, others, and the world?

2. Does a given biblical figure act or think in such a way as
   to suggest the text's portrayal of psychoanalytic tenets
   such as the following: "the unconscious," "psychic
   determinism," "transference," "life cycle crises," or
   God's being the "exalted father"?

3. Does the biblical narrative's voice speak at all to the
   religious valuings of Erikson, of Rizzuto, or of Coles,
   in regard to personality development? Is there any
   evidence of correlative psychological and spiritual
   growth?

4. Are any of the above concerns especially well-
   addressed by reading as if to "listen and infer" with
   the psychoanalytic psychotherapist -- with postures
   of "openness," "hypothesis-generation," or "hypothesis-
   checking," and with attention to "redundancy," "temporal
   contiguity," and "shifts of state"?

Chapter 2

A Literary Approach

As with the psychiatrists, the literati come to the Bible with certain assumptions that are given tangible expression in their critical methods and resulting insights. They both vary and coincide in an active viewing of the biblical text as an assemblage of sound and sense within a purposeful, poetic framework. By identifying some of their ways, as exemplified by Alter, Berlin, Sternberg, and Brichto, they also can be brought to the task of searching for the view of personality implied in the portrayal of Isaac.

Alter offers a precise address to the question of what literary analysis of a text entails:

> By literary analysis I mean the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else; the kind of disciplined attention, in other words, which through a whole spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy. [1]

It is Alter's contention that the above style of literary analysis

should be applied to the Bible as well, with "its seemingly simple

wonderfully complex art," and "splendid illustrations of the primary

possibilities of narrative." 2   He points out that "the ancient Hebrew

writers" were able to create "a certain indeterminacy of meaning" in the

realm of "motive, moral character, and psychology" which was unique, 3

and that gave "the religious vision of the Bible" a sophistication of "depth

and subtlety" associated with prose fiction. 4

In this regard, Alter sees the biblical narrative as "historicized

prose fiction" that is not "bound to documentable facts" in the way of

modern historiography, 5   but rather seeks "to reveal the enactment of

God's purposes in historical events," 6   which are reported with this

destination in mind. He considers this form to have offered a "remarkable

range and flexibility" by which "fictional personages" could be lifted out

of pagan epics and their "fixed choreography of timeless events," and

placed into dramas delineating "the wayward paths of human freedom, the

quirks and contradictions of men and women seen as moral agents and

complex centers of motive and feeling." 7

Alter's formulation of this biblical balancing act is stated as

follows:

> Under scrutiny, biblical narrative generally
> proves to be either fiction laying claim to a
> place in the chain of causation and the realm of
> moral consequentiality that belong to history,
> as in the primeval history, the tales of the
> Patriarchs and much of the Exodus story, and the
> account of the early Conquest, or history given
> the imaginative definition of fiction, as in most
> of the narratives from the period of the Judges
> onward. 8

He then gives "the large cycle of stories about David" as the
superlative example "of the intertwining of history and fiction," where a
basis of "firm historical facts" is imaginatively presented along with
"certain thematic biases" and with a "remarkable intuition of the
psychology of the characters." 9 Alter even extends his stance to a point
of considering the David stories' author as having the same relation to
Israelite history as Shakespeare does "to English history in his history
plays." 10

Yet with this encompassing formulation, Alter must acknowledge
that the modern reader has "lost most of the keys to the conventions"
which are woven into the biblical narrative fabric. 11 Nonetheless, he
offers a variety of textual markers which might still be helpful. He
proposes that "recurrent narrative episodes," or "type-scenes," are
"attached to the careers of biblical heroes," and that these occur "at the

crucial junctures" of their lives, from "the annunciation of the birth of the

hero to his barren mother," to "the initiatory trial," to "the testament of

the dying hero." [12] He also notes the "extraordinary prominence of

verbatim repetition" that seems to be a "most imposing barrier" [13] at

first glance, but can be appreciated as a fulcrum around which "the

slightest strategic variations" may "serve the purposes of commentary,

analysis, foreshadowing, or thematic assertion." [14] Repetition is offered

as "an elaborately integrated system," which may be "dependent on the

actual recurrence of individual phonemes, words, or short phrases," as

well as on "actions, images, and ideas ... that are not necessarily woven

into the verbal texture of the narrative." [15]

Alter also cites a "biblical preference for direct discourse" [16] that

acknowledges the spoken word as "the substratum of everything human

and divine," and represents "finally a technique for getting at the essence

of things." [17] In his mind, biblical characterization adds support to this

idea in its following an "ascending order of explicitness and certainty,"

from portrayals rooted in reportage of external appearances and acts, to

those of third-party commentary, to those of direct speech by the

character, to those of interior speech or monologue. [18]

Lastly, Alter points to allusion as a textual marker that "confirms the literary character of biblical narrative and biblical poetry." [19] He describes it not as "an embellishment but as a fundamental necessity" in which "the writer, scarcely able to ignore the texts that have anticipated him ... appropriates fragments of them," which in turn "give his own work both a genealogy and a resonant background." [20]

These elements comprise textual markers for Alter's reading: heroic type-scenes, variegated repetitive elements, direct discourse, graded characterization, and omnipresent allusion. It is through them that he discerns ultimately an implicit conception of human personality in the biblical narrative:

> ... every person is created by an all-seeing God but abandoned to his own unfathomable freedom, made in God's likeness as a matter of cosmogonic principle but almost never as a matter of accomplished ethical fact; and each individual instance of this bundle of paradoxes, encompassing the zenith and the nadir of the created world, requires a special cunning attentiveness in literary representation. [21]

Alter's colleagues share his perspectives to varying degrees. Berlin is also careful to claim the fictive nature of the biblical narrative so as not "to mistake mimesis for reality -- to take as real that which is only a

representation of reality." 22   She goes on to "suggest three main

categories for classifying character types":   a "full-fledged," "round"

character;   a "flat," "type" character;   and a "functionary," "agent"

character. 23   She sees them along a continuum -- from the figure "about

whom we know more than is necessary for the plot," to the one "who has a

limited and stereotyped range of traits," to the one who is only "a function

of the plot or part of the setting." 24   A given figure like Bathsheba may

appear as an "agent" in David's adultery episode, and later as a "round"

type in the episode with Abishag, David, Adonijah, and Solomon. 25   These

types are, in some regards, analogous to Alter's notion of graded

characterization.

Berlin demonstrates as well the Bible's using "point of view

frequently and effectively" in the way of "modern prose fiction." 26   She

considers its variance to achieve an effect "like film," in which an

omniscient editor determines gaps, continuities, and "scenic"

perspectives that may even include multiple events within a given

temporal frame. 27   The result of these multiple points of view and the

different character types within them is a biblical narrative that

"succeeds in projecting figures in space," 28   and in giving them notable

depth and perspective.

Sternberg acknowledges and demonstrates most of the poetics mentioned above. He does, however, depart from Alter and Berlin in seeing the Bible as belonging to a historical genre that makes use of techniques which are often incorrectly associated only with fiction:

> Individual character-drawing, storytelling posture or pattern, metonymic sequence, richness of detail, credibility: always available and always reversible, none of these has anything like a cutting edge in the discrimination of genre.... There are simply no universals of historical vs. fictive form.

> Nothing on the surface, that is, infallibly marks off the two genres. As modes of discourse, history and fiction make functional categories that may remain constant under the most assorted formal variations and are distinguishable only by their overall sense of purpose. 29

Sternberg conceptualizes this purpose, in the Bible's case, to be embodied in three regulatory principles of composition: the "ideological," the "historiographic," and the "aesthetic." 30 The first is envisioned "in the segments of law interspersed (say) throughout the story of the Exodus" or elsewhere. 31 It is also apparent "in divine and prophetic moralizing, or in thematic structures like promise and fulfillment, sin and

retribution." 32   The second "surfaces" in materials that "resist

assimilation to any higher order of coherence," like "aetiological-looking

tales," chronologies, and genealogies. 33   The third is apparent in "the

abundant material" that "bears the marks of invention and fulfills the

roles of imaginative enhancement and the probing of reality associated

with it." 34   This aesthetic material cuts "across the whole Bible," and

includes "privileged and in some sense private material" that is offered in

the formats of "dialogue, ... interior speech, or heavenly counsel." 35

The combination of the three principles of composition presents the

reader with an engaging puzzle that Sternberg formulates as follows:

> Does the avoidance of black-and-white portrayal
> reflect the historian's scrupulosity, the artist's
> eye for intricate characterization, or the
> doctrinal tenet that all men exercise free
> choice, so that no man can be wholly righteous
> or wholly evil throughout life?   Does the
> imposition of serial or cyclical form on the
> march of time bespeak an aesthetics of unity, a
> history repeating itself, or a God in control of
> the plot? 36

It is with this three-faceted state of mind that Sternberg would

undoubtedly search for a biblical concept of personality in general, and in

the case of Isaac in particular.

While sharing many points of agreement with the others, Brichto is

most notable in insistence, and by example, on an ever closer reading of the Hebrew text, and in claiming most candidly his own faith statement and personal view of the biblical writers themselves.

In the first regard, he identifies certain "foci of literary analysis," which he considers to be the only "altogether legitimate" elements of biblical poetics. [37] These foci include: setting, where "no descriptive detail seems merely ornamental;" [38] character, which is "in fine and large" more imbedded in "religious ideology" than depth portrayals; [39] plot, which "cannot admit of superfluous action;" [40] point of view, wherein both narrator and audience may vary; [41] dialogue, as a "deployment" which "is never accidental or capricious," "shows rather than tells," and may be understood as "direct," "free direct," or "indirect discourse;" [42] the "synoptic-conclusive/resumptive-expansive" technique, wherein "episodes" are repeated with calculated variance through the intermittent use of "the nominal sentence with waw-conjunctive," in contrast to the usual waw-conversive construction; [43] and repetition, which is acknowledged as being omnipresent and yet contextually conditioned, so that recurrence does not imply "sameness." [44] These elements are also joined by a reminder and demonstration of figures of

speech within the Hebrew, including idiom, metonymy, word play,

hendiadys, and merism. [45]

In the second regard, Brichto's approach merits attention for its arrival at a particular, stated view of the biblical writers, and for its engendering an expression of the critic's view of himself. Regarding the former, he writes:

> ... my exegetical essays champion a view
> of the author-editor or author-editors
> as sophisticated, ideology-oriented, and
> philosophically inventive -- hence figurative in
> expression and untrammeled by sanctified
> traditions from their society's past. Basic to
> this assumption is another one, namely, that
> neither the human condition nor human
> perceptions of it have changed in the last five
> millenia. As in intellectual capacity or artistic
> talent, the ancient mind is not inferior to the
> modern one, so the relationship between the
> ancient mind and ours is one of continuity, not
> divergence. [46]

Regarding himself, he confesses:

> My acceptance of the patriarchs as my ancestors
> is a function of my reading them not just as
> protagonists in a story but as the heroes of the
> story. As reader, I claim them as my
> forebearers whether I be "born-again" Christian
> or secularist Jew, whatever genetic pool I am
> heir to; for like all great artistic narrative,
> these stories elicit a "willing suspension of
> disbelief." And in this instance, particularly,
> the rewards of identifying with the heroes are

immeasurable, inasmuch as those heroes are the
instruments of the kind of God that I would want
to exist, a God benevolent to humankind, friendly
to my deepest and most intimate aspirations,
and at the same time the lord of history. 47

In Brichto's case, the reader is offered not only the techniques, but also something of the scholar himself. Both are obviously relevant to an effort at focusing upon personality, or upon any other valence in the Bible.

With this in mind, another set of summary questions is offered for the literary reader as a practical synthesis of some of the ideas above:

1. To what extent does a given text reflect Alter's markers of heroic type-scenes, variegated repetitive elements, direct discourse, graded characterization, and allusion?

2. Are examples of Berlin's three character types or varying points of view present?

3. How is a given biblical episode understood in light of Sternberg's triad of compositional principles -- the "ideological," "historiographic," and "aesthetic"?

4. Of what import for understanding a narrative are Brichto's emphases: upon "foci of literary analysis," such as setting, character, and plot; upon figures of speech; and upon a close Hebrew reading?

Chapter 3

Isaac

We will consider Isaac in the following pages by using a straightforward protocol. It was conceived so as to afford maximal accessibility of the biblical material to the non-Hebrew reader at the outset, and only afterwards to include some measure of Hebrew commentary under the rubric of a literary reading, which should necessarily include attention to the specifics of the language of composition.

The chapter will contain three sections -- a general reading, a psychiatric reading, and a literary reading. It is intended that issues will be raised and addressed progressively so that questions coming from the initial perusal of the text will then be built upon and clarified in the psychiatric exploration, and again refined in the literary effort. This three-level hierarchy is proposed in the spirit of Feynman's formulation above. The hierarchy is not meant to imply relatively greater or lesser truth in a given reading. It is rather to demonstrate the "connections" among them. [1]

Scriptural citations and translations will be offered. Those in the

general and psychiatric readings will come from the Bible's Revised

Standard Version, 2 so as to permit the non-Hebrew reader access to an

up-to-date English biblical concordance. 3 Citations in the literary

readings will be from the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. 4 Their

translations will be the writer's own.

General Reading

Tradition and scholarship have not imagined Isaac as a paradigm of

strength or clarity. The Biblical text is the undeniable source of this

portrait. Nonetheless, close examination of his origins and his doings

there suggests more of both these traits than is commonly assumed.

His birth in Genesis 21 comes nine chapters after Abram, Lot, and

Sarai have set forth from Haran for Canaan. The tone of his parents'

relationship in these chapters is one of disquietude, and is of relevance to

Isaac some years later. Indeed, the reader senses problems from the start

when the imperative from Deity to exit Haran comes only to Abram, not to

Lot or Sarai. The patriarch sets the course, and theirs is an involuntary

following:

> Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your
> country and your kindred and your father's house

> to the land that I will show you." (Gen. 12:1)

> And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his
> brother's son, and all their possessions which
> they had gathered, and the persons that they had
> gotten in Haran; and they set forth to go to the
> Land of Canaan. (Gen. 12:5)

There is no element of choice here for Sarai. So, when a few verses

later she is asked by Abram to claim to the Egyptians that she is only his

sister, in order not to risk their killing him, the reader may wonder if she

holds any resentment, and if she will give unqualified assent to the

request:

> When he (Abram) was about to enter Egypt, he
> said to Sarai his wife, "I know that you are a
> woman beautiful to behold; and when the
> Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his
> wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you
> live. Say you are my sister, that it may go well
> with me because of you, and that my life may be
> spared on your account." (Gen. 12:11-13)

Apparently she does hold resentment, and does choose silence on this

issue before Pharoah. Even though she allows herself to be taken as the

monarch's wife, the text suggests that Abram does the talking, and that

there is reason on this basis to assume a measure of discord between him

and Sarai. She does not speak his mind. He does:

> So Pharaoh called Abram, and said, "What is this
> you have done to me? Why did you not tell me
> that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She

> is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife?
> Now then, here is your wife, take her, and be
> gone." (Gen. 12:18-19)

At this point, the reader may allow that Isaac's parents-to-be surely

share some differences.   These difficulties are heightened by an

increasing anxiety over God's repeated promises of land and offspring in

the face of continued childlessness. Even Abram reflects this concern:

> But Abram said, "O Lord God, what wilt thou give
> me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my
> house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Gen. 15:2)

And Sarai follows with her two-pronged statement, blaming her husband's

Lord for the predicament, and enjoining Abram to father a surrogate child

with Hagar the Egyptian maid:

> And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the Lord
> has prevented me from bearing children; go in to
> my maid; it may be that I shall obtain children
> by her."   And Abram hearkened to the voice of
> Sarai. (Gen. 16:2)

Success in this regard brings even more marital tension as Sarai

feels demeaned before Hagar, blames Abram, and forces the pregnant maid

to flee:

> And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to
> me be on you! I gave my maid to your embrace,
> and when she saw that she had conceived, she
> looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge
> between you and me!" But Abram said to Sarai,
> "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her as

you please." Then Sarai dealt harshly with her,
and she fled from her. (Gen. 16:5-6)

These examples of marital strife between Isaac's parents before his

arrival are joined by a laughing skepticism toward God, when the actual

birth is announced to each of them separately. This occurs appropriately

after their names are changed to Abraham and Sarah, as a divine signal of

new things ahead. Abraham laughs first:

> Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and
> said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man
> who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah who is
> ninety years old, bear a child?" (Gen. 17:17)

Sarah laughs second, and then lies in an attempt to cover her fear of being

discovered by the Lord:

> So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I
> have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I
> have pleasure?" The Lord said to Abraham,
> "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed
> bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything
> too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I
> will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall
> have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not
> laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you
> did laugh." (Gen. 18:12-15)

Both of them, Abraham and Sarah, laugh at the prospect of their first-

born coming when they are well past the usual parenting age. Their laughs

are skeptical, intentionally hidden, and ambivalent -- even to the extent

of denial. They doubt God. But they also doubt themselves. "What is a

centenarian to do with a newborn?" they ask. Not only do Isaac's parents

carry their own marital discord to his birth, but they also have come by

this time to question their suitability for the task in the first place.

With these precedents of marital tension and waning confidence in

themselves and God, Abraham and Sarah eventually sojourn in the South

again. This is a second episode in which Abraham, in order to avoid

endangering himself, misleads a stranger into thinking that Sarah is only

his sister. However, on this stage she apparently corroborates his claim,

and Abraham offers the rationalization that she is, in fact, his half-

sister:

> And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my
> sister." And Abimelech King of Gerar sent and
> took Sarah. (Gen. 20:2)

> Now Abimelech had not approached her; so he
> said, "Lord, wilt thou slay an innocent people?
> Did he not himself say to me, 'She is my sister'?
> And she herself said, 'He is my brother.'" (Gen.
> 20:4-5a)

> And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What were you
> thinking of, that you did this thing?" Abraham
> said, "I did it because I thought, there is no fear
> of God at all in this place, and they will kill me
> because of my wife. Besides she is indeed my
> sister, the daughter of my father but not the
> daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.
> And when God caused me to wander from my
> father's house, I said to her, 'This is the

> kindness you must do for me: at every place to
> which we come, say of me, "He is my brother.""
> (Gen. 20:10-13)

Abraham is still willing to use Sarah as a shield. Moreover, his

assertion to Abimelech that the practice was made plain to her before

their departure from Haran leaves the reader asking whether she would

agree with Abraham's version of the event. Abraham may have been lying,

or Sarah may have agreed only with reluctance. Further, her statement, as

reported by Abimelech, is left without a context in which to fix her

attitude toward it. Was she freely allowing that, "He is my brother"? Or,

was she begrudingly admitting so in response to Abimelech's query, after

his first hearing Abraham's claim to this effect? The latter seems more

likely. And, the entire episode suggests once more that Isaac was born

into trouble.

As if to emphasize this fact, the Abimelech episode is immediately

followed by Isaac's birth, naming, and weaning. Here again, tension arises

among the trio of Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar, as Sarah wants no parity

between Isaac and Ishmael. Another expulsion of Hagar ensues in spite of

Abraham's reservations:

> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian,
> whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with
> her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out
> this slave woman with her son; for the son of

> this slave woman shall not be heir with my son
> Isaac." And the thing was very displeasing to
> Abraham on account of his son. (Gen. 21:9-11)

Thus, Isaac's birth and early childhood are in a milieu of ongoing marital tension that is joined to Abraham's and Sarah's doubting of themselves and God. They are prone to disagreement, to laughing skepticisms toward God, and to using others to make allowances for their own inner fears. Abraham uses Sarah. Sarah uses Hagar and Ishmael. All of this is evident.

Genesis 22 brings the only report of Isaac's youth. Therein, father Abraham binds him to near-slaughter out of devotion to God's command. He does so even though Isaac is considered an only and loved son:

> He (God) said, "Take your son, your only son
> Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of
> Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering
> upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell
> you." (Gen. 22:2)

Abraham acts even to an extent of loading the wood for the offering on Isaac's back, and dodging his son's suspicious questioning, which is Isaac's first verbalization in the Bible:

> And Abraham took the wood of the burnt
> offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took
> in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went
> both of them together. And Isaac said to his
> father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here
> am I, my son." He said, "Behold the fire and the

> wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt
> offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide
> himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."
> So they went both of them together. (Gen.
> 22:6-8)

Abraham persists even though father and son must endure "together"
an awful silence that is undoubtedly leaving its mark on them both. Isaac
does not speak again after Abraham's evasion. The angel intervenes.
Abraham descends Moriah en route to Beer-sheba. And, Isaac's
whereabouts are left unstated. Father and son are no longer "together":

> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they
> arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and
> Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba. (Gen. 22:19)

The reader is left to assume that both Isaac and his father remain in the
psychological and physical wilderness of wandering which such an event
might engender.

Genesis 23 relates Sarah's death and burial. Isaac's presence is not
noted. Logically, the reader may understand his absence as reflecting his
continued centeredness in the Moriah event of the prior chapter, and his
assumed wariness of Abraham. Significantly, Isaac's grief for his mother
is not in question, as is obvious in the text ahead when he begins life with
Rebekah:

> Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took
> Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved

> her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's
> death. (Gen. 24:67)

His absence from his mother's funeral was not for want of attachment to
her. It may have been in order to avoid his father.

The focus and contents of Genesis 24 seem to bear this out. There,
Abraham arranges Isaac's marriage with the help of a servant. But Isaac
remains out of sight until his bride's arrival. Notably, Abraham seeks his
potential daughter-in-law from his homeland and is adamant that the
servant, not Isaac, go back there for her. The father must know that once
Isaac has left, he would likely not return. Accordingly, Abraham twice
instructs the servant:

> Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not
> take my son back there." (Gen. 24:6)

> "But if the woman is not willing to follow you,
> then you will be free from this oath of mine;
> only you must not take my son back there."
> (Gen. 24:8)

Father and son apparently are not conversing or maintaining substantive
relations. Yet paternal sway will not allow Isaac the option of an exit.

Eventually, Isaac's first reappearance since Moriah comes.   It
precedes his contact with Rebekah. He is identified here with Beer-lahai-
roi, where he has apparently been living since the mountain incident:

> Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and

was dwelling in the Negeb. (Gen. 24:62)

The site is significant for having earlier been the refuge of Hagar when she first fled Sarah. It gives credence to the reader's supposition that for Isaac, Moriah was a trauma and a cause to retreat. Beer-lahai-roi was a refuge for him, as it had earlier been for Hagar:

> The angel of the Lord found her (Hagar) by a spring of water in the wilderness, the spring on the way to Shur. (Gen. 16:7)

> Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered. (Gen. 16:14)

While Isaac's difficulties are undeniable, he is now beginning to show renewed strength and trust as he allows Rebekah to excite his love, to become his wife, and to comfort him after Sarah's death, as cited above.

Nonetheless, Isaac has not offered a word of direct discourse since Moriah. His silence continues into Genesis 25 where he and brother Ishmael bury their father without dialogue or fraternity. There is no blessing or conversation from Abraham either. And, it is significant that while Isaac has come up to Hebron for the burial, and that while God is noted to have blessed him afterwards, Isaac's distrust and avoidance of family and community are still evident in his return to Beer-lahai-roi:

> Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ishmael his

> sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the
> field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east
> of Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased
> from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried,
> with Sarah his wife. After the death of
> Abraham God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac
> dwelt at Beer-lahai-roi. (Gen. 25:8-11)

In mid-Chapter 25, Isaac's portrait as an adult becomes plainer. In

spite of his being the child of Abraham's and Sarah's discord, of their

individual self-doubt, and of Moriah's trauma, he now has the will to

rejoin the world of his clan, as evidenced by his starting a family with

Rebekah. The reader is told of his age for the first time, and of his

successful entreaty to God for Rebekah's conceiving:

> And Isaac was forty years old when he took to
> wife Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the
> Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the
> Aramean. And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his
> wife, because she was barren; and the Lord
> granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife
> conceived. (Gen. 25:20-21)

Still, Isaac is not the realized figure that Abraham was. While he

"prays" to God for Rebekah's conception, the words are not recorded. And

while God responds with a pregnancy, there is no divine speech as with

Abraham. In contrast, Isaac's wife Rebekah's concerns over her twins'

intrauterine struggles are voiced and quoted outright by the text, with an

imperious intent of "inquiring," not "praying," before the Lord. The reader

is also shown that Deity answered her in speech:

> The children struggled together within her; and
> she said: "If it is thus, why do I live?" So she
> went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to
> her,
> "Two nations are in your womb, ..." (Gen.
> 25:22-23a)

At the least, Rebekah's stature is on par with that of Isaac, who has been

once blessed by God, has married, and has impregnated, but has yet to be

quoted again since Moriah.

Genesis 26 reports famine and finds Isaac facing a crisis known

earlier by Abraham. On this occasion, God speaks to Isaac directly for the

first time in telling him not to go down to Egypt, but to sojourn in the

region of Gerar, the territory of a certain Abimelech. Just as Isaac was

not to return to Haran for marriage, so now he is not to visit Egypt for

food. He can go only so far as Gerar. Abraham's far-flung travels are not

to be matched by his son. Isaac's status, unequal to his father's, is

emphasized by God's charge, along with another blessing. The charge and

blessing are bestowed on the basis of his father Abraham's observance,

not on the basis of Isaac's merit:

> And the Lord appeared to him (Isaac), and said,
> "Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of
> which I shall tell you. Sojourn in this land, and I
> will be with you, and will bless you; for to you

> and to your descendants I will give all these
> lands, and I will fulfill the path which I swore
> to Abraham your father. I will multiply your
> descendants as the stars of heaven, and will
> give to your descendants all these lands; and by
> your descendants all nations of the earth shall
> bless themselves: because Abraham obeyed my
> voice and kept my charge, my commandments,
> my statutes, and my laws." (Gen. 26:2-5)

Isaac's destiny continues in large part to be framed by those before him --

both for good and ill.

The chapter resumes as Isaac's story imitates his father's with the

similar episode of a wife denied her status before an Abimelech monarch.

Like Abraham, Isaac claims that his spouse is his sister out of fear for his

life:

> When the men of the place asked him (Isaac)
> about his wife, he said, "She is my sister"; for
> he feared to say, "My wife," thinking, "lest the
> men of the place should kill me for the sake of
> Rebekah"; because she was fair to look upon.
> (Gen. 26:7)

Unlike Abraham, these are Isaac's first recorded words since Moriah, and

they are a cowardly, unconditional lie without even the possibility of

qualification, as with Abraham's pointing to Sarah's being his half-sister.

Also, Isaac's ruse is discovered not by God's sending Abimelech a

dream as earlier with Abraham, but by Abimelech himself observing Isaac

with Rebekah:

> When he (Isaac) had been there a long time,
> Abimelech King of the Philistines looked out of
> a window and saw Isaac fondling Rebekah his
> wife. (Gen. 26:8)

The report of this observation pivots upon an implicit message concerning Isaac's status. This public display is not becoming for anyone, or hardly imaginable with regard to Abraham. Isaac's measure here is again not up to his father's.

In spite of his questionable standing, Isaac's fortunes turn in the remainder of the chapter. He acquires livestock and foodstuff, to the envy of Abimelech and the Philistines. They then seal the wells dug by Abraham, and insist upon Isaac's leaving Gerar. He changes location only to redig and rename Abraham's wells. Water, land, and wealth have come to Isaac. God has blessed him and he knows it:

> And Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the
> same year a hundredfold. The Lord blessed
> him, and the man became rich, and gained
> more and more until he became very wealthy.
> He had possessions of flocks and herds, and
> a great household, so that the Philistines
> envied him. (Gen. 26:12-14)

> And he moved from there and dug another well,
> and over that they (Philistines) did not quarrel;
> so he called its name Rehoboth, saying "For now
> the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be
> fruitful in the Land." (Gen. 26:22)

It is here, after Isaac's acknowledging his good fortune, that he

leaves the life of an habitual sojourner for the first time since Moriah:

> From there he went up to Beer-sheba.
> (Gen. 26:23)

It is as if he can now go up from the wilderness environs of Beer-lahai-roi and Rehoboth to the site of his father's settlement after Moriah. He likely does so with an awareness of his strength by virtue of his relation to Abraham. God is blessing him on his father's account. He may do so also with the certainty of his wife's demanding, strong will. She speaks and is spoken to by Deity. And, Isaac probably goes to Beer-sheba while still carrying the unresolved issue of the sojourner, even if blessed in some measure on his own right. Is he strong enough to stand by himself -- apart from his kinship with Abraham or his partnership with Rebekah?

The question's answer begins as Chapter 26 concludes with a curious marriage announcement:

> When Esau was forty years old, he took to wife
> Judith the daugther of Beeri the Hittite, and
> Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and
> they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.
> (Gen. 26:34-35)

The position of these verses suggests a function of transition. But how do they serve as an opening element for the following tale of Chapter 27, where Isaac bestows blessing upon Jacob rather than Esau in an

atmosphere of murky deceits?

The verses may do so by making it clear from the start that both Isaac and Rebekah have experienced bitterness over Esau's wives, and that this shared bitterness could possibly come to shared subterfuge so as to displace the elder heir. The assumption that Rebekah and Jacob are alone in their scheming ahead would thus be challenged at the outset.

Moreover, the unresolved issue of Isaac's fortitude remains central to the drama. Could he do his part? And if he did, how would it be best portrayed so as to do justice to the likely ambivalence that he would feel in acting, more than in being acted upon? Is he strong enough to stand on his own?

The text can be seen to answer in the affirmative. Isaac does his part. But his ambivalence is not put aside. The narrative only whispers of his actual role.

Genesis 27 sets the scene of a dim-eyed Isaac, who is nearing blindness and contemplating death. On this stage, he offers the longest discourse of his life so far in charging Esau with the task of hunting and preparing for him a dish of game. The blessing of the elder son is to follow.

After listening to the directive, Rebekah relates it promptly to

Jacob and persuades him to join a plot to intercept the blessing for himself, with well-seasoned domestic kids in a dish and a hairy disguise of skins on his hands and neck. Presumably, these will successfully fool his father Isaac, a blind man, who might just as likely in his state have a heightened sense of taste for all delicacies, especially wild meat, and a touch discriminant enough to discern skins of young goats from that of his son. Even if Jacob is assured that the trick will work, the reader must not dismiss a notion that everyone has taste and touch enough to discern game from domestic and goat from son. Isaac and Rebekah must be somehow in this together -- perhaps in order to sever the family tie with Esau and those Hittite wives. It could be that both sons are unwitting.

The scene shifts to Isaac and Jacob. The father acts tentatively toward the son's rapid success on the "hunt" and toward his voice, which sounds like Jacob's, not Esau's. Neither of these responses is avoidable, and both would be expected by Jacob to elicit a comment from Isaac. Without some response by his father, Jacob would suspect that something was amiss. However, he could accept his father's credulity regarding the disguised hairy hands. This had been expected ever since Rebekah conceived the disguise. The text here is filled with direct discourse that has been interpreted as a straightforward depiction of a deceiving son and

a misled father. Yet, the reader also can appreciate play-acting by both members of this odd couple, and Jacob's lack of awareness of the full script. The verses read:

> But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it (game) so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the Lord your God granted me success." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." (Gen. 27:20-22)

Even the possibility of Isaac's speaking honest doubts to himself over the sound of Jacob's voice in this last comment, rather than calculated lines to the son as the situation develops, is not borne out. If Isaac's comment was a self-directed one, the reader would expect the text to say so explicitly with an expected adverbial phrase, such as "to himself," which is employed later in the same chapter when Esau resolves vengeance:

> Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob." (Gen. 27:41)

Furthermore, the narrator's insertion that Isaac "did not recognize" Jacob as Jacob because of the hairy disguise does not indicate whether

this was a failure within Isaac's mind to "recognize" his son because the elderly father had been fooled, or if this was a purposeful decision by Isaac not to give true "recognition" to his son since the props were placed to the satisfaction of both of them:

> And he did not recognize him, because his hands
> were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he
> blessed him. (Gen. 27:23)

"Recognize" here suggests only that Isaac did not point out or give notice of knowing Jacob's actual identity. Conceivably, Isaac could ignore it and pretend to be deceived because the disguise was adequate, "because his (Jacob's) hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands." Correspondingly, Jacob would assume his success as merited for the same reason.

In addition, the text surely does not expect the reader to believe, along with Jacob, that his father or anyone else would so trust their touch as to overrule their hearing in matters of personal identity. If the ear says definitely that the "voice is Jacob's," it is not reasonable to accept that Isaac would truly allow his fingers to veto this conclusion. Rather, the text is likely hinting to the reader that the major bluff occurring is by Isaac, not Jacob. In spite of direct discourse and narrator commentary that has generally been assumed to portray Isaac as more duped than

duping, the reader should reconsider the elder patriarch here as a stronger player, amidst struts and frets, who is groping along his own way, with a script of his own and Rebekah's in mind.

But if this scenario is to be sustained, the reader must ask why Isaac and Rebekah would consciously want to keep both sons in the dark -- even Jacob. Why would they not just scold Esau for intermarriage, bless Jacob, and be done with it? And, why would the narrator not be more forthcoming in his omniscience, but rather force the reader into a subtextual excavation of his own?

The chosen couple may have taken this tack because their real concern was not the blessing transfer per se, which would pose no problem with Jacob, but rather the dictation of his eventual marital arrangement, so as not to include Canaanite women, whom he may have viewed with fondness. His brother did.

The couple would, therefore, want to focus the process in such a way as to arouse minimal suspicion from either son of their collaboration, and to arrive at a point of being able to usher Jacob off to Haran without protest for a non-Canaanite spouse. If Jacob had known that Isaac was on his side, he would have become suspicious. And, he may have thought twice about taking the blessing, if he had realized that its corollary was

no choice but a non-Canaanite bride.

In addition, along the way, Isaac might need a nudge, especially at

the end -- after the exertion of the second greatest event of his life, and

before his son's exit of Canaan, an opportunity that he had never been

given. It follows that Rebekah would remind him of their shared ruse and

give him a final cue in the last verse of Chapter 27:

> Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my
> life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob
> marries one of the Hittite women such as these,
> one of the women of the land, what good will my
> life be to me?" (Gen. 27:46)

What good will either of their lives be? The reader recalls that the

story began with Esau's Hittite wives making "life bitter for Isaac and

Rebekah" -- both of them, not Rebekah alone. Isaac takes the hint:

> Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and
> charged him, "You shall not marry one of the
> Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to
> the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and
> take as wife from there one of the daughters of
> Laban your mother's brother." (Gen. 28:1-2)

While bearing in mind these considerations, the reader should

resume with the earlier narrative sequence after Isaac's first and fateful

blessing of the dissembled Jacob. There the arrival of Esau brings a great

shuddering from Isaac and a bitter lament from Esau:

> As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, Esau his brother came in from his hunting. (Gen. 27:30)

> His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your son, your first born, Esau." Then Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him? -- Yes, and he shall be blessed." When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" (Gen. 27:32-34)

It is the trembling of an Isaac who is determining his own course at a critical juncture in his life. He is putting aside the legacy of his fear at Abraham's Moriah, his retreat to Hagar's Beer-lahai-roi, and his cowardice in Abimelech's Gerar. When Isaac stands by his blessing, he is acting with resolve -- even if shaky, and with Rebekah's supporting role. He is doing so in spite of the bitter lament of an anguished Esau who has himself brought bitterness to his parents and has now come to experience his own.

With Jacob duly blessed and Esau resolutely told, the drama approaches its close. Rebekah learns of Esau's murderous intent toward Jacob, which she and her husband must have anticipated from the outset, and determines to persuade the younger son to flee to Haran on this pretext:

> But the words of Esau her older son were told to

> Rebekah; so she sent and called Jacob her
> younger son, and said to him, "Behold, your
> brother Esau comforts himself by planning to
> kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice;
> arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran, and
> stay with him a while, until your brother's fury
> turns aways; until your brother's anger turns
> away, and he forgets what you have done to him;
> then I will send, and fetch you from there ..."
> (Gen. 27:42-45a)

She mentions nothing of marriage here but only establishes the

necessity for his departure. The idea is planted in Jacob's mind and

allowed to grow while she reminds Isaac, as already cited, that the

Hittite wives were the shared bitterness which started this whole

process. It is his cue to play the parents' final card. If they are to avoid

the duly blessed Jacob's marrying of Hittite women, as his brother has

done, they must make a non-Canaanite bride available, and his choice of

her unavoidable.

This is cleverly done by Isaac's now giving Jacob a respectable

means by which to escape Esau's wrath. It is made conditional on Jacob's

non-Canaanite marriage, which he might not favor but can ill-afford to

turn down under the circumstances. It is also a face-saving exit with the

approval of his father. It is not simply a feverish flight from his brother.

Rebekah establishes the necessity of the trek. Isaac gives the means.

And, Jacob has no choice.

Rebekah's cue to Isaac and his charge to Jacob merit a second

citation:

> Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my
> life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob
> marries one of the Hittite women such as these,
> one of the women of the land, what good will my
> life be to me?" Then Isaac called Jacob and
> blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not
> marry one of the Canaanite women. Arise, go to
> Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your
> mother's father; and take as wife from there one
> of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother."
> (Gen. 27:46-28:2)

The narrative has now come full circle. The envelope, which opened

with the announcement of Esau's marriages and their vexations for both

Isaac and Rebekah, is now sealed with the blessing transfer to Jacob and

the certainty of his marrying acceptable kin. As this goes forward, Esau

still tries to set things right by marrying a non-Canaanite woman himself,

a daughter of Ishmael. But Jacob has already set out for Haran with the

blessing. And, Isaac and Rebekah are no longer on the narrative stage.

With his strength and identity now established, Isaac is recalled only one

more time to note his death in Hebron, several chapters later after Jacob's

return from Paddan-aram:

> And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or
> Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham
> and Isaac had sojourned. Now the days of Isaac

were a hundred and eighty years.   And Isaac
breathed his last; and he died and was gathered
to his people, old and full of days; and his sons
Esau and Jacob buried him. (Gen. 35:27-29)

Isaac has moved from Moriah to Beer-lahai-roi to Beer-sheba to Hebron --

finally to join his parents again.

Psychiatric Reading

The psychiatrist who approaches the Isaac story, as interpreted

above, may offer supportive insights from his own discipline. What

distinguishes the psychiatric reading is not so much its destination, as

the means by which it is reached. While the general reader could interpret

along the lines already demonstrated, the psychiatrist could do so with a

different process of analysis and formulation, and still come to essential

agreement with the prior method. In this regard, the readings would share

the kind of truth of "connection" to which we alluded earlier.

Overall, the psychiatrist may discern Isaac's portrayal to be one of

consistency and to exemplify "enduring patterns" of his relating to

himself, others, and the world. By Klerman's definition earlier, Isaac's

figure constitutes a "personality." [5] This is appreciated by demonstrating

that the critical determinants of his ways are his parents' discord, their

self-doubt, the Moriah trauma, the Abraham-Isaac rift, Isaac's eventual

reappearance, and his blessing of Jacob rather than Esau.

Parental discord prior to and after Isaac's arrival has already been hypothesized above. It is assumed to have been part of Abram's, Sarai's, and Lot's departure from Haran before Isaac's birth. It is inferred from Sarai's apparent reluctance to claim an identity as Abram's sister, and thereby to submit herself to the designs of Pharaoh. It is implied by the ambiguity of the dialogue reported later by Abimelech in which he claims that she did say "sister." Yet there is no indisputable evidence of her choosing to say so. It is logically understood to be an element of both parents' responses to their childlessness. And, it is glaringly obvious in the two episodes of Hagar's being expelled. Each of these examples has been cited previously. All of them give evidence to the psychiatrist of parental discord, which brings the expectation that the "basic trust" in the stability of the external parental world, which Erikson considers crucial for developing infants and children, was lacking for Isaac. His susceptibility to social withdrawal and isolation was established early and realized later. Erikson's view merits citation again:

> Rather the psychological observer must ask whether or not in any area under observation religion and tradition are living psychological forces creating the kind of faith and conviction which permeates a parent's personality and thus

reinforces the child's basic trust in the world's trustworthiness. 6

The psychiatrist may also hypothesize that the laughing skepticisms of both Abraham and Sarah suggest a doubt of self as well as of God. As noted already, both parents laughed when God finally made the birth announcement. They did so uneasily and while commenting on their coming age-inappropriate parenthood. Just as their discord would reasonably influence their son, so also would whatever tentativeness and lack of confidence that they brought to the endeavor have an impact on him. If they were unsure as to their qualifications for the tasks at hand, so also could their son be.

Yet the susceptibility to trips and stumbles of all kinds, which parental discord and doubt might bring, is relatively less significant to Isaac than the expected trauma that would come his way from an event like Moriah. The psychiatrist may hypothesize considerable injury to come therefrom, and verify this theory with the text as well. The long silences of all parties are well-known. But the inclusion of Isaac's query to his father as to the whereabouts of the sacrificial lamb, his father's evasive reply, and Isaac's subsequent resignation are particularly haunting. This is further highlighted by the text's describing their ascent as being "together," but then making no mention of Isaac's descent afterward --

only that of Abraham and the attendants. These verses merit citation

again:

> And Abraham took the wood of the burnt
> offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he
> took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they
> went both of them together. And Isaac said to
> his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said,
> "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold the fire
> and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt
> offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide
> himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my
> son." So they went both of them together.
> (Gen. 22:6-8)

> So Abraham returned to his young men, and they
> arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and
> Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba. (Gen. 22:19)

The psychiatrist may read here the particularly traumatic

experience of a son who has already endured discord between his parents,

as well as their uncertainty over their parental qualifications. He has

now been taken up by his father for a near-slaughter, and can only view

virtually all the experiences of his life at this point as totally

inexplicable. Whatever residual there was of "basic trust" when he came

to Moriah, Isaac must have lost it there. The text's failure to mention his

descent and his presumed disappearance into the Judean wilderness

afterward validates this view even more.

The psychiatrist may continue by hypothesizing that Moriah brought

an insurmountable rift between Isaac and his father. It left him with a personality founded on parental discord and doubt, traumatized by a near-death experience, and now without the confidence of the supportive presence of Abraham. This is implied by Isaac's apparent absence from his mother's burial, which occurs immediately after the Moriah event. Abraham made the arrangements. But Isaac is absent, likely avoiding his father. The avoidance continues into the next chapter where Abraham arranges his son's marriage. But Isaac neither converses nor has recorded contact with his father. The rift is also suggested by a reference to Isaac's specific living environs after Moriah. As already mentioned, they were not those of Abraham but those of Hagar's first refuge, Beer-lahai-roi:

> Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and
> was dwelling in the Negeb. (Gen. 24:2)

And, the rift is last demonstrated by Abraham's death, and his subsequent burial by both his sons without blessing or talk being shared:

> Abraham breathed his last and died in a good
> old age, an old man and full of years, and
> was gathered to his people. Isaac and
> Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of
> Machpelah ... (Gen. 25:8-9a)

In the wake of these happenings, the psychiatrist may next view

Isaac's re-entry into social affairs as significant. His marriage to Rebekah and his apparent finding of maternal solace from her seem to provide a starting point for his renewal of trust toward the world in general. The text is recalled:

> Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Gen. 24:67)

Nonetheless, as the psychiatrist may expect, Isaac's return is that of a survivor, not a hero. He is a less domineering figure than his father, from the navigation of his beginnings to the destination of his marriage with Rebekah and beyond. The text is plain in making known his less commanding status before Rebekah than that of Abraham before Sarah, his more circumscribed sojourning in Gerar only and not in Egypt, and his reception of blessings from God primarily on the merit of Abraham's deeds. Each of these ideas was noted earlier.

Still, his eventual achievement, after the prolonged stay in Gerar under the surveillance of Abimelech, is a geographical relocation to Beersheba, as also described earlier. The psychiatrist may consider this as a symbolic as well as literal entrance into the territory of his father. But now it is presumably with less of the handicapping fear and avoidance

that has kept him in the environs of Beer-lahai-roi ever since Moriah.

With this move, the psychiatrist may see the stage finally set for Isaac's greatest test. Unlike the test of his father, which came from Deity, Isaac's test is with himself. He has survived parental discord, parental misgivings, life-threatening trauma, paternal separation, and a return to society via marriage and a family. But he surely still carries his proclivities for Beer-lahai-roi inside, as he also undoubtedly maintains the preference for Esau over Jacob, which he has had from the start:

> When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. (Gen. 25:27-28)

It is the relinquishing of this favoritism for Esau and its reversal via the blessing of Jacob that constitute Isaac's greatest challenge. His favoring of Esau, as the virile bowman who is more the pursuer than the pursued, the actor than the bystander, is an obvious choice of one who has known well the involuntary, passive role in dramas beyond his control. It is part of the "enduring pattern" of Isaac's personality that he tries to live with and eventually to overcome his victim state by aligning himself with this elder son. Like Esau, Isaac has been a man outside the tented community of family for much of his life. But unlike Esau's, Isaac's has

not been a stance of any particular strength. At some level, he would hope for more in this regard by mere association with Esau.

Yet the psychiatrist and biblical narrator know that in order for Isaac to stake a lasting claim to his own strength, he must do so apart from Esau. With the father-son pairing already established, the psychiatrist is not surprised that the narrator subtly recalls it at the end of Chapter 26 -- only then to bring it into question. Here Esau's marriage announcement to the Hittite wives includes his forty year age. This was Isaac's marital age as well and serves to link them again before delivering the critical news of the bitterness that has come. The verses read:

> And Isaac was forty years old when he took to wife Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean. (Gen. 25:20)

> When Esau was forty years old, he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah. (Gen. 26:34-35)

The Isaac-Esau connection is still in evidence. They are even married at the same age. But now there is cause for separation on Isaac's part. The question of Chapter 27 is whether or not he can do it.

The general analysis of these verses has already suggested that he

does. But from a psychiatric view, the text is observed to contain another

indication that, on his way to new strength, Isaac is trying to overcome

the specific echoes of Moriah and the memory of his father there. These

echoes are heard in the response elicited from Esau after Isaac's call:

> When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so
> that he could not see, he called Esau his older
> son, and said to him, "My son"; and he answered,
> "Here I am." (Gen. 27:1)

This verse is reminiscent of earlier ones in which Abraham is summoned

at Moriah:

> After these things God tested Abraham, and said
> to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I."
> (Gen. 22:1)

> And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!"
> And he said, "Here am I, my son." (Gen. 22:7)

> But the angel of the Lord called to him from
> heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he
> said, "Here am I." (Gen. 22:12)

"Here am I" is a phrase previously linked to Abraham. When Esau says it,

the reader cannot help nearly equating the two. It is as if the narrator is

presenting Isaac as trying to master Moriah by reenacting it in a different

version, wherein he is the holder of God-like authority over Esau, who is

Abraham-like in his implied distinctiveness from others, especially when

compared to Isaac. It is as if Isaac is sending forth his own father for a

pursuit of blessing that is destined to failure from the start. It is as if the son is evening the score with a father substitute.

The psychiatrist also sees the narrator as inviting the reader to consider this drama ultimately as Isaac's test, in a way analogous to that of Abraham. This notion is especially evidenced later in the chapter when the phrase, "Here I am," is repeated again at the critical, "testing" moment as Jacob enters Isaac's presence with a claim of Esau's identity. Until then, the phrase has been Abraham's three times and Esau's once. It is now taken over by Isaac. It is as if he is on the verge of replacing, or carrying on from his father. After he says it, there will be no turning back if he continues the ruse:

> So he (Jacob) went in to his father, and said, "My father"; and he (Isaac) said, "Here I am; who are you my son?" (Gen. 27:18)

As Abraham spoke up and was then tested, so now it is with Isaac. But as Abraham struggled to respond to God's call, Isaac seeks to overcome his own self-doubt in acting for himself and his wife with a strength not displayed before.

In sum, a psychiatric reading of Isaac's story may yield the above group of critical determinants for his personality's composition. They have been derived by joining a general textual reading to some of the

listening and inferring processes of a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, and by then including additional attention to certain psychoanalytic tenets.

For example, when the psychiatrist hypothesizes that parental discord has been a prominent element in Isaac's life, attention is given to the text's "redundancy" in the Pharaoh-Abimelech scenes, the Hagar expulsion episodes, and the repeated mentions of childlessness. This attention is focused in the same way upon the text as it would be upon a patient's comments in psychotherapy. "Redundancy" is of import in both analyses.

Moreover, when the psychiatrist hypothesizes that Moriah was a life-changing trauma for Isaac, attention is given to the text's "shift of state" in relation to his one remark during the assent. He is abruptly silent after this first recorded utterance of his life. This is no accident. It is judged as significant here, as it would be in the consulting room.

Additionally, when the psychiatrist hypothesizes that Isaac may be alienated from his father after Moriah, rather than their sharing a bond of surviving the frightful test, the "temporal contiguity" of the episode to Sarah's death and burial, and Isaac's absence therefrom, constitute verifying data in a way parallelling a psychotherapeutic inference.

These examples of the listening and inferring processes brought to

the text have been joined by considerations of the text's speaking to particular psychoanalytic tenets, and to any evidence of correlative psychological and spiritual growth.

It is difficult to apply such terms as "the unconscious," "psychic determinism," or "transference" to the Isaac story. His direct discourse is sparse, its meaning is not always apparent, and the omniscient narrator is selectively withholding.

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to observe that Isaac's life bears the sign of a kind of "psychic determinism" as he struggles to recover from a Moriah to which he was particularly vulnerable at the outset. His parental handicaps, by virtue of Abraham's and Sarah's discord and uncertainty, left him susceptible to the trauma's worst effects, which were partially expressed by his withdrawal and delayed reappearance.

Furthermore, he does behave as if in a "transference" relationship when the text suggests the link between Rebekah and Sarah in his mind:

> Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. (Gen. 24:67)

It is as if the mother that he lost immediately after Moriah has been replaced. He has "transferred" feelings and expectations from his mother

to his wife. In addition, Isaac's attachment to and ultimate setting aside of Esau is strongly suggestive of another "transference" relationship in which Esau represents a kind of Abraham-like figure to Isaac. This possibility was explored above.

These observations are joined by another obvious reflection in the text. Isaac appears to traverse sequentially and successfully the last four "life cycle crises" of Erikson's developmental scheme. [7] After Moriah, the adolescent seeks refuge and some sense of "identity" in the environs of Beer-lahai-roi; the young adult eventually reenters the world to know the "intimacy" of marriage to Rebekah; the more mature adult achieves the "generativity" of sons and property in Gerar and Beer-sheba; and the elderly man grasps "integrity" as he dies and is buried in Hebron, also the site of his parents' burial.

Finally, the text does offer some hint of correlative psychological and spiritual growth in the spirit of Rizzuto [8] and Coles [9] above. It comes subtly at the end of Isaac's active narrative life, after he has blessed Jacob the first time, and as he blesses him again with a sending forth to Paddan-aram for marriage.

As suggested above, this act can be interpreted as the culmination of Isaac's peak psychological achievement after an effort of sustained

acting in his and Rebekah's interest. In this scene, it is then appropriate that he utters the appelation for Deity, "God Almighty," that the text used earlier only when Abram became Abraham. That first biblical usage marked a kind of unique psychological-spiritual moment. Here there seems to be a second. Isaac, like Abraham, has become something of a new man in both mind and spirit. The verses are as follow:

> When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless." (Gen. 17:1)

> "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations." (Gen. 17:5)

> Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, "You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Arise, go to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. God Almighty bless you and make you faithful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples." (Gen. 28:1-3)

Literary Reading

The view of Isaac's story that has been considered in the general and psychiatric readings above can be amplified by demonstrating some of the

methods by which literati such as Alter, Berlin, Sternberg, or Brichto, approach these and related texts. Their unique parameters of interpretation are judged to be more significant than the varying content of their arrivals. Even though these scholars would likely disagree with the portrait of Isaac being offered here, it is appropriate to point out the utility of their approaches in the service of a contrasting formulation. In this section, repetition, type-scene, allusion, point of view, direct discourse, setting, plot, wordplay, and general compositional principles in the Isaac texts will be discussed. Most of the examples have been considered already in the previous sections. There, the specific use of literary terms to describe the function of a given word, verse, or pericope within the whole was not emphasized. We will now shift to a primarily literary, rather than general or psychiatric, frame of interpretation. In doing so, we will emphasize the use of this literary nomenclature as we try to understand the text. The cited scriptural translations are the writer's own.

The prominence of repetition in the Bible is readily observed. Isaac's case is not an exception. The technique's effectiveness invariably revolves around variation in the repeated elements at hand. The narrator is purposely inexact and leaves the reader wondering why. For example,

the scenario of a patriarch and a barren wife is a part of both Abraham's

and Isaac's stories. In Abraham's and Sarah's case, the drama is extended

over seven chapters from Abram's initial outcry to God regarding

childlessness, to Sarah's eventual conception and delivery:

> Abram responded, "Lord God, what could you give
> me? I am still childless! My heir is Eliezer of
> Damascus." Abram continued, "Look! You have
> not given me a child. My slave's son here is
> going to be my heir." (Gen. 15:2-3)
>
> Sarah conceived and delivered a son to Abraham
> in his old age, at the time that God had
> announced to him. (Gen. 21:2)

In the interim, the reader is informed of Sarai's barren state (Gen. 16:1),

of Sarai's expelling Hagar (Gen. 16:6), of God's promising Abraham a son

and naming him Isaac (Gen. 17:16-19), and of Sarah's overhearing the

divine messengers outside the tent as they forecast to Abraham the due

date (Gen. 18:9-12).

In contrast, Isaac's and Rebekah's experience of infertility is a three-

verse episode that begins with Isaac's making an entreaty to God and being

answered by Rebekah's conception. No direct discourse between the

patriarch and Deity is recorded. Rebekah then follows with an expression

of concern over the rumbling within her womb. Her words are offered in

direct discourse that proceeds to direct inquiry of and answer from God:

> Isaac prayed to the Lord on his wife's behalf
> since she was barren. God was attentive and
> Rebekah his wife conceived. Yet the children
> within Rebekah were pushing against one
> another, and she declared, "If this is the way it
> is, what am I to do?" Then she determined to
> inquire of the Lord. God said to her, "Two
> nations are in your womb; two peoples will be
> separated from the midst of your bowels; one
> will be stronger than the other; the older will
> serve the younger." (Gen. 25:21-23)

The differences between these repeated scenarios are significant.

At the least, the literary critic notes the greater relative emphasis of

length given to the first couple's story over the second, the greater

importance attached to Abraham's and even Rebekah's words of direct

discourse than to Isaac's reported prayer, and the greater degree of parity

between Isaac and Rebekah than between Abraham and Sarah. These data

are generated by simply observing the dissimilarities between the

repeated scenarios, and then inferring appropriate meaning from this

evidence. In Isaac's case, the reader is thereby given a textual basis for

hypothesizing his relatively diminished stature before his father and his

wife.

This notion is borne out by another example of asymmetric

repetition in the southward treks of Abraham and Isaac. In times of

famine, Abraham's travels extend to both Pharaoh's Egypt (Gen. 12) and

Abimelech's Gerar (Gen. 20). Isaac's are limited to Abimelech's Gerar:

> There was a famine in the land, besides the
> former famine that occurred in the time of
> Abraham. So Isaac went forth in the direction of
> Gerar to Abimelech, King of the Philistines.
> Then the Lord appeared to him and said, "Don't go
> down towards Egypt. Settle in the land of which
> I will tell you." (Gen. 26:1-2)

Additionally, the Philistine king learns, when God comes to him with

the news in a dream, of Abraham's deceitful ways in passing off Sarah as

his sister. A corresponding happening among another Abimelech, Isaac,

and Rebekah depicts the king observing the second patriarch indiscreetly

fondling his wife in public. There is no role for Deity here. The relevant

verses include:

> But God came to Abimelech at night in a dream
> and said to him, "You are as good as dead on
> account of the woman (Sarah) whom you have
> taken. She is another man's wife." (Gen. 20:3)

> When he (Isaac) had been there a long time,
> Abimelech, King of the Philistines, looked down
> from his window and there saw Isaac fondling
> Rebekah his wife. (Gen. 26:8)

Thus again, by comparing elements of repeated episodes, the literary

reader is able to support a view of Isaac's carrying a less heroic status

than his father. His journeying is more restricted, and his behavior is

less discreet.

Another prominent example of repetition in Isaac's case merits mention. It is the use of the idea of "bitterness" (מרה) in the pericope of Isaac's bestowing the blessing on Jacob rather than Esau. This material has been examined above, but can be approached again.

The reader is told initially that the Hittite wives have brought "bitterness" to both Isaac and Rebekah:

> They (the wives) were a source of bitterness for both Isaac and Rebekah. (Gen. 26:35)

The drama then follows with Isaac's blessing of Jacob, and Esau's eventual return from his hunt with the expectation of receiving the paternal favor. On being told of its bestowal upon Jacob, Esau's response is one of "bitterness." The idea's repetition here highlights his parents' "bitterness" over the marital choices that were the initiators of the whole affair. Esau has come to experience a measure of the grief that he caused earlier:

> When Esau realized what his father was saying, he cried bitterly out loud, exclaiming to his father, "Bless me, me as well, my father!" (Gen. 27:34)

Just as the "bitterness" idea is present at the start and in the middle of the drama, it is also repeated at the end. However, here the repetition is modified. When the reader notes Rebekah's remark to Isaac

concerning the Hittite wives in the last verse of Chapter 27, there are three differences from the prior mention of the wives in Chapter 26. The first difference is that they are now connected with Jacob as well as with Esau. As already claimed, this suggests that the whole process of the blessing ruse was aimed at a goal of ultimately determining Jacob's marital status, and not just his inheritance. The second and third differences from the prior mention of the wives are that Chapter 27 associates them with bringing on "loathing" (קַצְתִּי בְּחַיַּי) and not just "bitterness," and doing so for Rebekah without mention of her being joined by Isaac. This modified repetition is as follows:

> Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I have come to loathe my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob should take a Hittite wife, like these of this land, what is life to me?" (Gen. 27:46)

The modification of "bitterness" to "loathing" is effective here because it is not expected at first. "Bitterness" has already been noted twice. Why is it not here a third time? The answer comes on reflection when the reader realizes that the increased intensity conveyed by "loathing" parallels the text's assent toward the narrative goal of sending Jacob forth for a non-Canaanite bride. As Jacob's potential exit draws nearer, "bitterness" over the Hittite wives comes to "loathing." Also, as

has already been observed above, Isaac may be excluded from explicitly joining Rebekah in her stance, even though both of them had felt "bitterness" earlier, because for him the uncommon psychological exertion of the blessing ruse itself has forced all other feelings and preoccupations into the background. As we have suggested, Isaac needs a reminder from Rebekah for the final step in their scheme.

A final occurrence of repetition comes in this same chapter. As in the other examples put forward, it is the variance within the repeated elements that gives an imperative for interpretive response. When Isaac issues his directive to Esau, he concludes it with an assurance of blessing:

> "... my innermost being (נַפְשִׁי) will bless you before I die." (Gen. 27:4)

The reader is then informed that Rebekah was listening to the charge. By our earlier interpretation, she was doing so as a co-conspirator, not as an eavesdropper. Afterward, when Esau goes out, she summons Jacob and gives him his mission. But when she reports to Jacob Isaac's words of the assured blessing to Esau, she misquotes her husband:

> "'... I will bless you with the Lord's approval (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) before I die.'" (Gen. 27:7)

Rebekah substitutes "with the Lord's approval" for "my innermost

blessing." The reader is left to explain the variant.

Sternberg has cited this exact verse sequence as an example of an "expansion or addition" type of textual repetition in the Bible. [10]   His focus is on the "addition" of "with the Lord's approval." He makes no mention of the deletion of "my innermost blessing." And, he goes on to observe that the import of such variance "can be determined only in context." [11]

In this regard, the literatus who has noted this textual asymmetry, which is more obvious in the Hebrew rendering, does well to draw from a psychiatric colleague in explaining the context.   Together, they can advance this example of variant repetition as a literary portrayal of "the unconscious." Rebekah's error here reflects a slip of the tongue. She is not saying what she heard earlier or what she intends at present. Rather, she is saying her truest and unconscious sentiments. Namely, she would prefer a blessing for her son derived "with the Lord's approval," to one which is simply the "innermost blessing" of an all-too-human Isaac, who is in the throes of finally asserting himself in the interest of inheritance and progeny.

The biblical writer's inclusion of such a device is akin to other examples in the literary arena, like Freud's citations from Schiller's play

Wallenstein or Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice. 12   The analyst

wrote:

> It has repeatedly happened that a creative
> writer has made use of a slip of the tongue or
> some other parapraxis as an instrument for
> producing an imaginative effect. 13

In our case, the "imaginative effect" of Rebekah's slip, in the guise of the

narrator's variant repetition, is at least to serve to emphasize again the

standing of Isaac on this stage and the challenge that he faces.

Even more, the effect of Rebekah's slip is to highlight another

asymmetry when the assured blessing is brought forward a third time.

This occurs when Jacob approaches Isaac after being duly informed,

instructed, and disguised by his mother. With the presumed confidence of

her backing, he goes before Isaac with a savory dish and a request for

blessing.   But unlike his mother Rebekah, who is supposedly his only

source, Jacob recalls the wording of the blessing correctly:

> "... may your innermost being (נַפְשֶׁךָ) bless me."
> (Gen. 27:19)

He does not substitute "with the Lord's approval" for "innermost blessing,"

as Rebekah did when she reported to him the scene between Isaac and

Esau. He corrects her slip of the tongue. And the reader is led to the

inevitable conclusion that the ever-ambitious Jacob was also listening to

Isaac and Esau. But Jacob remembers and says the words correctly, so as to arouse minimal suspicion in the father who he assumes is being duped. So, in this case of variant repetitions, the reader discerns not only Rebekah's view of Isaac and his challenge, but also Jacob's eavesdropping and scheming on his own from the start -- apart from any alliance with his mother.

Among the examples of repetition cited thus far, the scenarios of the barren wife-patriarch couple and the patriarch's southward trek during a time of famine are a part of a subgroup called type-scenes in the broader category of the device of repetition. The biblical author utilizes this technique, as already shown, to draw contrasts between narrative figures. The original audience undoubtedly expected certain crises with recurrent motifs to arise at critical moments in any major character's life. Infertility and famine were among these crises. A further example of a type-scene in Isaac's life is that of his betrothal.

Alter has identified five elements of the betrothal type-scene and has demonstrated each within the Genesis 24 narrative where Abraham's servant seeks, finds, and brings Rebekah back to Canaan to marry Isaac. [14] The elements include: the bridegroom or his designee going to a foreign land; the bride being identified as a "young girl" (נַעֲרָה); water being drawn

from a well by one of the pair; the young bride rushing home; and, a concluding meal at the young woman's home.

Alter has characterized this betrothal as the first and "most elaborate" in the Bible. [15] Yet for the purposes of understanding Isaac's personality, the reader is left only with the fact that he was excluded from the process by his father, and that this reflects the rift between the two and the dominance of the elder. On the other hand, as Alter points out, the betrothal indicates early on that Rebekah is a woman who lives in a "continuous whirl of purposeful activity," as she draws water and rushes about. [16] Within this frame of a single, early type-scene, the reader is able to anticipate a considerable amount regarding what is ahead for Isaac and Rebekah. Isaac will struggle to come out of the shadows. Rebekah will strive to turn things her way.

Alter has also pointed out the critical function of allusion within biblical narrative, and has offered a particularly striking example in Isaac's case. [17] He observes that the confrontation of David and Saul at the cave in the Ein Gedi wilderness involves a long speech of fealty by David which is followed by Saul's response of "breathtaking brevity" and weeping. [18]

> When David had finished speaking these words to
> Saul, Saul asked, "Is this your voice my son
> David?" Then Saul wept aloud. (I Sam. 24:17)

Alter connects this verse and its actors to well-known earlier ones

in Genesis. He draws a parallel with Isaac and Jacob, and challenges the

reader to consider the basis for the biblical narrator's inserting this tie

of allusion. The second set of verses comes from the encounter of the

blind Isaac and the disguised Jacob:

> Then he went in to his father saying, "My father."
> And he responded, "Here I am. Who are you my
> son?" (Gen. 27:18)

> Then Jacob approached Isaac his father and he
> touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of
> Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau." (Gen.
> 27:22)

With this linkage, the reader faces two elders who are claiming

difficulty with voice recognition on one level, and yet who are obviously

struggling with deeper concerns on another. Saul's monarchy is destined

to fall. Isaac's blessing is being bestowed upon the second-born. So what

can each citation bring by way of clarity to the other? Is this not the

fruit of allusion? What is the biblical author intending to show?

Alter does not definitively tell. He does suggest that Isaac's

physical blindness may be an analogue to Saul's "moral blindness." [19] But

further analysis does not follow. Yet in keeping with our earlier general

reading of Isaac's story, an interpretation can be offered.

Each verse in its context leaves a question unanswered. In Saul's case, the reader has reasonable certainty that the king knows to whom he is speaking, since he has turned around and looked upon David before the fugitive hero delivers the lengthy speech of loyalty:

> Afterwards David rose up and went out of the cave. He called out to Saul exclaiming, "My lord the king!" And Saul looked behind him as David bowed low to the ground, prostrating himself. (I Sam 24:9)

However, later on it is not certain as to what Saul is weeping over. Whence comes the emotion? Are his tears from guilt over his behavior toward David, from a paradoxical joy in seeing his former favorite, or from the hopeless situation in which he finds himself? The allusion helps to answer the question.

In Isaac's case, the reader has little doubt that the emotional tension of the moment comes from the fact that Esau's first-born blessing is about to be bequeathed to second-born Jacob. However, the reader is not certain whether Isaac knows to whom he is speaking, or whether he is simply being duped. Again, the allusion helps to answer the question.

The tie of allusion between these two narrative scenes allows the reader to answer by association the question of Saul's weeping and of

Isaac's knowing. It allows the reader to grasp literary license and to claim that the certainty of Saul's knowing before whom he spoke can be extended to Isaac. Isaac knows as well. And, by reciprocation, it allows the reader to claim that the certainty of the emotional contagion attached to a displacing of the first-born in Isaac's case can be extended to Saul. Saul is weeping over his hopeless situation wherein his downfall is inevitable, and his only choice for remaining in line with the stream of things is to relinquish any hope of his first-born's succession and a subsequent dynasty. Each partner in this pair of allusion may be considered to bridge some of the gaps of meaning in the other. And, in regard to Isaac, the reader again finds reason to hypothesize that the patriarch knows more than is obvious in the blessing ruse.

Allusion is joined by point of view as another literary technique of import in the Isaac story. Berlin conceives this device in terms of modern cinema:

> The narrator is the camera eye; we 'see' the story through what he presents. The biblical narrator is omniscient in that everything is at his disposal; but he selects carefully what he will include and what he will omit. He can survey the scene from a distance, or zoom in for a detailed look at a small part of it. [20]

She goes on to illustrate this technique by citing Isaac's binding in

Genesis 22 as a narrative where the reader is mostly informed of events
from Abraham's view only. Yet, at various moments, the point of view
broadens or shifts to significant effect. It expands first when:

> On the third day, Abraham looked up and saw the
> place in the distance. (Gen. 22:4)

It then refocuses on Abraham while he gives orders to the attendants,
loads Isaac with wood, and takes the knife and fire himself. The view
then broadens again with dramatic impact as Isaac is included for the
first and only time:

> And they went on, both of them together. Then
> Isaac exclaimed to Abraham, his father, "My
> father!" And he responded, "Here I am, my son."
> Then he continued, "The fire and the wood are
> here, but where is the lamb for the offering?"
> Abraham answered, "God will provide himself a
> lamb for the offering, my son." And they went
> on, both of them together. (Gen. 22:6b-8)

The view then returns to Abraham's perspective and remains there
throughout the remainder of the scene until the final verse when it
expands again. But this time Isaac is absent. There are only the
attendants and Abraham. Father and son are no longer together:

> Abraham returned to the young men and they
> rose and went together to Beer-sheba. And
> Abraham settled in Beer-sheba. (Gen. 22:19)

As Berlin has suggested, this sequence of varying points of view is

of considerable relevance to the reader. In the examples given, it heightens the drama initially when the camera pulls back to survey the whole landscape. After a refocusing on Abraham, the moment is intensified once more when the camera brings Isaac and Abraham together in conversation as well as travel. And finally, after excluding Isaac with another refocusing on Abraham throughout the drama of the binding itself, the camera opens its eye again. And in doing so, it shocks the reader with Isaac's absence. The son is no longer to be found.

For one seeking understanding of Isaac's experience here, the technique effectively portrays both his isolation from his father and his trauma in the wake of the Moriah event. His speech is first cut off by a parent who the text insists is walking with him, before and after their dialogue. Then later, Isaac's very survival is called in question when Abraham's stage is expanded, and there the reader finds the young men, but no Isaac. The literatus here appreciates the discriminant use of point of view by the biblical author as demonstrating two critical determinants of Isaac's personality which the psychiatrist-reader suggested above -- that of his significant trauma from Moriah and that of his subsequent rift with Abraham.

Direct discourse, setting, and plot are additional valences to which

a literary reader attends. Examples of each of these have already been noted in prior sections. A few will be recalled.

Brichto has observed that biblical narrative has a decided preference for showing rather than telling. [21]   Direct discourse is often offered between characters rather than omniscient reporting by the authorial voice. This results in an interpretive milieu in which the reader must seek the meaning of often terse remarks, and not be able to rely on the narrator's background commentary to bridge or fill in the gaps. The effect is to generate multiple possible meanings for a given text.

Our consideration of Isaac's and Abraham's remarks above is an example. The reader is not told directly how Isaac feels when he asks about the lamb, or whether Abraham is anxious when he assures his son. The reader is given their conversation in an artful delivery and then left to infer. Additionally, our entire analysis earlier of Isaac's bestowing blessing on Jacob was based on inferences from a combination of direct discourse and background commentary. What allows a respectable departure there, from the usual interpretation of that text, is in large measure the narrative's reliance on direct discourse that is open to more than one understanding. What did Isaac really know? Why did Rebekah misstate the blessing that she overheard? Why was Jacob able to say it

correctly? What was Isaac really thinking when he trembled on Esau's return? The reader is not told. The reader is given the direct discourse, along with minimal background narration, and left to discern for himself. In Isaac's case, this has generated the proposed understandings in our analyses.

In addition to direct discourse, setting has also been seen to be purposeful. As Isaac's life progresses, there is noted movement from Moriah to the wilderness refuge of Beer-lahai-roi, to the re-entry point of Beer-sheba, where life after Moriah resumed for Abraham and later for his son, and finally to Hebron where Isaac is buried by both his sons and near his parents. As Brichto has argued, setting in the Bible is not "ornamental." [22] In these examples, his claim holds true.

Brichto has also emphasized that no element of action or sequence in a biblical plot should be considered "superfluous." [23] His insight could be supported from various points in our Isaac readings, but one is especially prominent. It comes in the sequence of events after Jacob's receiving the blessing from Isaac, Esau's coming to the intent of murderous revenge, and Rebekah's acting in this situation with Isaac's collaboration to send forth Jacob to Paddan-aram.

As we demonstrated earlier, the plot progresses methodically here

but without the fanfare of the reader being told outright what is occurring. Rebekah uses the murderous intent of Esau as a pretext to alert Jacob that an exit to Haran is imminent. She only speaks of the exit, not of the upcoming marriage assignment, which might bring Jacob to balk. She then reminds Isaac of the Hittite intermarriage problem and its threat now to the second-born. Isaac takes the hint and links marriage to a non-Canaanite woman with Jacob's exit, which he has now had time to consider. Hereby, Isaac's charge provides a face-saving, if not totally desireable, mission for Jacob as cause to exit Canaan. Isaac does not even mention Esau's threat, as if not to risk Jacob's feeling perceived as a coward, and then declining to leave.

Our reconsideration of this chain of events is simply to illustrate that each link is critical in the evolving plot. Rebekah waits for news of Esau's intent. She then only speaks to Jacob of safety, not marriage. She follows by reminding Isaac of the marriage goal. And Isaac then only speaks to Jacob of the marital charge, and not the flight from Esau, as cause for his going. Each link is necessary. Nothing in this plot is "superfluous."

A final literary device for our consideration, which is noted throughout the Bible by the literati, is that of wordplay. In reading Isaac's

story, the most obvious examples of this technique are derived from his

name and its Hebrew root (פn3), which means "laugh." The name itself

means, "he will laugh," and is obviously related to the "laughing" that

Abraham and Sarah do on hearing of Isaac's impending birth:

> Abraham fell on his face laughing (פnֳּל) and
> asked himself, "A son will be born to a man, a
> hundred years old? And Sarah, will she give
> birth at ninety?" (Gen. 17:17)

> God said, "Without a doubt Sarah your wife will
> give birth to a son for you, and you will call his
> name Isaac (פnֳּ)." (Gen. 17:19a)

> Then Sarah laughed (פnֳּאָל) to herself and
> asked, "After age has worn me down, would I
> have pleasure, and my husband being old?" (Gen.
> 18:12)

It is readily appreciated that Isaac's name is a wordplay itself. It is as if

he is God's answer to those skeptical chuckles that preceded his arrival.

However, another verse citation is troublesome -- both for meaning

and significance. The wordplay is again obvious, but how is the reader to

understand Genesis 21:5-6? Consider the following translations as noted:

> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son
> Isaac (פnֳּ) was born to him. (Gen. 21:5) RSV

> And Sarah said, "God has made laughter (פ'n3)
> for me; everyone who hears will laugh (ל-פnֳּ)
> over me." (Gen. 21:6) RSV

> And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac (יִצְחָק) was born unto him. (Gen. 21:5) AV

> And Sarah said, "God hath made me to laugh (צְחֹק), so that all that hear will laugh (יִצֲחַק-לִי) with me." (Gen. 21:6) AV

Verse 5 is a straightforward declaration by the omniscient narrator of Abraham's age at Isaac's birth, and of the father's paternal tie to his son. Verse 6 begins with Sarah's seeming to state outright, in both translations, that God has turned her skeptical laughter of the past into joyful laughter of the present over her son's actual birth. But the verse and her discourse then conclude with a problematic Hebrew phrase. One translation (RSV) states, "everyone who hears will laugh over me," while the other (AV) suggests, "all that hear will laugh with me." Neither is absolutely clear, but both are implying that Sarah's joy will be shared by others.

On the other hand, the problematic phrase, (יִצֲחַק-לִי), in Verse 6, may be translated as a claim of ownership by Sarah of her son, which counterbalances the assignment of Isaac to Abraham in Verse 5. While admittedly this translation is a notable departure from the usual, the unvowelled state of these texts, for the centuries preceding the Masoretes, allows for some error in transmission and at least the

possibility of a misplaced patach or kamatz, as in this case. The

alternative translation is made by making a slight alteration in the

traditional vowel pattern of the phrase from ('ל – יִצְחַק') to ('ל יִצְחָק).

With this change, consider the following translation of these verses by

the present writer:

> Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac
> (יִצְחָק) his son was born to him. Then, Sarah
> declared, "Laughter (צְחֹק), God has made for me;
> all who hear, Isaac (יִצְחָק) is mine ('ל)." (Gen.
> 21:5-6)

In this formulation, the two verses comprise a couplet that again

hints at the discord between Abraham and Sarah. First, Isaac is

Abraham's son, according to the narrator. Then, Isaac is Sarah's son,

according to Sarah. Apart from the translation difficulty, this

interpretation is further supported by a variegated repetition of the same

idea in parallel fashion only a few verses later. First, Abraham is

mentioned by the narrator in relation to Isaac, as Abraham celebrates his

son's weaning. The father does not speak here. Then, again, Sarah is

mentioned in relation to the child, and her direct discourse is included

once more.

But this time, the variegated repetitive element is expanded to

contain three verses. Two verses are devoted to Sarah, and one of them describes Isaac explicitly as her son. There is also an additional wordplay with a Piel verbal form (אֲצַחֵק) of our now familiar root (צחק). The verses read:

> The child grew and was weaned; and on the day of Isaac's (יִצְחָק) weaning, Abraham held a great celebration. When Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing (מְצַחֵק), she said to Abraham, "Expel this concubine and her son, so that the son of this concubine will not inherit with my son, with Isaac (יִצְחָק)." (Gen. 21:8-10)

Isaac is explicitly claimed as a possession by Sarah in this last phrase. We earlier suggested the same in the alternative translation of Verse 6. The narrator's verbal pun in the second repetitive element adds support to this idea. Its unambiguous derivation from Isaac's name invites an interpretive translation of "playing" (אֲצַחֵק), which conveys Sarah's concern that anyone, especially Ishmael, or perhaps even Abraham, would displace or endanger her son. The translation should reflect Isaac's prominence -- just as the original Hebrew does. Consider the following as a more accurate rendering of the biblical writer's intent:

> When Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian ... playing just like Isaac (אֲצַחֵק), she said to Abraham ... (Gen. 21:9-10a)

After this variegated repetition of Verses 5 and 6 by Verses 8 through 10, Verse 11 comes as a seal that makes plain again the longstanding discord between Abraham and Sarah. The discord has moved from the stage of Haran, to that of Pharaoh, to that of Abimelech, to that of Hagar, to this one of Isaac. After Sarah's insistence that Hagar and Ishmael be pushed aside to insure Isaac's ascendance, the narrator relates Abraham's misgivings:

> And the situation was very upsetting to Abraham
> because of his son (Ishmael). (Gen. 21:11)

Abraham has two sons. He does not want to mistreat either. Sarah has one. She has claimed him as her own twice within a span of five verses. She wants to protect his status in the face of all comers. This is one more contentious spark between her and Abraham that the narrator has skillfully unfolded through wordplay, which is clarified by variegated repetition and by direct discourse.

These verses also have implications for any reader, who ahead comes to know Sarah's death and burial in Chapter 23, immediately after Abraham binds her son Isaac, or any reader who comes to know Isaac finding uncommon comfort with his wife Rebekah after the loss of his mother, or any reader who comes to see Isaac as overly accustomed to the

dominance of his wife. From Verse 6, and Verses 9 and 10, the reader can verify Sarah's unique claim and explicit enactment of possession, in regard to Isaac. Her stance can be seen as a relevant factor in her own early demise, before the older Abraham, and as a seed for Rebekah's later prominence in Isaac's affairs. Sarah may have been literally shocked and demoralized to death over Moriah. Isaac may have been habituated to female dominance from the start. We are given possible explanations in these verses.

With this conundrum in mind, two additional examples of wordplay with Isaac's name may be offered. One comes in the incident of Abimelech discovering Rebekah's true identity by observing Isaac and Rebekah in a public embrace. As noted before, the posture is an unseemly one for a patriarch striving for stature comparable to his father. But even more, Isaac's demerit is doubly emphasized when the reader realizes that the biblical author again utilizes a Piel verbal form (מְצַחֵק) of the Hebrew root of Isaac's name (צחק). Yet here, it is to express the idea of "fondling":

> There was Isaac (יִצְחָק) fondling (מְצַחֵק) Rebekah his wife. (Gen. 26:8b)

The verse effectively says, "Isaac was isaaking Rebekah his wife." Again, Isaac is not up to his father's measure. Even his name is made a focus of

diminution.

Another and final example of wordplay in the Isaac material comes
in the heated moment when Esau realizes that Jacob has received the
blessing. The first-born cries out to his father in grief, anger, and
challenge. The wordplay comes in the alteration of the second root letter
in Isaac's name from a (ח) to an (ע). As noted, the original root (צחק)
means "laugh." The altered root (צעק) means "cry." The verse reads:

> When Esau understood his father's words, he
> cried out (וַיִּצְעַק) a great and bitter cry (צְעָקָה),
> and exclaimed to his father, "Bless me! Me, also,
> my father!" (Gen. 27:34)

The parallel of sound and sight to the prior verse is obvious
(יִצְחָק אֱמֶהִ/וַיִּצְעַק צְעָקָה). But here Isaac is not a subject of the
narrator's derision, but rather of Esau's challenge. The twice-appearing
root in the cognate accusative construction establishes the challenge's
intensity. The similarity of the root to that of Isaac's own name leaves no
doubt as to whom Esau's cry is aimed. The effect for the reader in pursuit
of Isaac's workings is to highlight the import of this emotional moment,
when Isaac faces the son whom he has just disinherited. The reader
watches and waits for Isaac's response.

In the wake of the above citings of a variety of literary devices,

which the literatus finds in the Isaac material, it is appropriate to conclude this literary reading section with a recall of and brief comment on Sternberg's triad of compositional principles. 24   It is critical to remember that the triad's importance lies in this: any given text has interweavings of historical, ideological, and aesthetic concerns. No text should be considered as the province of only one realm.

Moreover, our considerations in this thesis have been primarly aesthetic ones. But in so doing, historical and more strictly ideological readings are not intended to be discarded. Rather, we have focused on certain aesthetic features of the text with the assumption that the truths derived therefrom can be meaningfully connected to those of present-day psychiatry and literature. In the final chapter, a brief summation of this effort of connecting will be put forward.

Conclusion

In the preceding chapters, this thesis has aimed at making the Bible accessible to any reader who comes to its narratives with the opinions, sensibilities, and questions of psychiatrists and literary critics. It has included a rationale and means for Bible reading with these concerns, and it has offered a three-tiered analysis of the Isaac-related texts as an example of the interpretations and formulations that may be generated.

The first tier, a general reading of the Isaac stories, was one that assumed no special biblical knowledge. It also assumed neither a psychiatric nor a literary background. It proceeded only on the basis of an English translation, and it raised issues that any layperson might bring up with minimal recourse to references or scholars.

In this reading, Isaac was envisioned as having greater clarity and strength on the biblical stage than is often granted. It was established that he was born into the troubled dyad of parents who were prone to squabbles with each other, who were skeptical of Deity's and their own abilities to produce progeny, and who were beset by fears and cowardice that at times caused them to mistreat others. It was also observed that Moriah was most likely a considerable trauma for Isaac, and that an

estrangement from his father may have resulted thereafter. Yet Isaac was observed to return eventually to communal life and to actualize his capacity for marriage and parenting. Finally, he was interpreted to display a greater amount of strength and initiative in the blessing of his second-born, Jacob, than has been traditionally allowed.

The second tier, a psychiatric reading of these stories, was presented as arriving at conclusions similar to those 'of the general reading. But in this second approach, the means of arrival was centered in an identified psychiatric method, rather than in a common sense questioning of the text's surface message. Isaac was claimed to have the "enduring patterns" of a "personality," as defined by Klerman.[1] These "patterns" were presented as being conceivably determined by his impaired sense of Erikson's "basic trust" toward life in general,[2] after his being reared in an atmosphere of parental discord, parental self-doubt, Moriah's trauma, and a likely estrangement from his father. His "personality" was also noted to encompass the achievements of his eventual reappearance and his role in blessing Jacob so as to insure the family's continuity. Each of these emphases had been identified earlier in the general reading.

However, in the psychiatric effort, it was pointed out and

demonstrated that a specific method of listening to and inferring from the text's redundancies, temporal contiguities, and shifts of states could be used to arrive at interpretations in a way analogous to that of a psychiatric clinician. Further, these signposts were given added meaning by discerning their significance with particular psychoanalytic categories in mind, such as "psychic determinism," "transference," and "life cycle crises." Examples of this process were given.

The third tier of analysis, a literary approach to the Isaac material, also consisted of a specific conceptual orientation. In this case, a variety of poetic devices was identified and then located within the text. These devices included repetition, type-scene, allusion, point of view, direct discourse, setting, plot, and wordplay.

Once more, the examples offered were clarifiers of earlier themes that the general and psychiatric readings had already brought to attention. This was especially notable in citings like the identification of variegated repetitions by Rebekah and Jacob of Isaac's promised blessing to Esau. These repetitions were seen most vividly in the Hebrew text, and were judged, with the help of a psychiatric insight, to reflect Rebekah's unconscious "slip of the tongue," and to indicate Jacob's independent initiative to filch the blessing, even before his mother's approaching him

with the same intent. With Rebekah's words, the literary reading again established support for Isaac's less firm standing in comparison to Abraham's. With Jacob's delivery of the words, the literatus saw another example of the text's multiple intrigues and meanings, beyond the perimeter of tradition.

Overall, the connections between the three readings have been appreciated. The general appraisal raised most of the questions that the psychiatric and literary efforts also addressed in their ways. They, in turn, offered added support or insight to each other's gleanings and to the first rendering.

As a final example of this triad's interactions, it is recalled that the general reader sensed that Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27 was more complicated than plain. This position was supported simply on the basis of an English scriptural translation. The view was then enhanced by a psychiatric reading that argued for the biblical author's possible portrayal in this chapter of Isaac's struggle with a complicated paternal transferential relationship in regard to Esau. And, both of these reflections were then joined by literary treatments of the same verses, where the literatus conceived an even more complicated scene. There was an analyzing of Rebekah's and Jacob's variegated repetition of Isaac's

promised blessing to Esau. There was a suggesting of a connection of allusion between Saul and David at Ein Gedi and Isaac and Jacob in the blessing sequence. There was a noting of the extensive use of direct discourse and restrained narrator commentary in these verses. And, there was a pointing out of the methodical development of the plot to a goal of Jacob's exit for Haran and a non-Canaanite bride.

In this particular pericope, as well as others, the general, psychiatric, and literary readings were connected by a sense that the narrative's depth deserved more exploration. The three separate plumbings came to enrich one another and to serve as an example of the fruitful exchanges that can come from an interdisciplinary search for the truths of "connection" in a biblical text. Feynman's call [3] was at least partially answered in these analyses.

Yet, the present writer must acknowledge that, apart from this interpretative reading process of connecting general, psychiatric, and literary perspectives on Isaac's biblical portrayal, the arrival at a point of understanding him as a substantive, multidimensional figure, who does eventually act with purpose in Genesis 27, is an uncommon, contestable one. It is novel to see even fluctuating strength or initiative in Isaac's case.

One of the more recent, persuasive voices for Isaac's relatively equivocal role is that of Sternberg, who observes the patriarch to be an almost total failure. The critic bases his conclusion on the insight that when a reader compares the "old age" of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is clear that a hierarchy is present. 4   Abraham dies at a peak of both spiritual and physical vigor in Genesis 25. Isaac, on the other hand, is growing old in Genesis 27, in a doubtful condition of both spiritual and physical instability. He is blind, trembling, and hesitant. But Jacob is between the two in his final days. He is physically decrepit and spiritually decisive. Unlike his father Isaac, Jacob reverses the blessings of the first-born, Manasseh, and the second-born, Ephraim, in Genesis 48, without tremble or pause. Sternberg considers Isaac to be the least of the three. He writes:

> We leave him (Isaac) with painful memories of the past, a disheartening present (Esau going Canaanite, Jacob's fate unknown), and nothing settled about the future. In his old age Isaac has made such a mess of a hitherto uneventful career, patterned on his father's, as to jeopardize his whole heritage. 5

This general conclusion has been challenged in the previous chapter. Nonetheless, the validity of Sternberg's specific distinctions among the patriarchs is accepted and deserves comment. His analysis of their "old

age" differences is well-stated. But the present writer departs from the critic on a matter of degree. Sternberg seems willing to infer Isaac's failure, relative to his father and son, as being at an almost absolute extreme and to extend to his life in general.

In contrast, while the patriarch's portrait in these pages has also been one of less achievement than that of Abraham or Jacob, the view here has included a greater range of thought, feeling, and action overall for Isaac than has been allowed in the past. The textual bases for this depiction have been offered.

Thus, it is now claimed as reasonable to agree with Sternberg's specific analysis of patriarchal "old age," without holding a mostly negative view of Isaac. Isaac can be less than Abraham and Jacob, and still be more than failure. Sternberg's own description of the difficulty often encountered in trying to understand biblical figures can serve as an ultimate middle ground with him:

> Generally speaking, the more complex the figure,
> the more perceptible our inferior understanding
> of his inner life even with his speech and action
> in full view -- indeed, even where the shape of
> his future stands revealed to our eyes alone. 6

In this light, Isaac's complexity is claimed as the primary root of differences surrounding the interpretation of his personality.

Disagreement over Isaac is hardly to be unexpected. Our novel approach is defensible. Yet, Sternberg's depiction can also be advocated. And, any serious alternative which flows from the shared biblical portrayal must be given due consideration.

With this awareness, an additional and last step may be taken. In Isaac's case, it is a claim that his portrayal is more than adequate for carrying the designation of being a paradigmatic example of biblical personality. Even though his story is less extensive than some, it has been observed to bear recognizable and "enduring patterns" of his interacting with self, others, and the world, in resonance with the psychiatrist's definition of "personality." 7 Furthermore, these "patterns" have been made apparent by attention to various coherent modes of psychiatric and literary analysis that have been described and demonstrated.

But most important, perhaps, Isaac's narrative life can be noted to bear implicit witness to the freedom and paradox that Alter suggests as elemental in the Bible's view of human nature. 8 Isaac is freed from the binding, but is he really? He re-enters the community, but does he really? He finds comfort after Sarah's death, and blessing after Abraham's burial, but are his parents really ever far behind? The text seems to say, "yes

and no."

Isaac's limitations, his humanity, make him particularly noteworthy. The strength and weakness, the purpose and ambivalence are manifest. We can surely claim that he, like others, exemplifies Alter's approach to biblical personality. The scholar's precis is recalled again, and in conclusion:

> ... every person is created by an all-seeing God but abandoned to his own unfathomable freedom, made in God's likeness as a matter of cosmogonic principle but almost never as a matter of accomplished ethical fact; and each individual instance of this bundle of paradoxes, encompassing the zenith and the nadir of the created world, requires a special cunning attentiveness in literary representation. 9

Isaac's representation is, indeed, one of these.

Notes

Introduction

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4.   Feynman, Character of Physical Law, 125-126.

5.   Spinoza, Philosophy, 13.

6.   Wystan Hugh Auden, The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden (New York: Random House, 1945), 166.

7.   Nancy Andreasen, Psychiatric News, 1993, no. 2:6.

8.   Annie Dillard, Living By Fiction (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 145.

9.   William Faulkner, "Session Nineteen," in Faulkner in the University, edited by F.L. Gwynn and J.L. Blotner (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 167-168.

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2.   W.W. Meissner, "Theories of Personality," in The New Harvard Guide to Psychiatry, edited by Armand Nicholi (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 171.

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5.   Ibid., 171-181.

6.   Ibid.

7.   Stephen S. Marmer, "Theories of the Mind and Psychopathology," in The American Psychiatric Press Textbook of Psychiatry, edited by John A. Talbott, Robert E. Hales, and Stuart C. Yudofsky (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1988), 125-126.

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15. Meissner, "Theories of Personality," 190.

16. Coles, "Psychoanalysis and Religion," 2.

17. Ibid.

18. Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God, 18.

19. Erikson, Identity and the Life Cycle, 64-65.

20. Rizzuto, Birth of the Living God, 7.

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., 44.

23. Ibid., 46.

24. Ibid., 52.

25. Ibid., 90.

26. Ibid., 209.

27. Coles, "Psychoanalysis and Religion," 5.

28. Ibid., 20-21.

29. Ibid., 21.

30. Ibid., 21.

31. Ibid., 10.

32. Ibid., 13.

33. Ibid., 5.

34. Lester Luborsky, Principles of Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Manual for Supportive-Expressive Treatment (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 92-93.

35. Ibid., 118-119.

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1. Robert Alter, <u>The Art of Biblical Narrative</u> (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 12-13.

2. Ibid., x.

3. Ibid., 12.

4. Ibid., 22.

5. Ibid., 24.

6. Ibid., 33.

7. Ibid., 26.

8. Ibid., 32-33.

9. Ibid., 35.

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11. Ibid., 47.

12. Ibid., 51.

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25. Ibid., 26-30.

26. Ibid., 43.

27. Ibid., 44-46.

28. Ibid., 138.

29. Sternberg, Poetics of Biblical Narrative, 30.

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37. Herbert Chanan Brichto, Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

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47. Ibid., 250.

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7.   Erikson, <u>Identity and the Life Cycle</u>, 120.

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14.   Alter, <u>Art of Biblical Narrative</u>, 52.

15.   Ibid.

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17.   Ibid., 36-37.

18.   Ibid., 36.

19.   Ibid., 37.

20.   Berlin, <u>Poetics and Interpretation</u>, 44.

21.   Brichto, <u>Toward a Grammar</u>, 10.

22.   Ibid., 6.

23.   Ibid., 8.

24.   Sternberg, <u>Poetics of Biblical Narrative</u>, 41.

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2. Erikson, <u>Identity and the Life Cycle</u>, 64-65, 120.

3. Feynman, <u>Character of Physical Law</u>, 125-126.

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5. Ibid., 350.

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7. Klerman, "Classification and DSM-III-R," 79.

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