

STUDIES IN THE INTERPRETATION OF GENESIS 26.1-33

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To Elaine
who makes me happy
to Callum
and Lyle
who bring us joy

ABSTRACT

Studies in the Interpretation of Genesis 26.1-33, George G. Nicol, Regent's Park College, Oxford, Thesis submitted for the Degree of D.Phil., Hilary Term, 1987.

The thesis addresses both literary and historical questions to the Isaac Narrative, and the course it follows is set out in the Introduction. In Chapter One, following the formal definition of the passage to be analysed, the literary structure of Genesis 26.1-33 is examined. This examination reveals a narrative which, although episodic in nature, displays much evidence of unity. The narrative is concerned with the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech, and displays a strong interest in the welfare of the Philistines. The structure of the six episodes which comprise the Isaac narrative are analysed in Chapter Two, and these analyses show how the narrator has been able to portray a steady increase in Isaac's prosperity without thereby adversely affecting Abimelech's. In Chapter Three the perspective of the literary analysis is filled out by an examination of some of the ways in which the patriarchal narratives of Genesis 12-25 impinge on the reading of Genesis 26.1-33. The fact that the Isaac material relates events so similar to those which are narrated in the story of Abraham requires a careful examination of biblical materials, such as the doublets, in order to discriminate among their similarities and their differences. Part One is concluded in Chapter Four with a number of observations on the literary method applied in the preceding chapters.

Part Two is concerned with the interpretation of the Isaac narrative from an historical perspective. Chapter Five introduces the form-critical conclusions of Lutz and Coats, and provides an analysis of the structure and contents of the narrative. To some extent, this reading is informed by the earlier literary reading of Chapter Two, and it results in the identification of a unified composite narrative. Chapter Five continues with a discussion of Noth's tradition-historical arguments concerning the priority of Isaac over Abraham in the tradition, and is concluded with a discussion of the narrative's composition history. Chapter Six provides a survey of all the references to Isaac which occur outside of Genesis. These references, however, provide no firm evidence of an early or independent Isaac tradition, and certainly do not preclude the view that Genesis 26.1-33 is a literary revision of a number of Abraham narratives.

A brief concluding chapter reviews the main conclusions of the Thesis and discusses the comparative value of the two styles of biblical study represented by Parts One and Two.

SUMMARY

These Studies in the interpretation of Genesis 26.1-33 are concerned with a relatively brief and well defined section of biblical Hebrew narrative, and following an Introduction are divided into two parts reflecting literary and historical interests respectively.

The Introduction takes note of the current interest among Old Testament scholars in the literary interpretation of the biblical materials and, after opting for an approach which will take account of both literary and historical-critical enquiry, outlines the procedure which will be followed. No logical priority is claimed for literary analysis, although it is considered appropriate that it should be pursued prior to any historical enquiry. In this way, it has been possible to avoid any suspicion that literary analysis of the type pursued here is a further development of the historical-critical method.

Part One (Chapters One - Four) is concerned to construct a literary interpretation of the text of Gen 26.1-33. The interpretation consists of three main studies of the Isaac narrative which are followed by a brief discussion of certain aspects of the method involved. This interpretation has developed in the main from a reflection upon the relationship which appears to exist between the promise made to the patriarch by the deity and the surrounding narrative material.

Beginning from a literary-structural analysis of the Isaac narrative, it has been possible to observe that a number of relationships of a literary and structural nature exist between the promise and the surrounding narrative materials. The exploration of these relationships discloses a series of tensions between the promise and the narrated events which in one way or another seem designed to bring the fulfilment of different aspects of the promise under threat, and each of these tensions are resolved in turn in the narrative. Thus, even even if the events narrated appear to run counter to the direction of the promise, it is in the exploration of this dialectic which is set up between promise and those narrative events which tend to threaten the fulfilment of the promise that the beginnings of a satisfactory literary interpretation of Gen 26.1-33 is to be found.

The literary interpretation of the Isaac narrative is carried out in three stages. In the first stage (Chapter One), the extent of the material under consideration is narrowed down to Gen 26.1-33, and other material (notably Gen 25.19-26) is excluded. Once the narrative structure has been analyzed in terms of divine promise, threat, and (partial)

resolution, a further brief examination of the narrative context of the other divine promise sections in Genesis 12-36 shows that the literary technique of juxtaposing these same three elements has in fact been applied more widely, even if it is most clearly evident in Gen 26.1-33.

An analysis of the role Rebekah plays in the wife-sister episode shows that she is clearly a subsidiary character, and that in the narrative Abimelech the Philistine king of Gerar and Isaac's antagonist throughout is the character closest in importance to Isaac. Indeed, in many respects the narrative appears to explore the relationship which exists between Isaac and the Philistine king. A number of literary features which enhance the impression of unity which has already been gained from the structural analysis are examined. In particular, a number of narrative transformations are seen to take place between the beginning and the end of the narrative. These are largely concerned with the situation of Isaac in relation to Abimelech. At the beginning of the narrative Isaac comes to Abimelech at Gerar and is dependent on the latter's good will for his wellbeing. But at the end of the narrative, Abimelech comes to Isaac at Beersheba, in order to participate in the blessing enjoyed by the Patriarch.

In the second stage (Chapter Two), the structure of each of the episodes which combine to form the Isaac narrative is examined, using a form of structural analysis used by Bremond in relation to the fairy tale, but which is also appropriate to the analysis of other simple forms of narrative. This examination, which I have used to determine whether the individual episodes maintain a comic or tragic function within the Isaac narrative, is carried out without prejudice to the assumption that the narrative is a unity at some level. One of the impressive features of the Isaac narrative is that the Patriarch does not achieve his good fortune at the expense of Abimelech and his people, but the Philistines also prosper, and it is seen that this effect has been achieved by means of paradox. The discussion of the individual episodes leads to the conclusion that the ability of the narrative as a whole to generate meaning is greater than the sum of its parts.

In the third stage (Chapter Three), I have attempted to construct an appropriate 'narrative background' against which the text may be understood. This exercise involves the careful observation of such signals as are raised in the text and appear to direct one's attention to materials elsewhere in the tradition, and particularly among the narratives of Genesis 12-25, which may combine to serve as a background against which the Isaac narrative may be understood, and which might properly enrich one's understanding of the text. This undertaking begins from the point that no text may be properly understood from within a vacuum, and that while it is proper to begin such a literary-structural investigation as has been undertaken in this Thesis from a detailed study of the text itself, it has been considered necessary to go on from there

and to provide a richer understanding of the text. The formation of a 'narrative background' is to be distinguished from the method of 'narrative analogy' (Miscall, Alter) so far as it takes the canonical ordering of the narratives more seriously.

Part One is concluded with the discussion of a number of methodological issues in Chapter Four which forms an attempt to say something about the aims and validity of the analyses set out in Chapters One-Three. There is no concern, however, to resume systematically issues which have already been raised in the earlier chapters.

In Part Two, I have addressed some of the more usual historical concerns of biblical studies. The first main part of Chapter Five is concerned with the form-critical discussion of the Isaac narrative. An examination of the form-critical studies of Lutz and Coats is followed by an analysis of the structure and content of Gen 26.1-33. The analysis is then filled out by a broad discussion which is informed to some extent by the earlier discussion of Chapter One, particularly by the degree to which the various episodes were there seen to be related to each other. The fact that, apart from vv 1-6, the episodes all required assumption of information provided by one or another of the preceding episodes in order to appear coherent suggests that the unity of Gen 26.1-33 is perhaps more than the result of a collector stringing them together in terms of the common theme "Isaac and the people of Gerar". This observation sets an obvious limit against the usual form-critical criterion which holds that the most original units were concerned to narrate only single episodes. Throughout this discussion the results of current studies in folklore which have led to much uncertainty concerning the stability of oral transmission so that it is no longer possible to be so confident in the antiquity of the pentateuchal tradition were taken for granted.

The traditio-historical question of priority is examined, and it is concluded that Abraham is in fact prior to Isaac. Further examination of questions relating to the compositional history of Gen 26.1-33 support the conclusion that this section is a composite narrative composed of a variety of materials which were formerly associated with Abraham, and a very little new material.

The occurrences of the name "Isaac" outside of Genesis are all discussed (Chapter Six), and these provide no evidence to suggest that an Isaac tradition existed much before the time of the Deuteronomic writer. The references to Isaac in Amos are unique in that they seem to refer to tribal and/or geographical entities. There is also some difficulty in the fact that the versions appear to have had some problems with these references. This discussion tends to offer a measure of support for recent theories concerning the late dating of much of the patriarchal material.

In the "Concluding Remarks", some of the more important results of the literary and historical analyses are surveyed, and the relationship between the two styles of biblical study which they represent is discussed. Although it is possible to pursue either literary or historical studies independently of the other, that relationship is seen to be, in the main, a complementary one, although it is argued that historical-critical analysis benefits from taking careful account of the literary structure and the content of the biblical materials. Where this is not done, unfortunate mistakes can easily arise.

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Concluding Remarks

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ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AB</u>	<u>The Anchor Bible</u>
<u>AnBib</u>	<u>Analecta Biblica</u>
<u>AJBI</u>	<u>Annual of the Japanese Biblical Institute</u>
<u>AOAT</u>	<u>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</u>
<u>ASTI</u>	<u>Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute</u>
<u>AOTS</u>	Thomas (ed), <u>Archaeology and Old Testament Studies</u>
<u>ATD</u>	<u>Das Alte Testament Deutsch</u>
<u>BA</u>	<u>The Biblical Archaeologist</u>
<u>BASOR</u>	<u>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</u>
<u>BBB</u>	<u>Bonner Biblische Beiträge</u>
<u>Bib</u>	<u>Biblica</u>
<u>BibRes</u>	<u>Biblical Research</u>
<u>BibThB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u>
<u>BibTrans</u>	<u>The Biblical Translator</u>
<u>BKAT</u>	<u>Biblischer Kommentar Altes Testament</u>
<u>BTF</u>	<u>Bangalore Theological Forum</u>
<u>BThB</u>	<u>Biblical Theology Bulletin</u>
<u>BN</u>	<u>Biblische Notizen</u>
<u>BVSAWL</u>	<u>Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig</u>
<u>BWANT</u>	<u>Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament</u>
<u>BZ</u>	<u>Biblische Zeitschrift</u>
<u>BZAW</u>	<u>Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
<u>CB OTS</u>	<u>Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series</u>
<u>CBC</u>	<u>Cambridge Bible Commentary</u>

<u>CBQ</u>	<u>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</u>
<u>CJT</u>	<u>Canadian Journal of Theology</u>
<u>CQR</u>	<u>Church Quarterly Review</u>
<u>DBAT</u>	<u>Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament</u>
<u>EPN</u>	Millard & Wiseman, <u>Essays in the Patriarchal Narratives</u>
<u>ETH</u>	<u>Evangelische Theologie</u>
<u>ET</u>	<u>Expository Times</u>
E.T.	English Translation
<u>FOTL</u>	<u>The Forms of the Old Testament Literature</u>
<u>FRLANT</u>	<u>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</u>
<u>HTR</u>	<u>Harvard Theological Review</u>
<u>HUCA</u>	<u>Hebrew Union College Annual</u>
<u>IBS</u>	<u>Irish Biblical Studies</u>
<u>IDB</u>	<u>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</u>
<u>IEJ</u>	<u>Israel Exploration Journal</u>
<u>IJH</u>	Hayes & Miller (ed), <u>Israelite and Judaeen History</u>
<u>IJT</u>	<u>Indian Journal of Theology</u>
<u>ICC</u>	<u>International Critical Commentary</u>
<u>Interp</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>
<u>IZBG</u>	<u>Internationale Zeitschriftenschau für Bibelwissenschaft und Grenzgebiete</u>
<u>JAOS</u>	<u>Journal of the American Oriental Society</u>
<u>JBL</u>	<u>Journal of Biblical Literature</u>
<u>JBR</u>	<u>Journal of Bible and Religion</u>
<u>JJS</u>	<u>Journal of Jewish Studies</u>
<u>JNES</u>	<u>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</u>
<u>JSS</u>	<u>Journal of Semitic Studies</u>
<u>JSOT</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</u>

<u>JSOTS</u>	<u>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</u>
<u>JTS</u>	<u>Journal of Theological Studies</u>
<u>KdG</u>	<u>Kultur der Gegenwart</u>
<u>NT</u>	<u>Novum Testamentum</u>
<u>OTCF</u>	Anderson (ed), <u>The Old Testament and Christian Faith</u>
<u>OTMS</u>	Rowley (ed), <u>The Old Testament and Modern Study</u>
<u>OTS</u>	<u>Oudtestamentische Studiën</u>
<u>PEQ</u>	<u>Palestine Exploration Quarterly</u>
<u>PTMS</u>	<u>Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series</u>
<u>RevExp</u>	<u>Review and Expositor</u>
<u>SBLMS</u>	<u>Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series</u>
<u>SBT</u>	<u>Studies in Biblical Theology</u>
<u>SIDB</u>	<u>Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume</u>
<u>SVT</u>	<u>Supplements to Vetus Testament</u>
<u>TEh</u>	<u>Theologische Existenz heute</u>
<u>TGUOS</u>	<u>Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society</u>
<u>TRE</u>	<u>Theologische Realenzyclopädie</u>
<u>TRu</u>	<u>Theologische Rundschau</u>
<u>TvT</u>	<u>Tijdschrift voor Theologie</u>
<u>UTB</u>	<u>Uni-Taschenbücher</u>
<u>UUA</u>	<u>Uppsala Universitets Arsskrift</u>
<u>VT</u>	<u>Vetus Testamentum</u>
<u>VuF</u>	<u>Verkündigung und Forschung</u>
<u>WMANT</u>	<u>Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament</u>
<u>ZAW</u>	<u>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</u>
<u>ZDP</u>	<u>Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästinavereins</u>
<u>ZdZ</u>	<u>Zeichen der Zeit</u>

PREFACE

In completing this Thesis, I am conscious of the debt which I owe to a number of people whose help and guidance has been indispensable in so many different ways. Beside those who are mentioned here, many others have contributed, and the absence of a specific acknowledgement of various kinds of help does not diminish my gratitude to them.

I am happy to thank my teachers in the study of the Old Testament. When I was an undergraduate at Glasgow, Robert Davidson first stimulated my interest in the Old Testament, and Robert Carroll demonstrated the value of asking unusual questions. At Oxford, James Barr recognized in my interest in the Isaac narrative a worthwhile subject for closer investigation, while Ernest Nicholson whose friendship and encouragement I have valued most highly, has supervised my study. I would also express my appreciation for the financial assistance I have received from the Scottish Education Department, the University of Glasgow, Dr. Williams's Trust, and the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. Regent's Park College provided a congenial atmosphere during the years when the foundation of these Studies was laid, and in 1980 I benefited from the hospitality of the Theologische Seminar des Bundes Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Hamburg-Horn.

I gratefully acknowledge the kindness of my brother Angus and his company, Kesho Associates, 72 Waterloo St., Glasgow G2, in providing me with the equipment upon which this Thesis was prepared and my friend Ricky Deards for generously permitting me to use of his printer. David Woolls has kindly read through the manuscript at different stages in its preparation and pointed out a number of spelling mistakes and clumsy expressions. Nevertheless, for any mistakes which remain, as well as the views expressed herein, I must accept full responsibility.

I have been fortunate to have the help and encouragement of my parents through many years of study, first at the University of Glasgow, and since 1977 while I have been at Oxford. Above all, I have to thank Elaine and Callum. While I have been attempting to complete this Thesis they have had to tolerate a great deal of absence when I have worked most unsociable hours. This work is dedicated to them, along with Lyle who was born while it was in the final stages of preparation, with much love and considerable gratitude.

INTRODUCTION

Studies in the Interpretation of Genesis 26.1-33

The rapid acceleration of interest in literary interpretations of biblical texts has resulted almost inevitably in a certain amount of rivalry between the established procedures of critical biblical scholarship and the newer methods which may be operated independently of the results of critical scholarship. The situation is aggravated by the attitude of some scholars who do not seem to be prepared to admit the possible relevance of the new methods on the one hand, and the apparent readiness of some of the proponents of the new methods to belittle the achievements of the past on the other.¹ But it may be that both methods have a right to exist side by side, even if they address radically different questions to the same text. In a recent discussion of the question, "Should one's approach be primarily historical or literary, diachronic or synchronic?"² Polzin has restated his earlier position:³

diachronic and synchronic study of the Bible, historical critical and literary structural approaches, possess a complementary relationship to each other. Neither constitutes, a priori, the fundamental basis for the other's existence, neither occupies by intrinsic right an academic throne to which the other must bring its conclusions for scholarly approbation.

It seems to me that there is a lot of justice in Polzin's claim. The historical-critical method is not diminished by the introduction into biblical studies of new methods which approach the texts from a different perspective. By the same token, one's appreciation of the literary dimension of a text need not suffer simply because the same text might also

be read from an historical perspective. Although my primary concern is with the interpretation of the Isaac narrative, I shall also attempt in these "Studies" to test the viability of setting literary and historical analyses of a short passage of Biblical Hebrew narrative side by side.

The Isaac tradition of Genesis 26.1-33 provides a suitable text for such an exercise, for it constitutes a relatively brief and well defined section of biblical Hebrew narrative. It is the only passage in Genesis where Isaac appears in the narrative as a character in his own right.⁴ Elsewhere he is a subsidiary character, the son of Abraham who appears always in relation to his father before Gen 25.18, and the father of Jacob and Esau who appears always in relation to his sons, particularly Jacob, after 25.19 with this one exception. Moreover, it is at least arguable that if this passage were not included in the text of Genesis, its omission would hardly have disturbed the continuity of the narrative.⁵

In spite of this, the Isaac narrative has numerous points of contact with the patriarchal narratives. Apart from two promise speeches (Gen 26.2-5, 24) which have parallels in both the Abraham and Jacob narratives, it consists almost entirely of stories which are also told in somewhat similar form about Abraham. As a result, although relatively little attention has been paid by scholars to the Isaac narrative as a whole,⁶ parts of it have assumed great importance, especially in discussions which seek to identify the earliest form of the doublet stories.

A brief survey of the secondary literature discloses that many studies have been devoted to this question, with the majority of scholars arguing for the priority of Isaac over Abraham in patriarchal tradition.⁷ Even so, support for the reverse view has not been lacking.⁸ Further, as a

result of the large number of doublets which exist with reference to both Abraham and Isaac, commentators have tended to offer little worthwhile interpretation of the Isaac narrative and often hardly do more than refer their readers to the corresponding Abraham materials. The form-critical approach has resulted above all in the interpretation of the individual units of tradition in isolation from each other, and this has tended to divest the Isaac narrative of its sense of continuity. Along with the traditio-critical approach, form criticism has been concerned more with the meaning of earlier forms of the text than with its final form.

Thus, for example, von Rad discerned no fewer than six units of tradition in Gen 26.1-33,⁹ and, although he acknowledged that an attempt had been made to weld them into "einem geschlossenen Ereigniszusammenhang", he made no serious attempt to interpret the narrative from the perspective of the narrative continuity implied by that description. Rather, he commented briefly on various sections of narrative which do not always correspond precisely with the units which he first identified.¹⁰ Further, the kind of traditio-critical assumptions which von Rad made concerning age, originality, and value as a source of this tradition have become somewhat controversial.¹¹

I intend to devote Part One of these "Studies" of the Isaac narrative to questions of a primarily literary nature, and only when these have been completed shall I proceed to examine the same material from a historical-critical viewpoint in Part Two. But so that the decision to begin with literary rather than historical-critical method does not seem to be arbitrarily determined by the attractiveness of pursuing a relatively new course, rather than steering a way through the well worked paths of form and tradition-criticism, I shall first offer some justification for it.

In his introduction to the operation of the historical-critical method in biblical studies, published in 1975, Krentz was able to observe that:¹²

Today historical criticism is taken for granted; we cannot go back to a precritical age. The method used in biblical research is that used by contemporary historians.

This observation was challenged almost immediately, however, by the rapid growth of interest in forms of biblical research which employed the methods of literary critics rather than historians. Among those who championed the newer methods were some who rejected the validity of historical method,¹³ as well as those who more happily could look for the development of a complementary relationship between the different approaches.

I am attracted by the view that literary analysis should enjoy an operational priority over historical analysis,¹⁴ although I would not go so far as to lay down that such priority is essential. It is clear that historical analysis (form criticism and the like) has been practised for some time while the extensive application of literary methods to biblical materials is a relatively recent development. But that does not mean that biblical studies must proceed by applying first the traditional and well-tried methods before employing the new ones. I believe that to begin with a careful examination of the literary structure of a narrative may lead in the end to an improved application of historical method. The examination of literary structure is important not simply for its novelty value. Such analysis must be considered to provide important and legitimate results in its own right. Moreover, it may eventually benefit historical analysis so far as it must help the critic to obtain a clearer perception of the shape of the text under discussion, the nature of its contents, and the ways in which different features of structure interact with each other. To begin with literary analysis, therefore, is not to deny that biblical studies

have made many worthwhile advances through the consistent application of the historical-critical method.¹⁵

The development of the historical-critical method has resulted in the addition of successive methodological layers to the source analysis which took up much of the time and energy of the earliest critics. To questions of source were added in succession questions of form, tradition, and redaction history; each of which was aimed ultimately at providing a fuller understanding of the origins and development of the biblical literature. That is to say, they all belonged to the same general paradigm.¹⁶ The literary questions which are being raised insistently today belong to a different paradigm. And so, although they may be seen by many to represent a new development in biblical studies, it is inappropriate that they should be tagged on at the end, after all the historical questions have been asked, as if they belonged to the same paradigm.

Such an impression can most easily be avoided if the literary studies are presented prior to those which have been undertaken from an historical perspective. But the priority of literary analysis may also be justified on the grounds that a careful delineation of literary shape is a prerequisite of every form of narrative analysis, and that if the critic has actually established exactly what is contained in the text he should be much less likely to make simple and irritating mistakes. This is especially true of the analysis of doublet texts where mistaken impressions can sometimes be gained by importing certain features from the other version(s) of the story into the one under discussion.¹⁷ In point of fact careful literary analysis may sharpen the perception of the critic engaged in historical-critical analysis by impressing on his attention features of the text which he might otherwise have missed.

In an early article on the literary art of biblical Hebrew narrative, E. Robertson demonstrated a remarkable insight into the character of the Old Testament tradition as story:¹⁸

The Old Testament stories are concerned mainly with the figures of Hebrew tradition, and they are, primarily at least, figures of real life. It may be, in order to achieve the purpose of the narrator, that these figures, when they become characters of a story, are at times redrawn or overdrawn, that the settings in which they live and move may be idealized and the incidents in which they take part idyllized, and that the action, in the course of its detailing, may be elaborated or even exaggerated. There can, however, be no doubt that the Old Testament stories, in varying degree of course, are so skillfully composed that they attract and retain the interest and attention of the reader.

Leaving aside Robertson's emphasis that the characters in the narratives were "primarily at least, figures of real life",¹⁹ it is worth noting that he has well described both the fictive nature of much of the narration and the high degree of skill underlying the narrators' art, and that these same two qualities of the narratives are regularly observed today.²⁰

In pursuing a literary-structural approach I am aware that dangers may arise for the biblical scholar who ventures, however informally, into the field of structural analysis. Nevertheless, these dangers must be faced. Throughout Part One, the literary-structural approach which is undertaken will be governed strictly by the requirements of the text under discussion. The structural analysis which is offered in Chapter One arises out of an attempt to describe those relationships which exist among the several units which make up the Isaac narrative. It is not without justification that several Old Testament scholars who have examined the possibility of applying structural analysis to the biblical materials have insisted that a "modified form of structural analysis" should be used.²¹

Although I am not committed to structuralism in any formal sense, I am willing to modify and use methods and techniques borrowed from it so far as these might facilitate an approach to the interpretation of Old Testament narrative which will enable exegesis to progress beyond the restrictions of historical-critical method. The literary analysis offered in this chapter is not exhaustive; other tasks will be taken up in the following chapters.

The literary interpretation of the Isaac narrative which I shall offer below is to be carried out in three stages. In the first stage (Chapter One), I shall seek to analyze the Isaac narrative in terms of the close association in Gen 26.1-33 of elements of promise, threat, and (partial) resolution. Then I shall attempt to show that these same elements are also closely associated throughout Gen 12-36, although not always to the same degree as in the Isaac narrative. I shall also investigate a number of literary features which enhance the impression of unity which has already been gained from the structural analysis provided in the first part of the chapter. In particular, I shall examine the beginning and end of the narrative in order to appreciate better any relationship between them. At the beginning of the narrative Isaac comes to Abimelech at Gerar and is dependent on the latter's good will for his wellbeing (Gen 26.1). But at the end of the narrative, Abimelech comes to Isaac from Gerar (Gen 26.26) in order to participate in the blessing enjoyed by the Patriarch. This observation alone seems to indicate that the narrative evidences some concern for their relationship. It may also indicate a degree of literary balance between the first and last scenes of the narrative.

In the second stage (Chapter Two), I shall examine the structure of each of the episodes which combine to form the Isaac narrative. But I shall carry out this examination without prejudice to the assumption made

in Chapter One that there is a level at which the narrative is a unity. One of the impressive features of the Isaac narrative is that the Patriarch does not achieve his good fortune at the expense of Abimelech and his people. The Philistines also prosper so far as they enter into an alliance with one who has been blessed by Yahweh. Moreover, they may be observed to do so with the express intention of sharing in the benefits of Isaac's blessedness. Although my main concern here is to illuminate the structure of the component episodes, such an examination may promote a more adequate understanding of this trait of the story.

In the third stage (Chapter Three), I shall attempt to reconstruct my reading of Gen 26.1-33 in terms of its present context in the Patriarchal Narrative. The narrative events of Gen 12-25 fix a backdrop against which the Isaac narrative may assume a clearer shape once its relationship to its narrative doublets and immediate context have been clarified. I call this procedure 'narrative background'. This involves the detailing in general terms of the literary structure of Gen 12-25 in order to establish the wider context of the Isaac narrative, careful discrimination between doublets in order to establish difference as well as similarity, and some discussion of those features of the narrative which form the immediate context of Gen 26.1-33. Such features combine to serve as a background against which the narrative under discussion may be understood, and which might properly enrich one's understanding of the text. The formation of a 'narrative background' is to be distinguished from the method of 'narrative analogy' so far as it takes the canonical ordering of the narratives more seriously.²² In Chapter Four I shall address a number of methodological issues raised by the literary studies of Chapters One-Three. At that stage I shall make some further observations on 'narrative background'.

Following my literary analysis, I shall examine some of the more traditional concerns of Old Testament in Part Two,²³ and Chapter Five will be devoted to form and tradition-critical analyses of the narrative. An analysis of the structure of Gen 26.1-33 (of the form-critical rather than literary-critical sort) will be followed by a discussion divided into two major parts. In these I shall first review a number of form-critical questions associated with the study of the Isaac narrative, and then I shall discuss some matters related to tradition-history. In doing so, I shall presuppose the results of a several recent review articles which have presented to Old Testament scholars the results of field studies of oral storytelling techniques made by folklorists and anthropologists. Recent studies in folklore have led to much uncertainty concerning the stability of oral transmission, and it is difficult to be confident in the antiquity of the pentateuchal tradition if such studies provide a reasonable analogy for what happens when narratives are transmitted orally in societies where writing is the exception rather than the rule.²⁴

In Chapter Six, I shall discuss the occurrences of the name "Isaac" outside of Genesis. In this way, I hope to establish whether there exists any evidence in the Old Testament tradition, independently of the Genesis narratives, of the antiquity of traditions related to the patriarch Isaac. Although this enquiry is concerned with material which might seem to be excluded by the title of these Studies, it is nevertheless necessary so far as it may provide a clue to the relationship between Gen 26.1-33 and references to Isaac elsewhere in the Old Testament. This enquiry is also appropriate at a time when there is some reluctance to entertain a classic statement of the documentary hypothesis,²⁵ and a tendency to consider a late dating for the various strata of the pentateuch.²⁶

The decision to set literary and historical analyses of Gen 26.1-33 side by side implies, as I have already suggested, that I consider that the two styles of biblical study may be pursued in a complementary rather than competitive fashion. Each addresses a different set of questions to the text, and contributes to our total understanding of it. At the same time, neither style offers a complete interpretation, and while each may be "correct" so far as it goes, I suspect that neither is "correct" in any ultimate sense.²⁷ The validity of these intuitions, however, cannot really be assessed until these "Studies" have been completed. And so, I shall finish by detailing a number of conclusions arising out of these studies. In particular, I shall examine the styles of biblical study exemplified by the Parts One and Two respectively, and shall seek to assess the contribution which each makes to the study of Gen 26.1-33 as a particular example of biblical Hebrew narrative.

Throughout these "Studies" I shall seek to place proper weight on the continuity inherent in the Isaac narrative, but largely obscured by critical study. This emphasis is not a step backwards into the kind of interpretation which was practised before the rise of the historical-critical method. If it were that, it should clearly be rejected without court of appeal, for the historical-critical method is undeniably a given in biblical studies today. My literary-structural analysis of the Isaac narrative aims to examine the text from a viewpoint which is both distinct from and complementary to the kind of interpretation which arises from the application of the historical-critical method. At the same time, an increased appreciation of the unity inherent in a passage like Gen 26.1-33, allied with a more flexible use of form-critical method, may result in the gain of valuable new insights into the composition history of Genesis.²⁸

PART ONE

The Isaac Narrative - A Literary Interpretation

Chapter One

The Structure and Interpretation of Genesis 26.1-33

a) Defining the Boundaries of the Isaac Narrative: Since Isaac appears as a character or is otherwise alluded to in a number of other narratives in Genesis it is appropriate to begin by saying something about my decision to limit the investigation to Gen 26.1-33. My concern is with material in the Genesis narrative where Isaac appears as the principal character, and I therefore must rule out all the material where he appears as a subsidiary character and nothing need be said about narratives where Abraham his father or Jacob his son occupy the principal role. This consideration immediately excludes almost all of the material outside Gen 26.1-33 with one important exception, for it is here alone that Isaac is represented as the leading character. That exception is Gen 25.21-26a which narrates the birth of Esau and Jacob.

Taking an analogy with the account of Isaac's birth (Gen 21.1-3), one would expect the interest in Gen 25.21-26a to be weighted in the direction of the father. In the Genesis narrative, Abraham's need for an heir acceptable to Yahweh is met only after a number of possible ways of circumventing Sarah's long period of barrenness have been rejected. At every stage Abraham is the central character, and his central role is preserved in the account of Isaac's birth in spite of the emphasis on the intervention of Yahweh in Gen 21.1.¹ The expectation that Isaac will also assume a central role in the account of the birth of his sons is perhaps strengthened by an early note of Rebekah's own barrenness (Gen 25.21).

The story does not develop according to such expectation, however, and Isaac is not the major concern of the storyteller. Gen 25.21-26a begins with Isaac praying to Yahweh concerning his wife's barrenness. The prayer is granted, and Rebekah conceives (v 21). But Isaac is not mentioned again after his prayer is granted, and simply drops out of the narrative. Interest is transferred first to Rebekah who conceives, suffers a difficult pregnancy and inquires of Yahweh concerning the reason for her suffering. Her inquiry receives an answering oracle which refers to the struggle for supremacy between the twins and the peoples descended from them. Interest is then transferred to the birth of the twins,² and the story ends with an attempt to provide explanations for their names.³

This transfer of interest first to Rebekah and then to the birth of the twins by way of Yahweh's oracle, leads to the conclusion that the story should be considered primarily as an introduction to the cycle of stories about Jacob and not as a story about Isaac. Two other considerations seem to support this conclusion. First, the story leads naturally enough into the first of two accounts of a struggle for supremacy between the twins in which Jacob obtains Esau's birthright by extortion (Gen 25.27-34). And second, the fact that Gen 26.1-33 is surrounded by two so similar stories as Gen 25.27-34 and 27.1-45 which relate how Jacob deprived Esau first of his birthright and then of the blessing due to his firstborn position serves to isolate it almost completely from its narrative context.

These conclusions support the decision to concentrate upon Gen 26.1-33 and to exclude Gen 25.27-34 from consideration since the two passages plainly do not belong together. Nevertheless, when one reads through the Patriarchal Narrative, Gen 25.27-34 is read as a part of the immediate context of the Isaac narrative, and so it is necessary to explain why Isaac

should be considered childless throughout the whole of Gen 26.1-33 when, if a strictly chronological sequence were followed, one might imagine that by the time Isaac settled in Gerar he must be considered the father of twin sons who were well on the way to manhood.

Not only is there no mention of Jacob and Esau in Gen 26.1-33, but Isaac is able to represent Rebekah as his sister (v 7), and he does so because she is sufficiently attractive for him to fear that his own safety might be imperilled by the malice of potential suitors if it becomes known that he is her husband. Apparently, since his explanation seems to have satisfied those who enquired concerning her, he was unencumbered at the time by children whose presence might have demanded explanation.

The question arises whether Rebekah could have suffered a prolonged period of barrenness before giving birth, seen her sons grow to manhood and go their own way, and still be so beautiful that men might kill her husband in order to possess her for themselves. Although such things may well be possible in story, and as much seems to be claimed for Sarah in Genesis 20, I do not think Gen 26.7-11 needs to be understood in this way.

The decision to read Gen 26.1-33 as if Isaac enters the story without children is not arbitrary, for the birth of Jacob and Esau is not the only matter of context which is ignored by this passage. First, at Gen 25.18, it is said that "Abraham gave Isaac all he had", and his accumulated wealth must be considered to have been extensive (cf. Gen 12.10-20; 14.16-24; 20.1-18), yet in Genesis 26 there is no indication that Isaac was a rich man until vv 12-16. And second, at 25.11 it is said that after Abraham's death God blessed Isaac, yet in Genesis 26 he is promised blessing at v 3, and receives it at v 12; but he does not acknowledge it until v 22, and it

is finally acknowledged by others only at v 29. The story told by Gen 26.1-33 therefore seems to ignore three matters of context, and so it is hardly arbitrary to consider that Isaac enters at Gen 26.1 without having yet become the father of children when the whole passage proceeds as if Isaac were unencumbered by the presence of children, had not yet received Yahweh's blessing, and possessed little personal wealth.

These considerations find further support in the Priestly chronology. Abraham is said to have been a hundred and seventy-five years old when he died (25.7). Since he was a hundred years old when Isaac was born (21.5) and Isaac was sixty years old when his twin sons were born (25.26b), the Priestly chronology suggests that Abraham was still alive when Jacob and Esau were born, and that his death is reported prospectively. This would suggest that events are not related in the Patriarchal Narrative in strict chronological order, and if events may be related prospectively, there can be no objection in principle to their also being related retrospectively.

In view of all this, it is not unreasonable to treat Gen 26.1-33 as a narrative which deals with events in Isaac's life prior to the birth of his sons. The need to introduce Jacob - who assumes the role of the chief character after the death of Abraham - as quickly as possible into the Genesis narrative has led to the Isaac narrative being presented outside of its most natural chronological order. But the resulting disjunction of exact chronology is not without analogy in the Genesis narrative. In much the same way as the Isaac story is inserted towards the beginning of the Jacob cycle (Gen 25.21-35.29),⁴ the Judah-Tamar story is inserted towards the beginning of the Joseph narrative. Moreover, the similarly anomalous story of the rape of Dinah is inserted towards the end of the Jacob cycle, providing a degree of balance with the Isaac story.⁵

b) Literary Analysis and Theological Observation: In this chapter, I shall examine the literary structure of Gen 26.1-33, treating the whole as a single story which consists of several interrelated episodes.⁶ In this reading of the text, I am concerned to explore the literary dimension of the Isaac narrative and to exploit the literary relationships which exist among its several parts. That is to say, I am concerned with the text as narrative and not as a theological or historical document. I do not imply that I shall be able to avoid scrupulously every historical and theological consideration. Such a closed investigation may not be possible anyway.⁷ Yet the text under discussion exists as a literary form, and it is not at all self-evident that one should expect such a literary form to communicate either historical or theological information as its primary function.

This point may not be immediately obvious to biblical scholars who are accustomed to examining the biblical texts in order to discover the theology of the writers and their theological purpose in writing. But the possibility that the narrator's purpose was not always theological should at least be considered. The theological terms and motifs which appear on the surface of a story do not necessarily imply that the text is overtly theological, or even that any theological information which it conveys actually corresponds to the theology of the biblical writer.

It is certain that God was an important element in the world view of the Old Testament narrators, perhaps even the central element, and it is indeed possible that the framework of their intellectual make-up was largely theological. This circumstance, however, carries no decisive implications concerning their purpose in storytelling. It certainly does not show that their purpose was unambiguously theological, or that in their writing theology was never placed at the service of another purpose.

Indeed, the very probability that every biblical writer possessed a largely theological world view ought to warn against the assumption that their writings must always have been motivated by a theological purpose.

The literary-structural approach which is pursued in this chapter has evolved very much according to the demands of the text under discussion. For that reason, certain theoretical questions must be dealt with as they arise, but a more general discussion of method will be provided when the literary-structural analysis of Gen 26.1-33 has been completed.⁸

In the following analysis of the literary structure of Gen 26.1-33, although I am concerned with the internal relationships which exist among the several episodes of the narrative, every external relationship cannot be excluded, and some of these must be taken into account.⁹ And although I shall later investigate the structure of the individual episodes which comprise Gen 26.1-33, I do not intend by these analyses to prejudice the assumption that the Isaac narrative can be read as a literary unit.¹⁰

c) The Structure of Genesis 26.1-33: Gen 26.1-33 has a very complicated structure (Figure 1). Two passages which relate how Yahweh made certain promises to Isaac (Gen 26.2-5, 24) are crucial for understanding the structure and meaning of the narrative. But the remainder of Gen 26.1-33 is not a simple account of the fulfilment of these promises. On the contrary, the Patriarch behaves almost as if the promises had not been made and, as the narrative proceeds, it seems as if the outcome of each element of the promise is threatened in turn. In the following analysis, I have employed the categories "promise", "threat", and the kind of "resolution", sometimes only partial or temporary, which is utilized by the narrator to counteract each threat and restore something like a state of equilibrium.

Figure 1

PROMISE

"I will be with you
and will bless you"
(Being With + Blessing)

- a) Land
- b) Progeny
- c) Blessing for the Nations

"I am with you
and will bless you"
(Being With {realized}
and Blessing)

THREAT

Famine

- A) Threat against promise
of Progeny (vv 7-11)
- B) Threat against promise
of Land (vv 12-16; 17-22)

C) Threat against promise of
Blessing for the Nations (vv 7-31)

- i. possibility of guilt (vv 7-11)
- ii. envy of Isaac's wealth (vv 12-16)
- iii. lack of water rights (vv 17-22)
- iv. Isaac alone possesses the
blessing (vv 26-31)

Abimelech Journeys to Beersheba
to (against?) Isaac

(PARTIAL) RESOLUTION

Isaac journeys to Gerar, and remains there
(as vassal to Abimelech)

- A) Abimelech guarantees the safety of
and Rebekah (v 11)
- B) Isaac expelled by Abimelech (v 12); gains
undisputed possession of Rehoboth (v 22);
journeys to Beersheba (v 23)

- C) i. no guilt is incurred (v 11)
- ii. source of envy removed (v 16)
- iii. water rights gained (v 20f.)
- iv. the Philistines participate in the
blessing through covenant (נִרְבָּךְ)

The Philistines form a covenant with Isaac
and depart in peace (Dִּילָטָךְ)

In Gen 26.2-5, a promise of blessing, which is further articulated in terms of land, progeny, and the blessing of the nations, is made to Isaac. Whatever the meaning of this last problematic element of the promise, it is evidently most important for the narrator. As the narrative unfolds, one is impressed by its breadth of content as the narrator thinks out Israel's relationship with the surrounding nations, and her conflicts with them, in the light of this promise. It is striking that a concern for the welfare of the foreign nations was apparently entertained at so fundamental a level in terms of the promise to the Patriarchs, thus affecting the narrative relationship between the people (in the person of the Patriarch and his retinue) and Yahweh. In these terms of the divine promise to the fathers, Israel's destiny is linked at some level to the destiny of the nations.¹¹ To the extent that the major human characters at every stage of the narrative are Isaac and Abimelech, or some other party or parties which seem to represent these two, it may be considered that the narrative is deeply concerned with international relationships, and the consequences for the foreign nations of Yahweh's promise to the Patriarchs.

It should be noticed here, however, that while Rendtorff wants to emphasize 'die "Führung" als selbständiges Verheissungsthema',¹² this view should be resisted. This emphasis seems to extend the meaning of the phrase *ואהיה עִמָּךְ וְאַנְרִיכְךָ* beyond what is tolerable; semantically it cannot bear such a load. In this passage *ואהיה עִמָּךְ* is closely related to the promise of blessing, so that the sense of "being with" and the sense of blessing are entirely complementary, two aspects of the one divine initiative for Isaac's benefit which together suggest its completeness.¹³

In the structural analysis of Figure 1, the several narrative components of Gen 26.1-33 have been subjected to a degree of abstraction,

and set out so that they might be read synchronically in terms of the categories "promise", "threat", and "(partial) resolution". By following the linear progression suggested by the verse numbers, however, it is also possible to read the diagram diachronically. This diachronic dimension of the narrative might be set out more clearly as follows:¹⁴

Promise of blessing/being with, articulated in terms of land, progeny, and the blessing of the nations

- :: Threat A/C Isaac's safety (and progeny) jeopardized [the possibility of adultery jeopardizes the people of Gerar]
- :: Resolution Abimelech guarantees the safety of Isaac and Rebekah [the possibility of adultery is thereby precluded]
- :: Threat B/C Philistine envy jeopardizes Isaac's possession of land. Strife between herdsmen jeopardizes his possession of wells [Isaac's wealth provokes envy. His possession of wells threatens water supply]
- :: Resolution expulsion & strife lead Isaac towards new land [for Philistines, reason for envy is removed & for herdsmen of Gerar water rights are guaranteed]

Promise of blessing/being with, and progeny

- :: Threat the sudden appearance of Abimelech and his advisers at Beersheba [once again, a mutual threat is suggested]
- :: Resolution a treaty is concluded, consisting of a shared meal and an oath [Abimelech and his advisers depart in peace]

Narrative Conclusion (v 32f.): Isaac's servants report the discovery of a well at Beersheba, and the place is given an aetiology commemorating the oath sworn there.

In sketching out this reading of the text, in both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions, I hope to secure an alternative way of handling the pentateuchal narrative from that which is provided by the more usual form, redaction, and traditio-critical methods. I have begun by bypassing those techniques which involve the scraping off of redactional layers from the divine promise speeches to discover which, if any, of the promises are

original to the tradition, and investigate how the various story units may have grown within the tradition until they came together as the present more or less connected story. In taking this step, I have no wish to deny the importance or the validity of these more traditional forms of biblical criticism, but I would claim a more prominent place for the appreciation of the final form of biblical texts than is generally acknowledged by those who practise the historical critical method. I have been concerned with the final form of the Isaac narrative so far as I have not attempted to construct a more original form. Nevertheless, the canonical context has not been taken into consideration for the purpose of this structural analysis.¹⁵ The most immediate consequence of this failure to take the literary context into consideration may be discerned in the childlessness of Isaac and Rebekah, which is assumed throughout the present analysis.¹⁶ I have argued above that this assumption is not an arbitrary foreclosing of the perspective from which my analysis is presented, but that as the Isaac narrative proceeds three important matters of context (the birth of the twins, the receipt of Abraham's wealth, and the receipt of Yahweh's blessing) are consistently ignored. Thus, although the childlessness of the Patriarch and his wife at the time when the promise was given is a necessity for the present reading of the text, the context permits us to consider Gen 26.1-33 as the retrospective narration of events which must be deemed to have taken place before the birth of Jacob and Esau. Otherwise the element of the promise relating to great progeny would not be threatened in any meaningful way.¹⁷

Although the Isaac story of Gen 26.1-33 has a literary context within the Jacob narrative (Gen 25.19-35.22),¹⁸ there are possibly better reasons for holding that it narrates events retrospectively than in their correct

chronological sequence. Therefore, although the context may demand that Isaac is already the father of two grown sons, that he is immensely rich, and that he has been blessed by Yahweh, Gen 26.1-33 apparently depicts him as childless, comparatively poor, and recipient of a promise of blessing rather than already blessed. Moreover, the entire narrative seems to be concerned at some level with the fulfilment (or non-fulfilment) of the promise of blessing. Thus, although one could offer a reading of the Isaac narrative which takes its present literary context into account, it does no violence to the text to read it in isolation from that context, and to begin and end the reading with a Patriarch who is childless.¹⁹

Form criticism has emphasized the importance of the individual unit of tradition, but has failed to explain the way such units have been combined, with a greater or lesser degree of coherence, to form the overarching story.²⁰ That is to say, form criticism has sometimes lost sight of that form of the text which provides the critic with his most firm data, i.e., the final form. There is also a tendency among form critics to suppose that the oral version of the story, which is usually held to have existed prior to the written story, must necessarily have been quite brief.²¹ Against this contention, one might observe that if the individual story units which are studied by form critics ever existed independently as oral tradition, either the form in which they were narrated was a much expanded version of the form contained in the Old Testament, which preserves no more than an outline of the basic plot,²² or that such storytelling must have provided poor entertainment indeed. The very brevity of such stories in their present form would prevent the storyteller ever capturing the attention and interest of his audience. Moreover, the fact that the Old Testament stories exist only in written form must be taken seriously. The

reasons why and the conditions under which these stories were recorded in writing are by no means analogous to the reasons why or the conditions under which a modern folklorist records his material. In most cases it would be hazardous to guess why one tradition was recorded and not another, and what events occasioned such recording. The temptation to compare uncritically the results of patient field research carried out by present-day folklorists and the materials which are recorded in the Old Testament must be avoided.²³ Since the Old Testament is not an oral document, its writtenness should be taken seriously. And while it may be perfectly legitimate to investigate the history of possible oral antecedents, along with their form and content, the text which does exist appears to demand interpretation more insistently than the hypothetical text.²⁴

Although the narrative of Gen 26.1-33 certainly comprises a number of episodes, each with a more or less clearly defined beginning and ending, the content of each episode is not necessarily so complete as it must have been at any hypothetical oral stage where it existed as an independent narrative, complete in itself, with a beginning, middle, and ending of its own.²⁵ It may be possible to deduce from this circumstance one important reason why form critics often fail to agree the precise limits of those narrative forms which they investigate. To be considered as a unit in its own right, a story demands a sense of completeness and, whenever this is missing, form critics tend to compensate either by extending the proposed limits of the story or by hypothesizing the loss of certain details from it at some redactional stage.²⁶

By initially bypassing form-critical questions, and by setting out the structure of the major narrative components (Figure 1), it has become possible to observe the operation of a narrative technique which was quite

simple for the narrator to apply, but which has been extremely productive in generating the kind of material which now comprises a large proportion of the Patriarchal Narrative. I do not imply that in the operation of this technique the promise elements are always original to the context in which they are found, and never redactional. On the contrary, it is possible that much of the earlier material contained in the Patriarchal Narrative originally had nothing to do with this narrative technique which utilized elements of promise, threat, and limited resolution.²⁷ In applying the technique, however, the narrators have well recognized that, if a promise is to retain its emotive or parenetic force over those towards whom it is addressed, absolute fulfilment is out of the question, as indeed is the kind of resolution which dispels every threat.²⁸

I shall not attempt here to ascertain which, if any, of the elements of promise used in Gen 26.2-5, 24, are redactional, but I shall examine the patriarchal tradition to discover how pervasive this narrative technique is. Such an enquiry may provide further justification for positing its use in Gen 26.1-33 where it is perhaps most clearly in evidence.

d) **Promise and Threat as Narrative Technique in Genesis 12-36:** According to the Jacob narrative, when Jacob was at Bethel, making good his escape from Esau and beginning his quest for a suitable bride, Yahweh appeared to him by night and promised him land, progeny, and protection (Gen 28.13-15) והנה אנכי נצמך ושמרתך בכל אשר תלך. This promise may be followed by no immediate threat, but neither is it followed by any obvious fulfilment. It is made as Jacob departs from the land of promise, and is followed by the story of his somewhat protracted wooing of Rachel. There is a level at which the departure from the land may seem to evacuate the promise of a

great deal of its meaning. At the very least, it suspends the possibility of its fulfilment for a considerable time. The story of Jacob and Rachel is somewhat complicated, and, so far as it takes Jacob a full seven years to gain a bride, and a further seven years to earn the bride he really desires, the outcome of the promise of progeny is postponed if not directly threatened. Even after his marriage to Rachel, Jacob takes a long time to extricate himself from the service of the scheming Laban. The exiled Jacob is therefore alienated from the land promised to him. Throughout this time, the promise of "being with" is of no obvious benefit, and the promise of protection does not amount to very much as Jacob appears to suffer under the exploitation and deception of Laban.

As for Jacob's relationship with Rachel, his difficulty in winning her, her theft of Laban's household gods (**טַרְפוֹת**), and her prolonged barrenness, may all be considered as elements which severely limit the fulfilment of the promise, or at least subject it to serious delays. But it is precisely when Jacob feels Laban's oppression most keenly that Yahweh is said to have reappeared to him, instructing him to return to the land of his fathers, and repeating the promise of "being with" (Gen 31.3). Again the promise is threatened, first by Laban's pursuit in search of his household idols (when Jacob, quite unwittingly, endangers Rachel, the wife he loves best),²⁹ second by the mysterious (demonic or divine?) assailant at the brook Jabbok, and third by the prospect of meeting again with the brother he had usurped.

Gen 35.9-12 includes the promise of progeny, but this time it is quickly followed by the death of Rachel in childbirth (Gen 35.16-19), and by Reuben's seduction of Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen 35.22).³⁰

Outside of the Jacob narrative proper, a consideration of the promise at Gen 46.2-4 reminds the reader of the warning to Isaac not to go down to Egypt (Gen 26.2), and also that, in spite of the deity's promise to make Jacob "a great nation" in Egypt, the story will soon issue in the enslavement and attempted genocide of the nation. Indeed, the promise of land which stands towards the beginning of the Jacob narrative (Gen 28.13), is repeated elsewhere, and has been partially fulfilled by Genesis 46, is again brought into question by this command to go down to Egypt.

If the general theory is valid that the nucleus of the Jacob story is probably older and more extensive than the earliest material which survives with respect to the other Patriarchs, this factor would go some way towards explaining why this section conforms less consistently to the promise-threat schema than the rest of the patriarchal story. Further, it should be emphasized that the promise-threat schema is a narrative technique and not a form-critical category.

The promise that Abraham will become a "great nation"³¹ occurs at the beginning of the Abraham narrative, along with the promise of blessing for others (Gen 12.2-3). This is followed by the promise of land for Abraham and his descendants (Gen 12.7). But this promise is followed immediately by Abraham's journey from the land into Egypt, and the consequent threat to the ancestor (and thereby his progeny) which results in the jeopardizing of the ancestress, the future of the race, and the promise. In Genesis 13, the motif of strife between kinsmen occurs. As a result, Abraham and Lot separate, and the possession of the land falls to Abraham at his kinsman's whim! The promise of land is repeated at Gen 13.15, 17, where it is followed in Genesis 14 by the story of the battle with the so-called eastern kings. Although it may be going too far to discern in this battle

some direct threat to the promise of land (Abraham enters the battle only to rescue Lot),³² a concern for the land is present in this chapter at the point where Abraham receives the benediction of Melchizedek, king of Salem - a veiled reference to Jerusalem and the land of promise.³³

It is hardly surprising, in view of the way in which events have turned out, that when the promise of land is repeated at Gen 15.7, Abraham responds doubtfully, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I am to possess it?" (v 8). The justice of the question is fully underlined when, at Gen 15.13, the deity tells Abraham that his descendants "will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and... will be oppressed there for four hundred years". Nevertheless, at the end of this chapter, the land promise is repeated in terms of a covenant (ברית) set up unilaterally by Yahweh with Abraham, and promising the land which belonged to a number of named nations to Abraham's descendants. The last of these is the Jebusites - the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Jerusalem. The conquest of Jerusalem, and the expulsion of the Jebusites from the city, "would constitute the crowning triumph of the conquest."³⁴

The promise of progeny is constantly threatened by the emphasis which is placed on the motif of barrenness and, after the birth of Isaac, by the deity's strange demand that the long-awaited son should be sacrificed on Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22). Immediately after this bizarre episode, which recounts a threat altogether more fundamental than any supposed threat to the ancestress of the race, the promise of numerous progeny is repeated once more (Gen 22.17). The promise of blessing for the nations (Gen 12.3; 18.18; 22.18), is also jeopardized in the experience of Abraham by actions quite similar to Isaac's (Gen 12.10-20; 20.2-18; 21.25-34), as well as by the expulsion of Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21).

Although the operation of this narrative technique in Gen 26.1-33 has been observed briefly above, its importance for understanding the structure of the Isaac narrative properly warrants a fuller discussion here. Having migrated to Gerar in time of famine, Isaac receives the divine promise. The fundamental promise is one of blessing/being with, but it is expanded in terms of land and great progeny, by a repetition of the promise of land, and by the promise of blessing for the nations. It is important to notice how these promises relate to the narrative which follows.

Gen 26.6 emphasizes that the scene of the subsequent action is Gerar, and in vv 7-11 the life and welfare of the Patriarch is placed at risk. Although the risk is subsequently shown to be more imagined than real, when the childlessness of the Patriarch is taken seriously, the promise of numerous descendants who will inhabit the land is apparently threatened. The nature of Isaac's deception is disclosed to the Philistine king by his accidentally observing a moment of intimacy between Isaac and Rebekah, and that moment is shared with the reader through a pun on the name Isaac.³⁵ The narrator employs another word-play when he has Abimelech command that no one should touch (אָנַח) Isaac or Rebekah (v 11). Van Seters has pointed out that with respect to Isaac, the verb means "to inflict bodily injury", and with respect to Rebekah, "to approach sexually".³⁶ In his selfish concern with the first of these dangers, Isaac has exposed Rebekah to the second. The danger is avoided not by deception, but by the discovery of the attempted deception. Abimelech is at pains to point out that, by his attempt to deceive, Isaac has endangered the Philistines. When the true nature of the situation is accidentally disclosed, it becomes possible to avoid both dangers. Abimelech's speech at Gen 26.10 clearly demonstrates that the narrator is deeply concerned about the possible

consequences of the patriarchal deception for the foreigners upon whom it is practised. The conclusion can scarcely be resisted that the narrative is much more about the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech than the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah.

Gen 26.12-16 tells how Isaac, as a result of Yahweh's blessing, became immensely rich while farming in the neighbourhood of Gerar. Isaac's great wealth, however, soon provoked Philistine envy, which placed his possession of the land under threat. But the extent to which the threat was mutual may be discerned from the words with which Abimelech expelled Isaac, "Go away from us; for you are much mightier than we" (v 16).

Gen 26.17-22 records Isaac's journey from the city of Gerar, through the valley of Gerar, towards Beersheba. This section consists of a series of notices which record the digging of wells at Esek, Sitnah, and Rehoboth. The narrator's concern with the threat against the promise of land is again evident in the disputes which arise between the herdsmen of Gerar and Isaac's herdsmen over the possession of the first two wells, which are quickly surrendered. The series is brought to its resolution in v 22, when Isaac names Rehoboth.

Isaac then travelled to Beersheba (v 23) and, at this stage, the narrative is punctuated by a further theophany and report of the divine promise. Here the promise is of blessing and numerous descendants, and it is integrated into the ongoing narrative by means of a reference to Isaac's servants digging a well at Beersheba (v 25).

At Beersheba, Isaac is unexpectedly confronted by Abimelech along with Ahuzzath, his adviser, and Phicol, his military commander. Isaac assumes a renewed threat to his security. But Abimelech assures him that, on the

contrary, it is the Philistines who feel threatened and that they want to make an oath and treaty with him. When the formalities have been completed, Abimelech and his retinue depart in peace (vv 26-31). The narrative ends with Isaac's servants reporting to him that they have discovered water at the well which he names Beersheba (v 32f.).

In the Isaac narrative, each element of the promise is threatened in turn. The promise of great progeny is threatened in vv 7-11, and that of land in vv 12-16, 17-22, and 26-31. But the promise of blessing for the nations is threatened most consistently. At Gen 26.10, Abimelech declares that his people have been endangered by Isaac's deceiving them; at v 16 Isaac's success constitutes the threat, as it does throughout vv 17-22; and, finally, his prosperity brings Abimelech to sue for peace (v 28f.).

Considerable evidence can therefore be advanced in support of the view that a narrative technique which utilizes elements of promise, threat, and limited resolution has been used in the composition of the patriarchal narratives. Elements of promise and threat have been constantly and consistently juxtaposed against each other in such a way that the promise must be understood as something which is never brought to an immediate or complete fulfilment. This implies that whatever the narrator is saying by means of this technique, he is not simply imposing a theology of promise upon a number of older narratives which have come down to him in the tradition. For the narrator, as for the reader, the promise is never unambiguous, and the longer one follows through with his statement, the more ambiguous the relationship between promise and fulfilment becomes.

Although this technique was used at some stage during the composition of Genesis 12-36, it seems to have constituted a particularly powerful

influence in shaping the Isaac narrative. And although this study has not been carried out at a level conducive to historical judgements, it can be observed here that, provided the theories of Winnett and Van Seters concerning the late dating of J are considered acceptable, the same late author who was responsible for the composition of this chapter must also have imposed the narrative technique upon much of the earlier tradition,³⁷ even in the Jacob material where some, if not all, of the promise elements can hardly be thought to have originated in their present contexts. In any case, if promise and threat can be shown to belong together at any stage of composition, it must surely be with respect to Gen 26.1-33.³⁸

e) Rebekah in the Isaac Narrative: I have already noted that Isaac and Abimelech, or some other party or parties which seem to represent them, are the major human characters throughout Gen 26.1-33.³⁹ In view of the fact that vv 7-11 narrate a version of the so-called "wife-sister" incident, it seems appropriate to investigate the status of Rebekah as a character in the narrative. A survey of all the references to Rebekah in this section shows that she has been represented as a secondary character. It is said that the men of Gerar asked Isaac about his wife (לאשתו, v 7), and that he replied, "She is my sister" (אחותי היא). It is only after she is twice referred to impersonally in this way that she is finally identified as Rebekah (v 7). She is named again, and for the last time in Gen 26.1-33, in v 8 where it is related that after Isaac had been in Gerar for some time, Abimelech observed him sharing in some intimacy with Rebekah, his wife, רבקה אשתו. Whatever the nature of the action implied by the participle מצחק, it was sufficiently intimate for Abimelech to conclude that Isaac was married to Rebekah, and he accused him to that effect, הנה אשתך היא, demanding at the same time an explanation of the attempted

deception, ואיך אמרת אחתי הוא (v 9). In reply, Isaac refers to his fear for his own safety פן אמות עליה (v 9).⁴⁰ This reply repeats in somewhat different terms the fears already expressed in terms of the Patriarch's thought in v 7.

When Abimelech expresses horror concerning the possible repercussions of the attempted deception, his reference to Rebekah is again impersonal, "... one of the people might have lain with your wife (את אשתו)..." (v 10). Similarly, his apodictic command that his subjects should touch neither this man nor his wife (באיט הזה ובאשתו) upon pain of death (v 11), refers to neither Isaac nor Rebekah by name.

Apart from the two occasions where she is named (vv 7, 8), every reference to Rebekah is quite impersonal, and neither of the principals utter her name, although she is the subject of their conversations. One should not make too much of this last observation, however, since no character in the narrative ever addresses or refers to another by name or title. Only the narrator names characters. Yet, by naming Rebekah so infrequently in this episode which contains so many references to her, he has been able to use the terms "wife" (x6)⁴¹ and "sister" (x2)⁴² a number of times. Apart from these terms and the personal name (x2), he uses the third person singular feminine suffix (v 9), and also the feminine pronoun היא/הוא (x4).⁴³ The term "wife" is therefore much preferred over "sister". And, when Isaac is accused of deception, unlike Abraham at Gen 20.12, he does not protest that he had told the truth.⁴⁴

The conclusion that Rebekah is represented unambiguously as the wife and not the sister of Isaac is irresistible. The narrative is quite clear that there is no substance to Isaac's subterfuge. Moreover, it permits

Abimelech's censure to stand in judgement on Isaac's lie, and offers him no defence. Thus any suggestion that the motif of deception -- so far as the Isaac narrative is concerned at any rate -- "demonstrates the (Patriarch's) quick intelligence" or even "the discomfiture" of a hated enemy ought to be resisted.⁴⁵ In Genesis 26, Isaac's carelessness in consorting openly with Rebekah and thus exposing the attempted deception is quite obviously highlighted by the narrator. Indeed, his ruse is shown to be quite unintelligent and potentially dangerous by Abimelech, and it is Isaac who is discomfited and not Abimelech, who graciously protects him.

Rebekah is therefore portrayed as a minor character in this episode, where the two principals are Isaac and Abimelech. The story is about their relationship, portrayed in terms of confrontation. The danger which Isaac anticipates does not materialize, and his attempt to avoid that danger only succeeds in creating a more real danger for the Philistines. The outcome serves to clarify the respective status of each of the two principals: clearly Abimelech is the superior. In this way the narrative portrays a relationship already suggested by Gen 26.1, which relates how Isaac went "to Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar". Throughout the rest of the narrative, the confrontation between Isaac and Abimelech (or their representatives) remains in the foreground. As I shall show below, Gen 26.1-33 concludes with the reversal of the relationship which is defined at Gen 26.1, 6-11.⁴⁶ In keeping with her subsidiary status in the "wife-sister" episode, Rebekah simply vanishes from the rest of the narrative. Since the other episodes narrated in Gen 26.1-33 are also about the relationship which exists between Isaac and Abimelech and/or the Philistines, there is little reason why this should not also be the case in the story of vv 6-11.⁴⁷

f) Narrative Coherence and Integration: I shall now examine briefly a number of elements of the text which serve (a) to hold the narrative together as a more or less coherent whole, and (b) to integrate the narrative into the ongoing patriarchal story.

The first such feature is the speech as resolution which occurs at least three times, and possibly four. The threat to the safety of Isaac and Rebekah (and so to their progeny) on the one hand, and to the safety of the population of Gerar on the other, is resolved by the speech of Abimelech at v 11. The threat to the promise of land arising from the envy of the Philistines is resolved by the speech of Abimelech at v 16, as is the threat to the promise of blessing for the nations. The dual threat to the promise of land and to the blessing for the nations arising out of the strife over the possession of the wells is resolved in the speech of Isaac at v 22. It is less clear, however, that v 32, where after the conclusion of the feast and oath with Abimelech the servants of Isaac say, "We have found water", may be considered as such a "speech of resolution". Strictly speaking, this speech comes after the resolution of the threat implied by the approach of Abimelech and his retinue. But one might at least consider the possibility that for the narrator this speech has a similar function to the speeches at vv 11, 16, and 22. It may even be considered that this speech provides a resolution which in some sense overarches the entire story. Isaac is now blessed by Yahweh, not only in fact, but in the eyes of the Philistines. He is no longer threatened by the dangers which have beset him throughout the narrative. He is at Beersheba; that is, he has entered the land of promise, where he has come into possession of a second uncontested well.⁴⁸ Further, he is again on the verge of prosperity (v 22) and has made his peace with Abimelech.⁴⁹

The second feature which requires some discussion here is found in a number of references to wells (באר). From v 15 onwards, the substantive באר (well) and the verb חפר (to dig) occur frequently. באר occurs some ten times, both by itself and in connection with שבוע (in the place-name Beersheba). The verb חפר occurs seven times, and in addition, שבוע (to swear) and מים (water) are also frequent.⁵⁰ Apart from this chapter, באר occurs in Genesis only at 21.20 where Abraham is said to have dug a well. In the Old Testament באר is frequent only in the patriarchal tradition which accounts for twenty-two out of thirty-six occurrences, and where it is used in stories concerned with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Elsewhere בור is much more common, but this word occurs in Genesis only in connection with the Joseph story where it is used nine times.

In Genesis 26, the word באר is used to link a number of different episodes together. It appears first in v 15, a verse which is usually considered redactional,⁵¹ thus linking the episode which is concerned with Philistine envy over Isaac's great wealth to the episode which is concerned with conflict over the possession of wells (vv 17-22) where it occurs more frequently. In the second of the promise sections (vv 23-25), it occurs both in the place name Beersheba (v 23) and as a substantive (v 25). It also occurs at the conclusion of the final narrative section (vv 32-33). In the P postscript to the narrative, the father of one of Esau's foreign brides is called Beerī (בְּרִי). Whatever the correct etymology of this name, one might wonder whether it was suggested by the frequent use of the word באר in the previous narrative, or whether the notice was added at this point on some kind of catchword principle.

The last feature to be considered here is the function of references to Abraham. There are no fewer than seven references to Abraham in this chapter, and this frequency is all the more striking in view of the fact that Isaac's children are not mentioned. These references function as a means whereby the Isaac narrative is provided with a particular sense of continuity within the Patriarchal Narrative: Isaac is here represented in relation to Abraham, but not in relation to his sons, born, according to the canonical sequence, at Gen 25.24-26. Consequently this continuity may represent some kind of trick which the narrator is playing with time, in that the route which he takes from Abraham to Isaac appears, from the point of view of Gen 26.1-33, to avoid any consideration of the intervening birth of Jacob. This presentation has seemed, to many commentators, to be at odds with the narrative context. The childlessness of Isaac and Rebekah, which is assumed by Gen 26.7-11, remains a feature of the entire Isaac narrative. Further, this narrative is both preceded (Gen 25.27-34) and followed (Genesis 27) by stories in which Jacob outwits Esau, taking his birthright by hard bargaining and his blessing by deception. For this reason it has often been suggested that the Isaac narrative is now out of its correct position, and that originally it stood before Gen 25.11b.⁵² It may be, however, that the Isaac story occupies a position in the Jacob narrative analogous to that of the Judah-Tamar story (Genesis 38) in the Joseph narrative, and that both stories must be considered out of the sequence implied by their context.⁵³

Because the traditio-historical priority of Isaac is widely held,⁵⁴ the references to Abraham in Genesis 26 are often considered redactional.⁵⁵ But a proper appreciation of the literary function of these references greatly enhances the literary interpretation of the Isaac narrative:

- (A) v 1: the famine in Gen 26.1 is distinguished from "the famine which was in the days of Abraham", and the notice functions as a time reference.
- (B) v 3: Yahweh swears to Isaac that he will perform the oath sworn "to Abraham your father". Here the reference functions by providing continuity and guarantee.
- (C) v 5: Yahweh further declares that he will keep his promise "because Abraham obeyed my voice..." The function of this reference is to guarantee the fulfilment of the promise. This guarantee perhaps involves a vague hint of some such notion as salvation in Abraham as representative of the nation.
- (D) v 15: Abraham also provides a measure of continuity in the 'well' tradition, for the Philistines are said to have filled up the wells which Abraham had dug. Once again a time reference is involved. The notice also explains why the wells had to be dug all over again, and, by referring both to Abraham and the wells, it serves to integrate the two parts of the chapter into a single narrative sequence.
- (E) v 18: Isaac has his men redig Abraham's wells, and this further strengthens the sense of continuity with the Abraham tradition, for the excavation of the same wells is followed by an outbreak of hostility similar to that experienced by Abraham. A second reference to Abraham in the same verse appears to indicate the passage of time.
- (F) v 24: Yahweh first represents himself as "the God of Abraham your father", and second, promises Isaac blessing and numerous progeny "because of Abraham my servant". The first of these references indicates continuity, and the second functions as a guarantee.

Thus both halves of the chapter, vv 1-16 and 17-33 alike, contain a number of references to Abraham which function in terms of time reference, guarantee, and continuity. Along with the other features discussed in this section, these references help to provide a measure of coherence throughout the Isaac narrative, and help to integrate it into the patriarchal sequence, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁵⁶

g) The Geography of Genesis 26.1-33: Just as there are two characters, Isaac and Abimelech, who are supremely important for the narrator, there are two locations, Gerar and Beersheba, which assume priority over all the rest. For the most part, the other locations which are mentioned are no more than stopping places along the way between the two major loci. Two exceptions, however, are found at the beginning of the story, and should be dealt with first. These are the somewhat enigmatic reference to "the land" and a brief reference to Egypt.

Isaac's whereabouts at the beginning of the story are not specified. Because he is connected with Beer-lahai-roi at Gen 24.62 and 25.11, some scholars suggest that he was there.⁵⁷ But the text hardly requires this conclusion. The introduction, וְהָיָה רֵגֶב בְּאֶרֶץ, no doubt provided sufficient information for those who heard the story in ancient times. Curiosity about the location of the famine and the place of revelation may be a modern phenomenon, and may also suggest too positive an evaluation of the historicity of the narrated events. For the original audience, "the land" may have been simply the area of Palestine with which they were familiar as the scene of the patriarchal wanderings, or any part of it.⁵⁸ A more precise location may have been unnecessary in view of Isaac's immanent departure, or even because this kind of story did not require it.

Egypt is mentioned in the form of a negative command, "Do not go down to Egypt" (Gen 26.2), and it serves from the beginning, along with the reference to Abraham in v 1, to anchor the entire narrative within the patriarchal tradition. Elsewhere in the tradition, Egypt is the typical place of refuge in time of famine.⁵⁹ Abraham and Sarah went there (Gen 12.10), and Jacob sent his sons there in search of food (Gen 42.1-3), before finally taking refuge there along with his entire household

(Gen 46.1-27), although this last event is connected with the famine only indirectly. This negative command is used, most importantly, to explain the presence of Isaac and Rebekah in nearby Gerar. Unless Gerar was a store city, it may seem a somewhat unlikely destination during a famine in view of its close proximity to the affected area, but that has not deterred the storyteller. The situating of Isaac in Gerar rather than Egypt makes the point that it is not only in Egypt that the promise can be jeopardized. In Gerar, Isaac was to commit precisely the same deception as his father had perpetrated both in Egypt and in Gerar.

Altogether one gets the impression that the introduction to the Isaac narrative is somewhat contrived for the purpose of getting Isaac out of "the land" to Gerar. This impression is strengthened by the report of the theophany (vv 2-5) and the promises which are made to Isaac at that time. These promises intervene between his arrival in Gerar and his attempt to carry out the deception, and they include the divine command to stay in "this land" (now Gerar and not "the land" he had left behind).

Gerar is identified as the city of Abimelech, king of the Philistines, and may be presumed to have been situated on the coastal plain, south of Gaza and some distance west of Beersheba.⁶⁰ Its precise location, however, is of little importance for a literary appreciation of the narrative. But it is important that it should provide a location outside of "the land", yet close enough for its foreign king to be a neighbour of Israelite Beersheba. One may therefore presume that Gerar and Beersheba were no great distance apart, but neither were they directly adjacent. For the literary appreciation of the narrative there is no need to consider the historical location of either place more closely.⁶¹

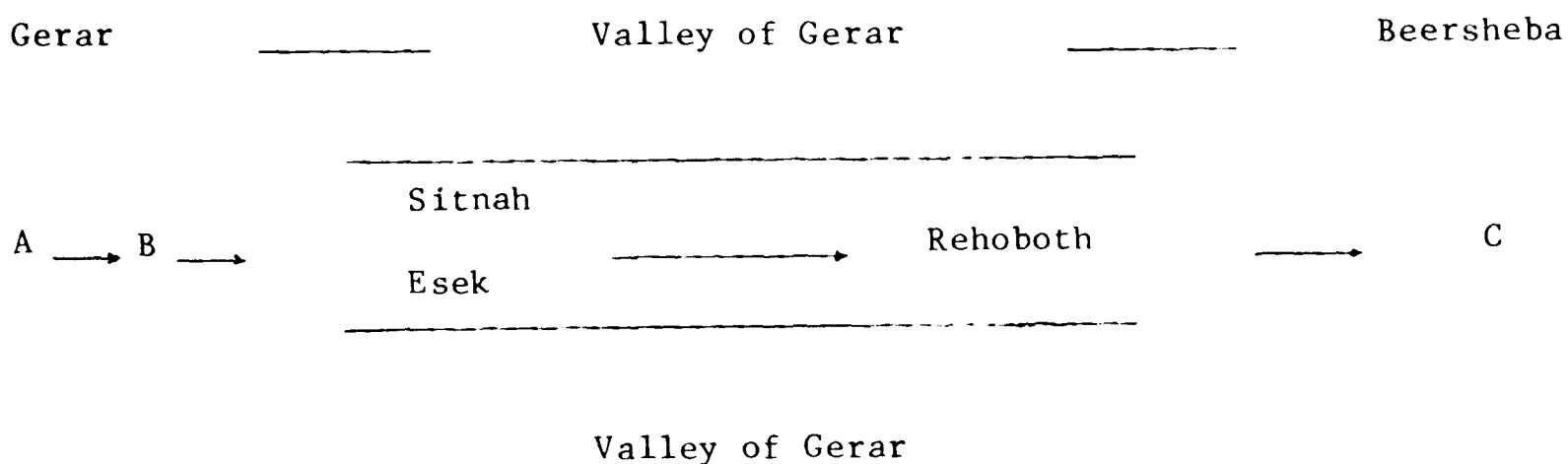
In the Old Testament, Beersheba is a very important location, and it is well known as a sacred site both in the patriarchal tradition and elsewhere. It is instructive to notice that Beersheba, which in the Isaac narrative is the goal towards which the story progresses, functions in the Joseph story as the point from which Jacob departs from the land on his journey to Egypt (Gen 46.5). It was there that he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac (46.1), and received the divine promise "I will go down with you to Egypt" (46.4). At any rate, the chief importance of Beersheba in the Isaac narrative appears to derive from its symbolism as the southern boundary of Israel; a symbolism attested elsewhere in the phrase, "from Dan to Beersheba" (Jdg 20.1; 1 Kgs 4.25). As a sacred site, Beersheba is associated elsewhere in the patriarchal narratives with both Abraham and Jacob. Once Isaac arrives there, he is back within "the land" which he had left at the beginning of the story on account of the famine. Beersheba therefore provides an apt symbol of the narrator's intention to secure blessing for Isaac within the land of promise.

The other locations mentioned in Gen 26.1-33 are no more than stopping places between Gerar and Beersheba. The wells of Esek, Sitnah, and Rehoboth, all presumably situated in the "valley of Gerar", are utilized by the narrator in order to place a distance, both spatial and temporal, between the events he describes at the beginning and end of the chapter.

This distance is achieved by a remarkable piece of narrative art. At the beginning of the story, Isaac is positioned so centrally in Gerar that his intimacy with Rebekah is observed by Abimelech himself. He is next situated, still at Gerar, but now farming and therefore not so close to the immediate presence of Abimelech. He is close enough, however, to be expelled by the king when the Philistines envy his successful husbandry.

Isaac's further progress through the valley of Gerar is punctuated by reports of strife between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Gerar over possession of water rights. This strife results in his moving on from Sitnah and from Esek. After his servants had dug and retained possession of a well at Rehoboth, Isaac moves to Beersheba. By means of these successive movements the narrator manages to create a sense of distance between the events which illustrate the relationship which existed between Isaac and Abimelech at Gerar on the one hand and at Beersheba on the other. This spatial distancing is represented diagrammatically in Figure 2.

Figure 2



The journey which is represented in this diagram is from A (the centre of Gerar) through B (the area farmed by Isaac) to C (Beersheba). Between B and C lie the wells of Sitnah, Esek, and Rehoboth.

Beside this spatial distancing of the events narrated at the beginning and end of the chapter, there is a corresponding temporal distancing. It is said that Isaac spent some time at Gerar before the act of deception was exposed (26.8). His great prosperity must have taken at least the time of sowing and harvesting, but one gains the impression from the narrative that he became progressively more wealthy over an undetermined and perhaps quite

lengthy period -- possibly several seasons of sowing and harvesting. In the same way, a well is hardly dug and surrendered in a single day, and all this conspires to give the impression that a considerable time may be supposed to have elapsed between the first and last events narrated in Gen 26.1-33. Indeed, it must be supposed that Abimelech journeyed to Beersheba only after Isaac had been there sufficiently long for his success to be noticed some distance away in Gerar. This temporal distancing is represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3

vv 6-11	vv 12-16	vv 17-22	vv 23-25
Time spent in Gerar until the discovery of the deception	Time spent farming in the region of Gerar	Time spent in the valley of Gerar disputing possession of several wells	Time spent in Beersheba before the arrival of Abimelech

The correspondence between narrative time and "actual time" is a difficult subject to deal with.⁶² Indeed, such a correspondence may hardly be meaningful. The events which are narrated are not set against any absolute time scale by the narrator, but give the general impression of one event succeeding another. It has, however, been helpful to set out the temporal progression which is implied by the narrative. By setting this time scale alongside the spatial progression which has been employed, one gains a more adequate perspective of the events which are narrated in the story.

h) Structural Transformations in Genesis 26.1-33: The first transformation which should be noted is bound up with the fundamental promise, **וְאֵתְּךָ אֶעֱבֹד** (I will be with you and will bless you), and the way the Philistines react differently at different times to the apparent fulfilment of the promise. At v 12 it is stated that after Isaac sowed in the land, **וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ יְהוָה** (Yahweh blessed him). When faced with this apparent blessing, however, the Philistines reacted badly out of envy for Isaac, and Abimelech expelled him from the environs of Gerar (v 16). Thus, at the beginning of the story, Isaac's experience of blessing entails negative consequences so far as it evokes the envy of the Philistines and results in his expulsion.

At the end of the narrative, when Isaac is at Beersheba and following the repetition of the divine promise (v 24), he is approached by Abimelech and his retinue who have come from Gerar. Isaac fears that their approach threatens his security. But Abimelech sues for peace, saying, "We see plainly that Yahweh is with you (**לְעִמְךָ**); so we say, let there be an oath between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you (**לְעִמְךָ**)". And he concludes his speech with the declaration, "You are now blessed of Yahweh" (v 29). The repetition of **לְעִמְךָ** at v 28, the declaration of v 29, **אַתָּה צֵאתָ בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה**, and the further use of **לְעִמְךָ ... אֶעֱבֹד** in v 29, all show that the narrator deliberately has Abimelech pick up the language of promise (v 3).

This transformation seems to operate on at least two levels:

(1) **for Isaac and his people**, blessing which is not recognized by other nations (e.g., the Philistines) retains a threatening aspect. Perhaps it is not even real blessing when others do not recognize its source in Yahweh. But when foreign nations recognize that source, as they do at the end of the narrative, they no longer regard Isaac with envy, and the threat is properly resolved.

(2) **with respect to the other nations**, when the source of blessing is not recognized the negative attitude of envy results (v 14). This attitude leads to the expulsion of Isaac and strife between his herdsmen and the herdsmen of Gerar. But when they do recognize the source of blessing, (אתה...ברוך יהוה/יהוה עמך) they come to Isaac to negotiate a peace treaty and set up a covenant with him (עמך), and thereby gain a share in the blessing.

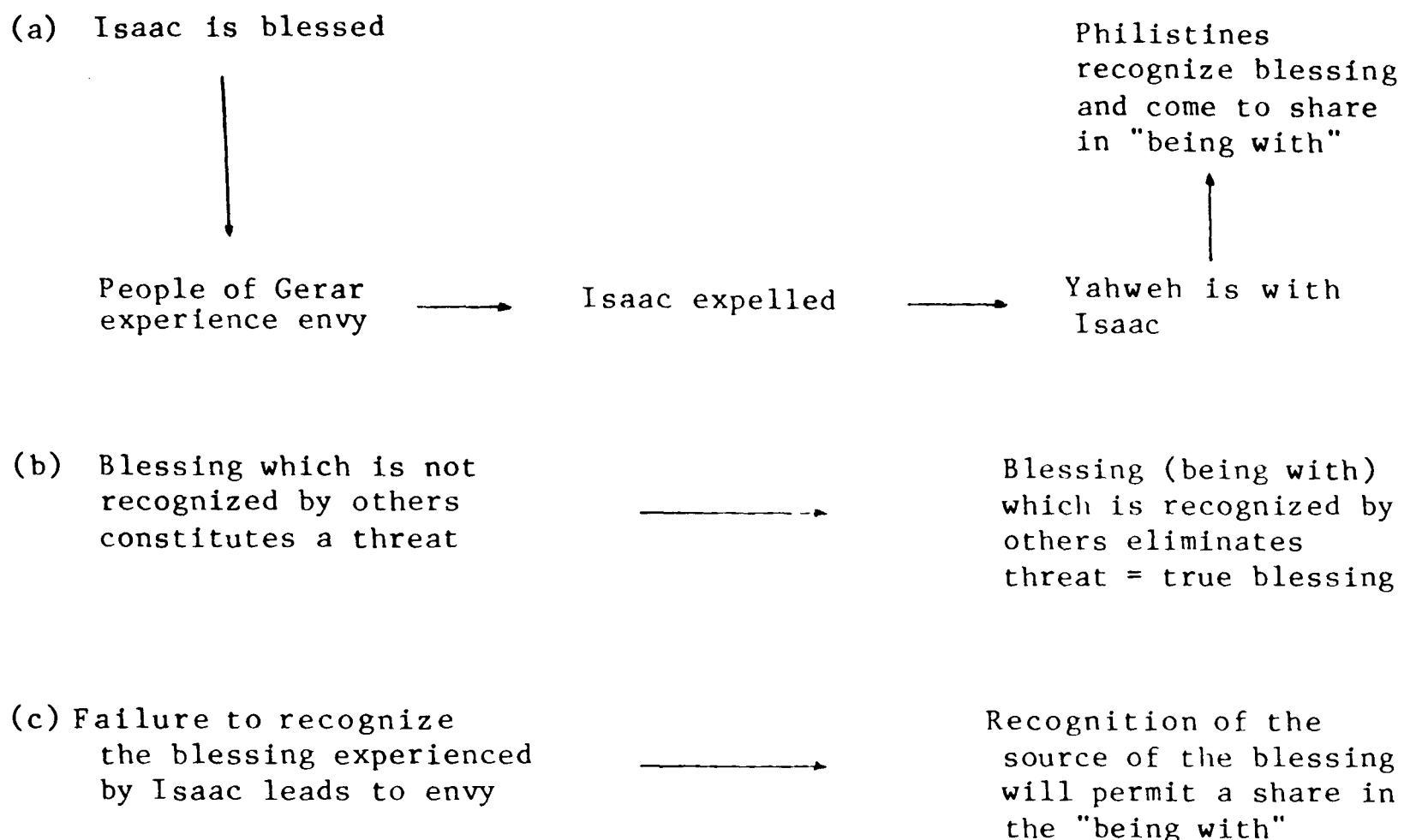
It seems possible that this transformation indicates an incipient eschatology underlying the narrative, if not a direct eschatological theme. Apart from the narrative level which has been examined, there may remain an eschatological level which may be exploited in the following terms:

(1) blessing will become an actuality for Israel only when it is recognized as Yahweh's blessing both by Israel (v 22) and the foreign nations (v 28f.). Anything less can only result in envy and strife, and runs counter to the promise.

(2) when the nations recognize the source of Israel's blessing, they may also come to share in it. This idea seems to fit quite well with some of the prophetic speculation concerning the nations coming to Jerusalem in the last times.⁶³ It also seems to accord with the other narrative transformations examined below.

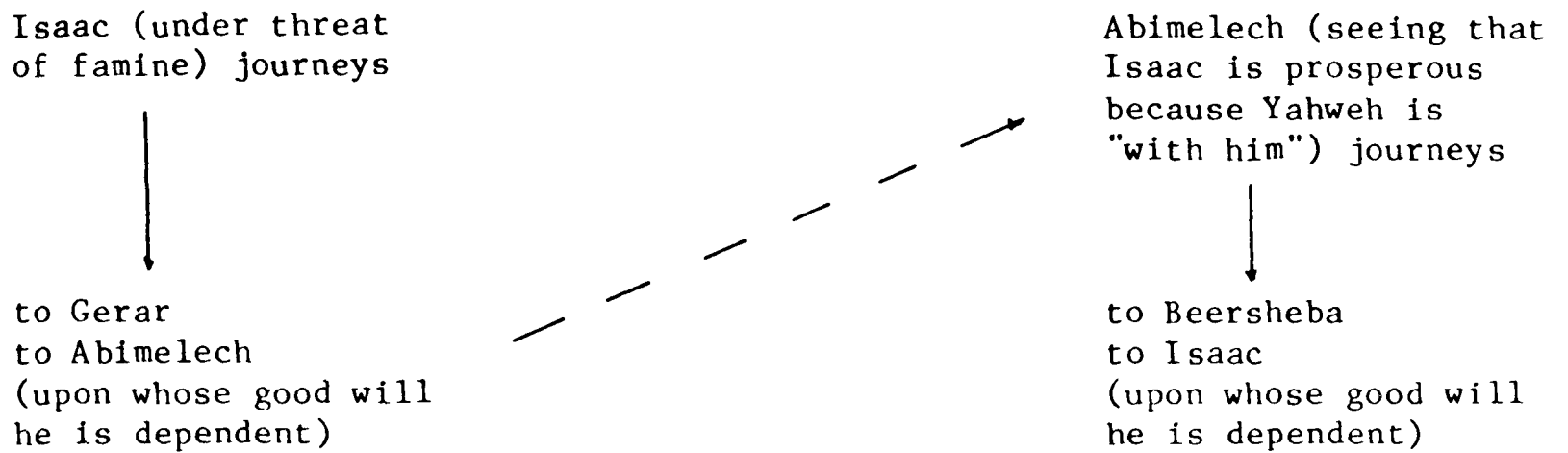
This first transformation is represented by the diagram of Figure 4, where (a) is concerned with the transformation of the blessing referred to in the first part of this discussion, and the eschatological aspects of the transformation are represented in (b) and (c):

Figure 4



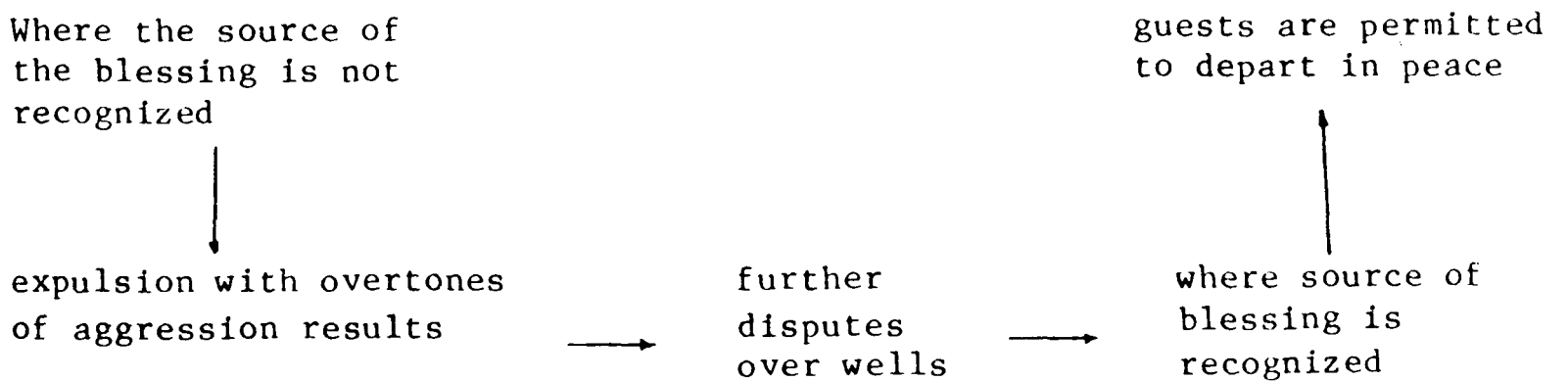
At the beginning of the narrative, Isaac journeys not simply to Gerar, but "to Abimelech, king of the Philistines". Not only to a place, but to a person; a person who will guarantee his security (v 11), who will expel him (v 16), and from whom he will become increasingly distant in a spatial sense until he reaches Beersheba (v 23). At the end of the narrative when Isaac is at Beersheba their roles are reversed: Abimelech travels to Beersheba, to Isaac. In this reversal, it is also possible to detect a transformation of roles and dependence. Isaac, who had begun by being dependent on the good will of Abimelech, which he retained when he might have deserved to lose it (v 11), and later lost through no fault of his own (v 16), becomes the superior of Abimelech who, in turn, becomes dependent on Isaac's good will. This transformation is set out in Figure 5:

Figure 5



The scene depicting the feast and oath shared by Isaac and Abimelech introduces a third transformation. Abimelech's speech expelling Isaac from Gerar carried overtones of threat, perhaps even aggression (v 16). Incidentally, this speech implies that Isaac is already very powerful, and provides insufficient reason why he should so readily accede to his being expelled from productive land where he had become extremely rich. The competition for the possession of water rights depicts further the uneasy relationship between Isaac's people and the Philistines. Yet, at Beersheba, in reply to Isaac's charge of aggression, Abimelech insists that his people have done Isaac "nothing but good" (v 29).⁶⁴ Later, when Isaac dismisses Abimelech and his retinue, "Isaac set them on their way, and they departed in peace" (v 31). In this third transformation (Figure 6), as the direct result of a correct recognition of the source of Isaac's blessing, threat and aggression have been turned into peace.

Figure 6



This examination of the structural transformations which take place in the Isaac narrative has been worthwhile, for it has apparently disclosed a sense of narrative continuity which has not been suspected by form critics. It is too early to say that the kind of interpretation which has been offered above accords closely with the intention of the narrator. The foregoing analysis has not sought to probe the narrator's intention, but has been concerned to provide a careful analysis of the structure of the Isaac narrative and, so far as that structure clarifies it, to say something about its meaning.⁶⁵ It is left to the remaining chapters of Part One of this study to enrich this analysis.

Chapter Two

The Structure of the Individual Episodes

The study of the structure of Gen 26.1-33 has shown that the Isaac narrative is composed of a number of episodes. That study, however, was concerned with the "sense of continuity" present in the narration, and not the individual episodes, either in themselves or simply as an aggregate which takes on the appearance of a single story. Some discussion of those features which imbue the narrative with a measure of coherence was also included. In this Chapter, I shall examine the structure of each episode in order to clarify how it contributes to the course which the story takes. I shall also examine the means whereby the narrative possibility that Isaac's positive experience of blessing should also entail a negative experience for the Philistines has been avoided.¹

By "episode" is meant each narrative unit, whether a single sentence or a more complicated group of sentences, which narrates the entire course of a single "incident"; that is, which relates a story, however brief, comprising a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Of course, each episode must display some evidence of possessing a plot, whereby it achieves a sense of movement, however rudimentary, between beginning and ending.

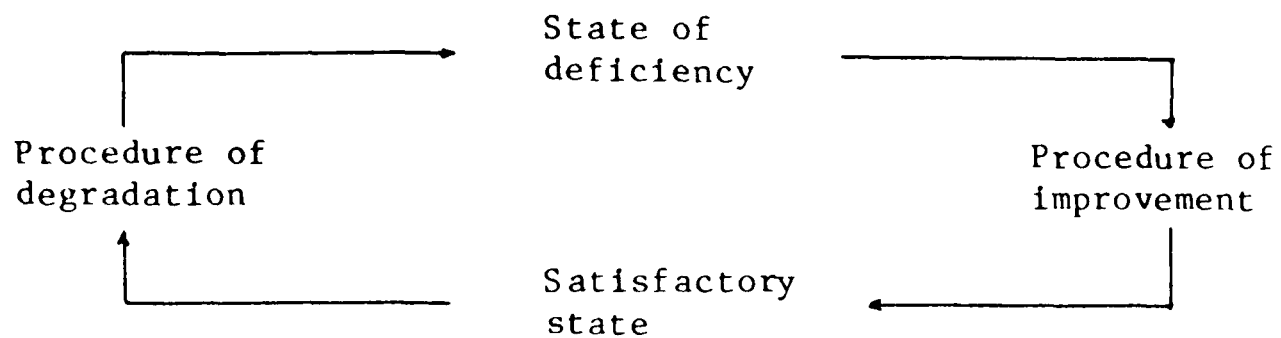
The "episodes" which are discussed here coincide more or less exactly with the "pericopes" which are usually isolated by form-critical analysis.² But I have avoided the term "pericope" in order to distinguish my present goal from that of form criticism.³ My concern is with the mechanics

whereby a particular story-effect has been achieved by the narrator, rather than with the question of aesthetics. The present chapter, therefore, is neither form-critical nor aesthetic in its intent.⁴

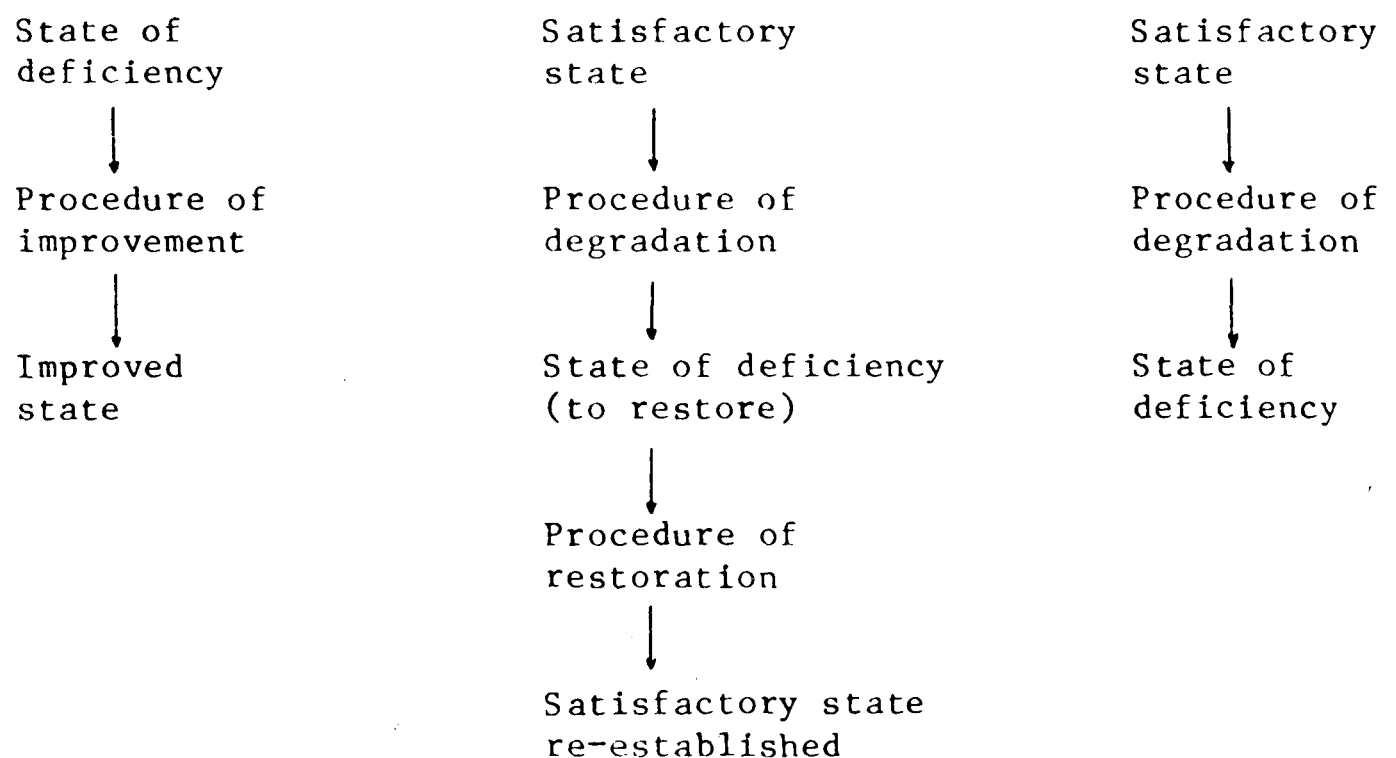
I will use a comparatively simple functional analysis developed by Brémond in connection with his study of the morphology of the French folktale,⁵ and particularly with respect to what he termed "an elementary sequence",⁶ in order to clarify the method whereby the Israelite narrator built up a single narrative out of several episodes. Although this method was developed in relation to the French folktale, it is general enough to be applied to a much wider range of literature.⁷ Thus, although the various episodes narrated in Gen 26.1-3 may not be authentic folktales,⁸ the applicability of Brémond's method need not be questioned.

Brémond's method arises essentially out of the tripartite division of story into beginning, middle, and ending.⁹ Nevertheless, he has focused more clearly upon the essence of the story by implementing a dipolar classification of the functions of beginning, middle, and ending, which constitute the narrative. The first function is that of potential which leads to a procedure, and the determination of that procedure will depend upon whether the initial state (potential) is satisfactory or deficient. The second function actualizes this potentiality by means of a procedure of improvement (deficient initial state), or by a procedure of degradation (satisfactory initial state). Brémond notes, that in the case of the French fairy-tale, the story "ends usually with the establishment or re-establishment of a satisfactory state".¹⁰ The third function "terminates the procedure by confirmation of its achievement".¹¹ He also notes that beside each function there is the possibility of contrary choice.¹² Complex sequences are produced by a combination of elementary sequences.¹³

Brémond constructs a cyclic diagram to illustrate the course which a simple brief narrative, such as the French fairy-tale, might take:¹⁴



The most general diagrams of such narratives may be constructed from the following three patterns:¹⁵



Although the whole of Gen 26.1-33 might be susceptible to an analysis in terms of Brémond's "complex sequence", I do not think that the exercise would prove worthwhile. First of all, the initial state of deficiency indicated by the narrative is "famine" (v 1), whereas the final stage is concerned with the establishment of a peace-treaty between Isaac and Abimelech, beside which the naming of the well at Beersheba (vv 32-33) is more or less incidental. This lack of exact correspondence between beginning and ending of the narrative probably indicates that it does not

readily conform to Brémond's model of a "complex sequence". Second, the analysis of Chapter One has already suggested that the aim of the narrative is to provide Isaac with a blessing which is not won at Abimelech's expense but is precisely for Abimelech's benefit as well as Isaac's.¹⁶ In examining the means whereby this result is effected, a study of the individual episodic units which uses a technique based on Brémond's analysis may prove helpful. In several cases, however, the sequence will be examined twice, so that the narrative process is illuminated with respect to Abimelech (and his representatives) as well as Isaac (and his representatives). These analyses are neither form-critical nor source-critical, but subdivide an extended and complex narrative into the several episodes of which it consists, and examine the structure of each of these episodes, before attempting to discern what relationship, if any, might exist among them. In these analyses, episodes which end with an improved state will be termed "comic", while those end in the reverse state of degradation will be termed "tragic".¹⁷

a) **Analysis of the Individual Episodes:** The proper definition of the scope of the first episode provides an initial difficulty.¹⁸ Should the episode concerned with the Patriarch, his wife, and the foreign ruler, be limited to vv 7-11, or should the discussion of this episode also deal with some of the earlier verses, particularly v 1, which after all provides the motivation for Isaac's being at Gerar? And does this imply that the first episode to be examined should be the whole of vv 1-11?

I have divided Gen 26.1-11 after v 6 for two reasons. First, the division is necessary on grounds of economy; vv 1-11 resemble a complex rather than an elementary narrative sequence. To examine the structure of

vv 1-11 would burden the analysis unnecessarily by forcing it to take account of the conjunction of two separate episodes, even if the plot of vv 1-6 is ill-defined. And second, v 1, with its motivation for the journey to Gerar, also functions as a connecting piece with some of the Abraham narratives, and so is a special case since it performs functions both internal and external to the Isaac narrative. It indicates why the opening scene takes place at Gerar and not Beersheba, Beer-lahai-roi, or even Egypt. It also indicates that the story which follows ought to be compared with other versions of the wife-sister incident.¹⁹ Although this last circumstance might suggest that vv 1-11 is the section which should be considered, the argument does not seem sufficiently compelling to sustain the conclusion that vv 1-11 should not be divided at v 6.²⁰

1. Genesis 26.1-6:

State of deficiency	Process of Improvement	Improved State
famine	a) journey to Gerar]	Isaac remains in Gerar
	b) divine promise/]	
	command to remain]	
	in Gerar]	

The analysis does not greatly illuminate the structure of this episode, nor does the improved state which is described here correspond well to the initial problem. It does not really explain why remaining in Gerar should be considered an improvement, except that it is a fulfilment of the divine command. In journeying to Gerar, Isaac has entered into a relationship with Abimelech of inferior to superior, which is hardly an improvement.²¹ Another difficulty is that these verses, which contain a complex series of promises made by Yahweh to Isaac, are chiefly the vehicle for an account of a theophany. Yet a general movement from unsatisfactory state to satisfactory state is discernible, even if the sense in which the

final state is satisfactory is a little ambiguous. In this ambiguity lies the possibility of a state of deficiency which becomes apparent at the beginning of the next episode (vv 7-11), and which provides for the ongoing nature of the story. Although the reader has to make the assumption that the journey to Gerar permits Isaac to avoid the rigours of famine (the initial unsatisfactory state), sufficient improvement is evidenced in the situation at the end of v 6 to permit the tentative description of this episode as "comedy".

2. Genesis 26.7-11:

State of Deficiency	Process of Improvement	Goal or Result
Isaac in danger	[Isaac perpetrates a [deception	[of the deception is [(ambiguous) safety
	[<u>Opposition</u> Abimelech [discovers Isaac's [deception	[<u>Result</u> by paradox, [safety is mediated [by discovery of [deception

The result of Isaac's deception has been defined as "(ambiguous) safety" because it implies the possibility of danger for Rebekah as well as for the Philistines.

It is clear that the transformations which occur within this episode are not exhausted by this simple, but important, reading of the narrative process. Isaac's deception brings about a further state of deficiency which places the people of Gerar, quite innocently for their part, into a dangerous situation. It should therefore be possible to construct another diagram in which the same elements which gave substance to the Process of Improvement and the Opposition in the previous diagram are again utilized, but this time in reverse:

State of Deficiency	Process of Improvement	Goal or Result
People of Gerar unknowingly in danger because of Isaac's deception	[Abimelech accidentally [discovers Isaac's [deception [<u>Opposition</u> Isaac's [deception	[to ensure the safety [of the people from [incurring guilt [<u>Result</u> the deception [is neutralized

From the point of view of both Isaac and the people of Gerar, a state of deficiency has been transformed into a satisfactory state. As a result of Abimelech's edict (v 11), Isaac need no longer fear for his own or Rebekah's safety, and the Philistines are no longer in danger of incurring guilt through one of them forming an adulterous relationship with Rebekah. Thus, from whichever perspective the narrative is examined, it evidences a "comic" structure. Two features in particular demand closer appreciation. The use of paradox, as the means whereby safety is mediated to Isaac, demonstrates that his real safety lies in the discovery of the deception rather than its maintenance, and ensures that there are no losers in the story. Isaac may suffer a degree of discomfort when the deception is discovered, but on the whole everything works out for the benefit of both parties. This use of paradox works hand in hand with the existence of the second structure which mirrors the first to produce a fine and complicated example of comedy within the context of a most economic use of words.

3. Genesis 26.12-16:

Satisfactory State	Process of degradation	State of deficiency
Isaac is very rich and successful, having been blessed by Yahweh	[a) jealousy of the [Philistines (gives [rise to antagonism) [[b) antagonism disclosed [in the filling in of [Abraham's wells	[expulsion of Isaac by [Abimelech [<u>Paradox:</u> ability of [Abimelech to expel one [who has become so [great and powerful

Isaac's position deteriorates in this episode, despite a satisfactory initial state. It begins with Isaac becoming immensely rich. The grain which he sowed produced an hundredfold, and he amassed great flocks and herds as well as a large household of servants. The narrator credits Isaac's success to Yahweh's blessing him, but it excites the envy of the Philistines, and the story ends with his expulsion from Gerar, when he abandons the land upon which he had become so rich. The Philistine envy which initiates this downward trend is also evident in the antagonism which had already filled with dust the wells dug in the previous generation by the servants of Abraham. The structure of this episode must therefore be termed "tragic", although Isaac's position will deteriorate further.

Two further observations should be made. First, although it is stated explicitly that Isaac had been blessed by Yahweh, neither Isaac nor his Philistine opponents recognize Yahweh as the source of his wealth and blessing.²² Perhaps the narrator intended to imply that where the source of the blessing goes unrecognized there can only be tragic, or adverse, consequences. Tragic for Isaac in that he has been expelled from the land from which he had derived great wealth, and for the Philistines in that they have expelled the man of blessing from their midst. Second, in permitting the expulsion, Isaac has accepted his inferiority to Abimelech. In failing to recognize the blessing of Yahweh, Isaac fails also to recognize that he is already, at least potentially, Abimelech's superior, and so his tragedy is that he has lost his place in the land where Yahweh has blessed him (v 12) and made him powerful (v 16).²³

4. Genesis 26.17-22: This narrative unit is more difficult to define in terms of "comic" and "tragic" structures. So far as its conclusion describes a satisfactory state, the overall effect is comic. An initial

difficulty arises, however, in the fact that the narrative has no real beginning: it contains no substantial narrative description of an initial state, satisfactory or otherwise. Instead, the narrator depends on his reader-hearer's possession of tacit knowledge of Isaac's present condition, particularly his recent expulsion from Gerar. Otherwise the unit consists simply of a series of notices concerning the digging of wells along with a brief description of the events subsequent to their digging. Perhaps the beginning of the sequence narrated here should be described as a continued deterioration rather than a relatively more static state of deficiency. In fact, this brief unit succeeds in intensifying the comic effect at the end of the sequence. It also heightens the element of suspense by prefacing the comic element with two brief notices which contain elements of tragedy, and which function structurally by developing the previous tragic episode (vv 12-16) into something of a downward spiral.

This last observation confirms indirectly the view expressed above that these disputes over the possession of wells are employed to set Isaac at a distance, both spatial and temporal, from Gerar,²⁴ and that they therefore function as a kind of bridge between those events which are said to have happened at Gerar and those which will take place at Beersheba. They also express an uneasy, and aggressive, relationship between the representatives of Isaac and Abimelech.

In essence, the sequence of the digging of the three wells, the disputes concerning water rights, and the moving on of Isaac's party following the digging of each of the first two wells, along with the lack of conflict over the third well, might be said to provide a sequence of structures, two tragic and one comic, which have been absorbed into a single sequence which functions effectively in terms of comedy.

The Structural Sequence:

digging of well -- dispute -- secession of well (and moving on)
 digging of well -- dispute -- secession of well and moving on
 digging of well -- no dispute -- possession of well (but also moving on)

Although the narrator does not include a specific notice to the effect that Isaac and his people moved on after the secession of Esek (v 20), one can hardly suppose a precise geographical identification existed between Esek and Sitnah. Even if the distance between the two wells was very small, probably some movement is implied, even if it were a matter of yards rather than miles.

State of deficiency	Process of improvement	Satisfactory state
continued antagonism disclosed in the disputing of wells	[through moving on from [one location to another, [Isaac comes to a place [where his possession of [a well is not contested	[a) cessation of [disputes over wells [b) possession of a [water supply in [secured

At this stage, when control of water supply and grazing rights have been won, Isaac and his group move on to Beersheba. But the purpose of this movement has nothing to do with the preceding disputes. Neither is the move to Beersheba closely related to the structure of the narrative unit which has been discussed immediately above. Nevertheless, it may be noted that for the narrator of Gen 26.1-33 Beersheba is the goal towards which Isaac must be led. It is worth considering whether, now that Isaac is about to receive the divine promise again, the narrator positions him in Beersheba so that he might receive the theophany at a recognized Israelite holy place.²⁵ Moreover, Beersheba is the only place of revelation common to all three Patriarchs.²⁶

At another level, in terms of the narrative of Gen 26.1-33 considered as a single story, the move to Beersheba may be intended to provide some kind of balance of two wells each for the Philistines and Isaac. A story which provided two wells for the Philistines and only one for Isaac might have been thought unsatisfactory by an Israelite audience. At any rate, when one relates all the parts of the narrative to the whole, the arrival at this location must be considered an important moment in the story since it signals not only the place where Yahweh will appear to Isaac, but the place where the climax of the whole story of Isaac in his relationship with the Philistines will take place.²⁷

5. Genesis 26.26-33: Leaving aside for the moment the brief account of the theophany and promise at Beersheba (vv 23-25), the structure of Gen 26.26-33 must now be examined. Once again the structure is complicated by paradox, and this time the paradox is contained in the first part of the episode. When Abimelech comes to him at Beersheba, Isaac assumes that his visit implies a threat against his own wellbeing, for Abimelech's retinue includes his commander-in-chief as well as his closest adviser. The paradox is disclosed, however, when Abimelech reveals the reason for his visit. He views the fact that Yahweh is with Isaac, and Isaac's continued good fortune, as a threat, and he has come to forestall the threat by making a treaty with Isaac. Presumably he believes that by such means he can also enter into a relationship with Yahweh, although indirectly, through his association with Isaac. This mutual threat is resolved in the shared feast and the oath which constitute a process of improvement for both parties so that, for the first time, their leavetaking is an entirely satisfactory affair.

Once again a comic structure underlies the episode. Here, as in Gen 26.7-11, the introduction of paradox has brought about an improved state of affairs for both protagonists.

State of deficiency	Process of improvement	Satisfactory state
a) visit of Abimelech which Isaac assumes to be a threat	[Abimelech's speech -- [offering of contract -- [feast and oath -- [Isaac's acceptance of [the contract	[Abimelech and his [retinue depart in [peace [[(Isaac's servants [report find of [water)
b) for Abimelech and the Philistines, Isaac is a threat	[Isaac's acceptance of [Abimelech's offer	[Threat removed by [feast and oath -- [peace established

b) The Theophany in Genesis 26: The Isaac narrative includes two episodes which tell of Yahweh appearing to the Patriarch in order to make certain promises to him (vv 1-6, 24-25). Although these theophanies appear to have an important structural function for the narrative as a whole,²⁸ unlike the other episodes which have been analysed in this chapter, they do not appear to fulfil any clearly defined tragic or comic function. The reason for this is that the narration of theophany which consists almost entirely of one character addressing another is much more static than the narration of action or events.²⁹ As a result, Gen 26.23-25 simply does not respond to the type of analysis applied to the other episodes of the Isaac narrative, while, in the case of vv 1-6, the state of deficiency indicated by the initial clause, ויהי רעב בארץ, barely permits the reader to understand Isaac's response (v' 6) as an improved state.

The first theophany is set within a framework which tells of Isaac going to the Philistine king Abimelech at Gerar in time of famine (v 1) and settling there (v 6). In vv 2-5 Yahweh appears to him, commands him to remain where he is and addresses a number of promises to him (vv 2-5).

Although auditory rather than visionary phenomena are certainly of primary importance,³⁰ I would not trace the narrator's failure to describe the appearance of the deity to his knowledge that he would have to cope with the ineffable,³¹ but to a relative lack of interest in the appearance of characters compared with an all-pervasive interest in their actions and speech. It seems to me, especially in the patriarchal stories concerning Abraham and Isaac, that the use of the niph'al of the verb הָאֵל was more or less a formal requirement of narrative prior to the report of first person divine speech,³² although such speech did not require accompanying description.³³ It might even be that an authenticating description of the theophany was considered less necessary in the narrative presentation of the experiences of the Patriarchs, located as they are in ancient times, than, say, in the report authenticating a prophet's calling.³⁴

The theophany reported at vv 1-6 consists of the following elements:

1. change of location (v 1)
2. the appearance of Yahweh to Isaac (v 2a)
3. admonition [to sojourn where he was rather than go to Egypt] (v 2b-3a)
4. complex group of promises guaranteed by Abraham's behaviour (v3b-5)
5. response [Isaac remained in Gerar] (v 6)

It is perhaps significant that the change of location reported in v 1 takes Isaac outside "the land" to the Philistine city of Gerar.³⁵ When Yahweh appears to him at Gerar he does not respond by building an altar as he does following the theophany at Beersheba, and this may indicate that the author thought it inappropriate for him to worship Yahweh outside of "the land".

An examination of the second theophany (vv 23-25) reveals a structure similar to that of the first, although the admonition, which is reduced to the command "Fear not", is preceded by a self-identification formula. It also differs from the first with respect to the extent and content of the divine speech which in vv 2-5 it is long and complicated, but in v 24 is quite terse. Even so, both accounts are introduced by the formula, (ויאמר), וירא אליו יהוה, and both immediately follow a change of location:

v 1 ויֵלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל אָבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים גֵּרָרָה
v 23 וַיֵּצֵא מִשָּׁם בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע

Verse 24 does not refer to the promise of land,³⁶ and this omission may be deliberate since the narrator emphasises that the theophany occurred on the night of Isaac's arrival at Beersheba; that is, as he re-enters the land associated with the promise. So far as the circumstances narrated in the preceding narrative may be interpreted as Yahweh's leading Isaac to the place where he must dwell, this theophany fulfils the earlier commandment-promise: (26.2) שָׁכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֵלֶיךָ. The function of the divine speech as fulfilment as well as promise is made explicit in the change of language from וְאֶהְיֶה לְעִמְךָ to כִּי אֶתְּךָ אֲנִכִי. The promise is now referred to as a present rather than future reality.

The theophany therefore has two different functions in Genesis 26:

- 1) It indicates that the deity is with the Patriarch in his wanderings. Yahweh is not tied to one location; it is his nature to "be with" (v 3; v 24) the wanderer. Hence the emphasis on this element of the promise, and interest in its fulfilment.
- 2) The fact that Isaac is now within the land of promise, at Beersheba, an Israelite holy place rather than a Philistine city, permits him to respond appropriately to the theophany by building an altar (v 25).

c) The "Episodes" and the "Isaac Narrative": I began this study of the structure of the individual episodic units by repeating an earlier observation that it is in their "sense of continuity", and not as an aggregate of individual stories, that these several episodes constitute the "Isaac narrative". It is appropriate to say something here about the way in which these units achieve that sense of being interconnected and avoid the appearance of being only loosely connected.³⁷

The above analyses demonstrate that, whatever else is constituted by the narrative of Gen 26.1-33, the narrator has done more than present all that he knew about Isaac, strung loosely together on the thematic thread of "Isaak und die Leute von Gerar".³⁸ Such a view is based on a deficient estimate of the narrative connections between these several episodes, and fails completely to appreciate the portrayal of the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech (and their respective groups) in such a way as would ultimately benefit both parties.

The means whereby this effect has been achieved is represented in the diagram below. I have attempted to illustrate the course which is followed by the affairs of Isaac and/or his people on the one hand, and by Abimelech and/or the Philistines on the other. The positive (+) and negative (-) signs reflect "comic" and "tragic" structures respectively, and each of the sequences discerned in vv 17-22 is represented. Where there is no evident interest in Abimelech and his people, an oblique line has been drawn.

Unit	vv 1-6	vv 7-11	vv 12-16	vv 17-22			vv 23-25	vv 26-33
Isaac	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	+ +
Abimelech/ Philistines	(-)	+	+	+	+	(+)	/	+

In two cases the evaluation of the structural movement from the point of view of "Abimelech/Philistines" has been set in parenthesis, because the narrative is not entirely clear on these points. On the whole, however, Isaac's coming to Gerar seems to carry a negative connotation for the Philistines since he is potentially dangerous, an outsider who dwells among them as a λ . On the other hand, the discovery of the well at Rehoboth carries a potentially positive connotation for the Philistines since they need no longer fear encroachment by Isaac's herdsmen. A positive value for Isaac has been indicated with respect to the theophany at Beersheba,³⁹ but no corresponding value has been indicated for "Abimelech/Philistines" since this unit (vv 23-25) has been narrated without reference to them.⁴⁰

Another indication of the connectedness of these episodes is provided by the way each successive unit demands a certain amount of tacit knowledge which must be derived from the previous unit(s) in order that the reader should make sense of its beginning. The phrase $\text{וַיְהִי רֵגֶב בְּאֶרֶץ}$ provides a suitable introduction for a story (v 1; cf. 12.10). Yet even with this beginning there is included a note which anchors the story firmly within the patriarchal tradition by referring to the former famine of Abraham's time. This beginning perhaps suggests the deliberate dependence of one story on the other.⁴¹ At any rate, a story could begin with such an introduction. The audience need demand no spatial reference other than "the land". It is doubtful, however, whether as much could be argued for the introductions to any of the other narrative units. In the second unit, v 7 demands knowledge that "that place" was Gerar. Similarly in v 12 the phrase "the land" requires closer identification, since the Hebrew construction בְּאֶרֶץ הַקְּוֹא appears to imply that Isaac sowed in a particular land, but that land may be identified as the region around Gerar only with

reference to the narrative context. Precisely the same point must be made with respect to $\square\psi\mathcal{D}$ which is used in the introduction to each of the following two units (vv 17, 23). Finally, with respect to the last unit (vv 26-33), the destination of Abimelech and his retinue requires clarification which is gained only by referring back to v 23, and indeed the whole of Gen 26.1-25 provides a motive for his journey.

Arguably the coherence of the Isaac narrative might have derived from a redactor having smoothed out previously independent units into a coherent whole by manipulating the locations to which they refer. Yet the degree of coherence which has been detected among the various episodes disallows any argument that the theme "Isaac and the people of Gerar" simply provides a suitable narrative thread for the arrangement of previously independent Isaac stories. The unity of the narrative which was disclosed in Chapter One above seems to lie at a deeper level, and is not simply a redactor's cosmetic which glosses over inconsistencies. Several instances of interdependence among the various units of Gen 26.1-33 were noted there. First, the fact that the narrator discusses throughout a series of episodes the changing nature of the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech (and their representatives) must be allowed as evidence of unity. Second, a number of narrative transformations discussed above appear to confirm the narrator's interest in that relationship. And third, time after time, a genuine concern for the welfare of the Philistines emerges, and in the working out of that concern the narrative is entirely consistent.

One area which deserves further consideration is the development of the role played by Yahweh. At the beginning of the story Yahweh appears to Isaac to make a number of promises to him. Apart from the fact that Isaac is said to have dwelt at Gerar, apparently in obedience to Yahweh's

command, there is little evidence that either promise or commandment deeply affected the early course of the narrative. In a sense, Isaac is preserved in spite of himself; for the deception he perpetrates is not a fitting response to the divine promise. Isaac succeeds only in involving himself in an ambiguous situation from which he is delivered, ironically enough, by being found out. Here Isaac persists in acting as though the promise had not been made, and the deity takes no immediate initiative to bless him.

In the second episode, Isaac is blessed by Yahweh. Neither he nor the Philistines, however, recognize Yahweh as the source of the blessing and he is expelled by Abimelech from the land where he has been blessed. Although Yahweh remains in the background throughout the incidents at Esek and Sitnah, a turning point appears at Rehoboth where Isaac attributes the finding of water to Yahweh's intervention, and anticipates the further fulfilment of the divine promise (v 22). Indeed, it is not impossible to consider that the expansion which Isaac anticipates in this verse must include the expansion of his family as well as his fortune. The lack of specific reference to his children is certainly one of the most puzzling features of the narrative, but if there is a sense in which the wife-sister episode threatens the promise of progeny, it may not be too fanciful to find a reference to the prospect of progeny in Isaac's joyful speech.

Following Isaac's acknowledgement of the deity's help, Yahweh appears to him for the second time, repeating certain elements of the promise (vv 23-25). It may be significant that v 25 reads as if indicating that Isaac not only worships at Beersheba, but makes the place his more or less permanent dwelling. The narrative states that he pitched his tent there, and his servants dug a well, within the land of promise.

It is only after Isaac has recognized Yahweh's intervention (v 22) and worshipped him (v 25) that the Philistines also recognize his activity on Isaac's behalf (v 28). Their motive, that they desire to participate in the blessing by making a treaty with Isaac, has been noted above.⁴² The narrative therefore seems to portray the growing awareness of both Isaac and Abimelech that Yahweh has participated in events to Isaac's benefit. Independently, their attitudes move from a failure to acknowledge that intervention at the beginning to an open confession of it towards the end.

d) Concluding Remarks: The analyses of the individual episodes provide a supplementary account of the structure of Gen 26.1-33. The Isaac narrative has been considered as a series of brief episodes which display either comic or tragic structures. In that the final episode is "comic", so too is the overall effect. This arrangement of comic and tragic structures in sequence, however, does not provide an entirely satisfactory account of the overall structure of Gen 26.1-33, but has provided a number of clues which promote a deeper understanding of the narrative.

First, there is an element of ambiguity, arising out of the attempt to examine the point of view of both parties, whether the structure of certain episodes is tragic or comic. Thus, for example, vv 12-16 have a tragic structure when viewed from Isaac's side, but not from a Philistine perspective. Again, the sequence of vv 20, 21 is tragic for Isaac, but comic for the Philistines, even if the entire unit (vv 16-22) provides a satisfactory conclusion for both parties. At no stage do the Philistines experience a tragic episode, but there are episodes which appear to be hardly concerned with them (vv 2-5; 22; 23-25; 32-33). This ambiguity, however, does not lie at a very deep level, and since Isaac (or his

representative) is always the main character, it is certainly correct to consider his point of view primary for interpretation.

Second, just as the proper analysis of the initial function of an episode often depends upon information given by a previous episode, a comic episode need not present an entirely satisfactory ending (or a tragic episode an entirely unsatisfactory one). The improved state at the end of one episode may still represent a deficiency which is improved on in the next. Thus Isaac's staying at Gerar where food is presumably available to him (v 6) seems to indicate an improvement over his former famished state, but it entails his assuming the disadvantaged position of a resident alien (גֵר) in Gerar which in turn arouses fear for his personal safety. And later, when this fear is resolved, the protection afforded by Abimelech against physical danger (v 11) does not preclude envy (v 14). In the same way, the climax of a tragic sequence need not imply that every degradation has been experienced. Thus, after the expulsion from the environs of Gerar (v 16), Isaac is to suffer further reverses (vv 20, 21) before the situation improves (v 22).

Consequently, in a structural sequence of the kind which has been examined above, the story is always open to continuation. The sequence might be reversed, or intensified, but the story continues through a number of episodes.

Third, in Genesis 26, the story has been concluded effectively by the aetiology for Beersheba in v 32f., for this aetiology provides a form of punctuation which appears at no other stage in the narrative. The Philistines have been ushered off-stage at v 31, and only the memory of the treaty with them is retained in the naming of the well. In short, the

inclusion of the aetiology at this point underlines the fact that the narrative has attained its desired conclusion.⁴³

Fourth, the theophany constitutes an important structuring device in terms of the narrative as a whole, and occurs at two decisive points in the story (vv 2-5; 23-25). First, when Isaac leaves "the land" and goes to Gerar, and second, when he returns to "the land", to Beersheba. The second theophany evokes worship, but the first apparently does not. The second occurs immediately after Isaac first confessed that he had experienced the divine favour. Thus the narrative implies that it is tragically possible to hear the divine promise and to continue to live one's life as if the promise had not been given.⁴⁴ This is precisely what Isaac did in Gerar when he resorted to deception. And he continued in this folly when he failed to recognize that his early prosperity was the fulfilment of the promise of blessing.⁴⁵

Fifth, although the structural analyses of the individual narrative units do not account for the kind of narrative transformations which were discussed in Chapter One above, they afford an important clue in that direction. By using paradox, the narrator has ensured that Abimelech and his people do not lose seriously as a result of the good fortune enjoyed by Isaac. Yet he has successfully ordered the episodic units in such a way that Isaac's ascent is achieved at a greater rate than Abimelech's, and this despite the fact that Isaac has several adverse experiences whereas Abimelech does not. Initially, Isaac's status is inferior to Abimelech's, but ultimately he is superior. It is this simple fact which gives structure to the overarching story, and the desired result is achieved by arranging the episodes around a journey from Gerar to Beersheba, and by inserting the two theophanies into the story in order to

assert Yahweh's intention in relation to the narrated events. It is precisely at the beginning, in the reference to the famine, that the story is most obviously artificially contrived. The famine is nothing more than a narrative device to get Isaac out of "the land" to Gerar.⁴⁶

These analyses of the structure of the individual episodes have helped to demonstrate how they operate within the whole. At the same time, they have shown that the ability of the larger narrative structure of Gen 26.1-33 to generate meaning is greater than the sum of its parts.

Chapter Three

Genesis 26.1-33: The Narrative Background

The literary-structural analysis of Chapter One focused on the Isaac narrative as a self-contained unit. Although specific references to Abraham were considered,¹ the analysis was based principally on information contained in Gen 26.1-33. But the Isaac narrative also has a context in the Patriarchal Narrative and contains a whole array of allusions to events which have already been narrated in Genesis 12-25. The events, names and places alluded to may be said to form a background which casts its shadow over Gen 26.1-33 and thus enriches the reading of the text.

Recurring motifs fulfil different functions depending upon context, however, and context changes as the story proceeds. For example, the motif of the Patriarch who represents his wife as his sister to foreigners occurs three times in Genesis. When it first occurs at Gen 12.10-20 it is without narrative analogy, and its context early in the Abraham story has some bearing on how it is understood. When it next occurs in Genesis 20, the story may be read not only in relation to its context, but against the earlier incident. And finally in Gen 26.7-11, the story may be read, not only in relation to its context, but against both of the previous versions. This procedure permits a careful comparison of the three stories in order to identify those respects in which they are identical as well as those in which they differ.²

My concern here is not simply with the comparison of doublets. It is more precisely with the way that the Abrahamic doublets not only stand in the background of the Isaac narrative but also affect our perception of it. The analysis of narrative precedents permits a careful discrimination between Isaac's actions and Abraham's, and that should lead to a more exact interpretation. I call this procedure "narrative background".³ I shall now examine Genesis 12-25 in order to expose the narrative background most appropriate to Gen 26.1-33.⁴ To this purpose, I shall trace a number of trajectories through Genesis 12-25 rather than attempt a complete literary analysis of these chapters.⁵

a) The Divine Promise to the Patriarchs: The Abraham story begins with a divine command and a promise (Gen 12.1-3): Abraham is commanded by Yahweh to make a new beginning, leaving behind his country, kinsmen, and immediate family. In addition to the promise of guidance to "a land that I will show you", Yahweh makes several other promises to him.⁶ He will found a great nation, will be blessed, will receive a great name, and $\text{לְכָל־עַמֵּי־הָאָרֶץ}$ will be blessed according to their relationship with him. The fulfilment of these promises depends upon Abraham obeying the command, which he does immediately.⁷ At Shechem, Yahweh again appears to him to promise "this land" to his descendants, and in response Abraham builds an altar there (12.7).⁸ He then journeys in stages from Shechem to the Negeb, building another altar between Bethel and Ai, and worshipped there.⁹

Gen 12.1-9 therefore covers the events from Abraham's call out of Haran down to his travelling into the Negeb.¹⁰ It comprises an audition (vv 1-3), a note of Abraham's response (v 4), reference to his arrival at Shechem along with the theophany, promise, and altar building there (vv 6-

7), and an account of his further progress and altar building as far as the Negeb (vv 8-9). Further, a notice detailing the retinue which accompanied Abraham on his journey from Haran is included at v 5 (P). All this precedes an account of the first of Abraham's "faithless" acts, his attempt to deceive the Egyptians by claiming that Sarah was his sister (vv 10-20).

The story of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt stands in some tension with vv 1-9, for his going there apparently takes him outside the area promised in 12.1. Abraham's lie results in Sarah's being taken into Pharaoh's harem and his receiving great wealth in return for her. But a plague inflicted by Yahweh on Pharaoh's household leads to her restoration, and the couple are given a military escort from Egypt. Neither Lot nor the wealth Abraham had accumulated in Haran (cf. 12.5) are mentioned in vv 10-20.

In chapter 13, after tensions between Lot and Abraham lead to their parting, Abraham receives another audition (vv 14-17). He is told that all the land he can see will become his and his descendants' possession, and to walk through the length and breadth of the land which Yahweh will give him. Abraham's response includes a change of location, and a notice of altar building (v 18).

These two chapters form a prologue to the Patriarchal Narrative, and on the whole their content is quite unlike that of succeeding chapters. Material similar to that noted in 12.1-9 is also found in 13.1-4; 14-19, and together these pieces, which function in some sense as an itinerary and so take Abraham quickly through several different locations, form a sort of inclusio around two units which are much more storylike in appearance.

The two stories (Gen 12.10-20; 13.5-13) are echoed later in Genesis. The wife sister episode is retold in a different context (Genesis 20), and the Lot narrative is resumed and completed in Genesis 19. This reversal of the order in which the stories are taken up, as well as the different ways in which they have been resumed, is evidence of the care with which many of the patriarchal narratives have been arranged.¹¹ Gen 13.5-13 prepares for Genesis 19 in two distinct ways. First, v 12 reports how Lot settled near Sodom, a city known for the wickedness of its inhabitants (v 13). This report foreshadows the enormity of the Sodomite's offence and their destruction at Gen 19.1-26.¹² And second, Abraham's speech to Lot (v 8) appeals for peace between themselves and their retainers on account of their kinship. In Gen 19.30-36 there is no condemnation of the incest between Lot and his daughters, and it is possible that the avowal of good will at 13.8 has paved the way for this tolerant attitude.

Genesis 14 stands apart from the material which precedes it in matters of style and content.¹³ The presentation of Abraham in martial guise and Melchizedek's recognition that he deserves divine blessing (vv 17-20) should both be noted. In chapter 15, where the promise theme is restated, there is an account of a covenant between Yahweh and Abraham. The passage reflects on the possibility of the promise being fulfilled. Abraham complains about his continuing lack of an heir (v 3) and his landless state (v 8), and receives a measure of assurance on both counts. To the promise of an heir (v 4) is added the promise of progeny as great in number as the stars (v 5). But there is also the prospect of four hundred years of exile between Abraham's time and possession of the land (vv 13-16).¹⁴

In Genesis 16 the divine promise is addressed to Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian maid (v 14), and concerns her unborn son Ishmael.¹⁵ This story

impinges on the narrative background of Gen 26.1-33 so far as it tells of the Patriarch's attempt to circumvent the problem of his childlessness and introduces a possible rival to the promised heir.¹⁶

Chapter 13 ended with Abraham encamped by the terebinths of Mamre at Hebron (v 18), and this location is resumed at 18.1 where it is suggested that in meeting with three strangers Abraham also encountered the deity.¹⁷ The promise of an heir is repeated and Abraham is assured that conception is immanent (v 10). In a second scene, Abraham and Yahweh debate the destruction of Sodom (vv 16-33). This scene also includes a reference to the promise in an aside which Yahweh addresses to himself (vv 17-19).

At Gerar (Gen 20.1-18), by again perpetrating the deception that Sarah is his sister, Abraham threatens the promise that she will bear his son. This time his victim is the king Abimelech, but again the plan fails. When the issue is settled, Abimelech invites Abraham to settle (גור) wherever he wishes in his land. So far as Abraham, in the final form of Genesis, does not move on before Isaac's birth, that event is associated with Gerar.¹⁸

When Abraham's heir is finally born (Gen 21.1-3), his conception is attributed to Yahweh's favour (רפד) towards Sarah (v 1). Thus the notice of birth is linked explicitly to the promise narrative of Genesis 18. Isaac's birth, however, leads to further strife between Sarah and her maid which results in Hagar and her son being expelled by Abraham (Gen 21.9-21).

The promise is again addressed to Abraham at the end of the story of the "sacrifice of Isaac" (Gen 22),¹⁹ where the promise is mediated by the angel of Yahweh.²⁰ This passage (vv 15-18) holds the key to understanding how the promise theme functions in Genesis: the fulfilment of the promise is to be founded on Abraham's obedience in not withholding his son. Here

the promise becomes unconditional, precisely because the only condition laid down is a past event. In vv 16-18, the role played by Abraham is stressed both at the beginning and at the end of the divine speech, and the speech is underwritten by the deity's oath (v 16). The theme of Abraham's obedience surfaces elsewhere in his response to the initial divine command (Gen 12.4), and the highly reflective chapter 15 speaks of his placing his trust in Yahweh (v 6),²¹ although in other narratives his actions seem to jeopardize the fulfilment of the promise (e.g. Gen 12.10-20; 20.1-18).

Gen 26.1-33 contains two divine speeches (vv 2-5; 24), and the first, in which the oath sworn to Abraham guarantees the promise to Isaac, refers back to Gen 22.16-18. Similarly, in v 24, the promise is made "for the sake of Abraham my servant". In the Abraham narrative up to 22.16-18, the Patriarch's disobedience might prevent the fulfilment of the promise, but this possibility is removed for later generations because of Abraham's obedience. Clearly a distinction must be made between the function of the promise in the Abraham and Isaac narratives respectively. The fulfilment of the promise may still be delayed by any unfaithful response, but because of its now unconditional nature a final miscarriage is out of the question.

Although the theme of promise continues through the Jacob narratives, and even into the Joseph story (Gen 46.2-4), it is unnecessary so far as constructing a narrative background to Gen 26.1-33 is concerned to examine every reference to the promise here.²² It is sufficient to notice that in the Isaac narrative the fulfilment of the promise is not only guaranteed on the basis of Abraham's obedience, but in fact attains a satisfactory outcome. So far as Isaac has been blessed by Yahweh, has acknowledged his blessedness, and is living in prospect of further increase in the land promised to Abraham, at peace with Abimelech and his people (who benefit by

being brought into a relationship with Yahweh through him), every aspect of the blessing has been fulfilled or is on the point of fulfilment.²³ The very paucity of material in which Isaac is a leading character makes him eminently suitable for playing the role of the Patriarch in whose experience the fulfilment of the promise is most thoroughly expressed.²⁴

b) The Patriarch, his Wife, and a Foreign Ruler: In the story of Isaac's attempted deception of the Philistines (Gen 26.7-11), the wife-sister motif appears for a third time in the Patriarchal Narrative. An examination of the three occurrences will show that each constitutes a different story on account of a different ordering of structure and content, as well as a different narrative context. It first occurs at Gen 12.10-20 where, according to Culley,²⁵ the following structural arrangement is found:²⁶

- (a) Problem
- (b) Deception
- (c) Problem Solved/New Problem
- (d) Divine Intervention
- (e) Problem Solved

Gen 12.10-20 consists of "two episodes with a problem/problem-solved structure in which the first problem was solved by the... resourcefulness of the hero and the second by divine intervention".²⁷ In Genesis 20 the stress upon deception is weakened and the story is reduced to "one episode consisting of the taking of the woman, the divine intervention, and her restoration to her husband".²⁸ In Gen 26.7-11, although the problem/problem-solved tension is weaker still and there is no real danger,²⁹ some evidence of the two episode structure remains. Isaac perceives a danger, and attempts to deceive the Philistines. Culley concludes that these "similarities cannot be due to coincidence", yet each version of the story is so different in the selection of, and the emphasis given to, elements within them that a common outline would be quite unhelpful.³⁰

In an important article,³¹ Polzin has applied a synchronic analysis to the three versions of the story. He describes two sets of transformations which occur in the telling and retelling of the story. The first concerns "the relationship of wealth and progeny to an adulterous situation",³² and the second is concerned with the way in which the true state of affairs is disclosed to the ruler who is subjected to the deception.³³

Polzin holds that in Genesis 12 Abraham begins with neither wealth nor progeny. He acquires wealth through "actual adultery", and is expelled from Egypt, a wealthy man, but still without progeny. In Genesis 20 Abraham begins wealthy, but without progeny by Sarah. He acquires further wealth by the removal of an apparently adulterous situation, there is no expulsion, and Isaac is soon born (Gen 21.1-3). Polzin argues that in Genesis 26, Isaac begins with progeny, but without wealth. By crediting Isaac with two sons (Gen 25.25f.), but not wealth (cf. 25.5) or blessing (cf. 25.11), however, he is selective in his use of the wider context of Gen 26.1-33. If the context dictates that Isaac's children should be taken into account, wealth and blessing should not be ignored.³⁴ But Polzin holds that Isaac acquires wealth after the removal of the potentially adulterous situation and then is expelled along with his already existing progeny.³⁵

Polzin constructs the following structural transformations from this analysis:³⁶

Gen 12:	adulterous wealth	+	removal of adultery	--	no progeny
Gen 20:			removal of adultery		
			+ anti-adulterous wealth	--	progeny
Gen 26:	non adulterous progeny	+	removal of adultery	--	wealth

Another set of transformations concerns the different ways in which the foreign ruler discovers the deception: in Genesis 12 the royal house is afflicted by a plague; in Genesis 20 the king is warned of the potential adultery by God in a dream; and in Genesis 26 he happens to observe an intimate moment between Isaac and Rebekah. Polzin relates these different ways of discovering the truth to the way in which man finds out Yahweh's will and purpose.³⁷

Since each version of the wife-sister motif occurs in a different context which contributes to the different effect which its story achieves, I must now examine the contexts of Gen 12.10-20 and 20.1-18.³⁸ The degree to which Gen 26.7-11 was observed in Chapter One to be integrated into the surrounding narrative (26.1-6; 12-33) is not at all evident for Gen 12.10-20. Even if Abraham's lie (Gen 12.13) threatens the outcome of the promise received at Gen 12.1-3, the story's connection with its context is more loose. In this story Sarah, and not Pharaoh who disappears after expelling Abraham from Egypt, is perhaps second in importance to Abraham. Although he takes Sarah briefly into his harem, Pharaoh is represented as the victim, both of Abraham and Yahweh. He is merely a foil who is deceived, provides Abraham with wealth, and restores Sarah to him. In all this the narrator shows little sympathy for him.

Although set in the context of Abraham's early wanderings, this story takes him completely outside the area to which he had been sent by Yahweh. This circumstance, along with the awkwardness of the transition,³⁹ and the almost complete absence of any significant structural relationship with the surrounding narrative, points towards the conclusion that Gen 12.10-20 is a self-contained unit which has only a slender relationship to the narrative chain in which it occurs.

Genesis 20 enjoys a somewhat different relationship to its context. Although this story also lacks the degree of integration which Gen 26.1-33 enjoys with its immediate context, it is nevertheless complemented by its context in a way that Gen 12.10-20 is not. It is one of several stories which separate the account of the divine promise of a son to Abraham (Gen 18.1-15) from its fulfilment (Gen 21.1-3). At first sight these stories are quite diverse, but a brief examination of their content shows that at least a superficial relationship exists among them since each has some interest in the sort of sexual relationships which result in childbirth.⁴⁰

In Gen 19.1-11, a potential homosexual relationship between the men of Sodom and Lot's guests seems to be evaluated negatively, and Lot's offer of his daughters as substitutes for his guests is evidence of an undervaluing of a blood relationship. The question of progeny does not arise since heterosexual intercourse does not take place.⁴¹

The account of the destruction of Sodom describes the divine judgement on the behaviour of the Sodomites and incidentally relates the rejection of Lot's daughters by their Sodomite suitors (vv 12-29). The next scene (Gen 19.30-38) essays a neutral evaluation of an incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters - the women are neither condemned nor praised - while its evaluation of the blood relationship is ambiguous.⁴² Nevertheless, progeny results from the sexual union, indicating perhaps that the women were in some sense justified in seducing their father.

A potentially adulterous relationship between Abimelech and Sarah is evaluated negatively (Genesis 20), while Abraham does not value his marital relationship so highly as an alleged blood relationship. As a result of his potential adultery, progeny is prohibited to Abimelech.

In Gen 21.1-3, a heterosexual non-adulterous relationship is evaluated positively, and a blood relationship is evaluated positively within a situation which is actually incestuous.⁴³ Both God and the narrator, however, seem to approve this union. It is to such a couple as Abraham and Sarah that Yahweh gives his promise of progeny, and he fulfils that promise in spite of the advanced age of those to whom it is given.

These observations illustrate the point that the Genesis 20 episode is more fully integrated into its narrative context than Gen 12.10-20, but not so fully as Gen 26.7-11. The varying degrees of integration have some bearing on how each of the wife-sister episodes might be interpreted. Interpretation should discriminate between the contexts in which stories appear as well as the stories themselves, and not flatten out differences.

c) The Expulsion from Gerar, Genesis 26.12-16: According to Gen 12.20, Abraham was expelled from Egypt with his wife and possessions, presumably as a punishment for his act of deception. But it is not entirely clear why he was granted a military escort. Whether it was to guarantee his departure, or his safety, or simply as a courtesy in keeping with his status,⁴⁴ cannot be determined with certainty. Gen 26.7-11, however, does not end with Isaac's expulsion, but with the promulgation of a law which guaranteed his and Rebekah's safety (v 11). His expulsion from Gerar happened rather later, and was occasioned by Philistine envy rather than Isaac's deception, and clearly is narrated as a separate episode.

Gen 26.12-14 relates Isaac's success in farming, apparently at or near Gerar, since no change of location is specified. Such success is unique in the patriarchal narratives, and suggests a level of settled existence not hinted at in the stories about Abraham and Jacob, who are represented

as herdsmen rather than husbandmen.⁴⁵ Isaac's wealth is derived entirely from the blessing of Yahweh (v 12), while Abraham gained his from the gift of Pharaoh (Gen 12.16) and Abimelech (Gen 20.14, 16). Although his wealth is unconnected with the act of deception, Isaac's possessions are listed in a way which is both reminiscent of and distinct from the references to his father's wealth. Quite distinct is the report of the hundredfold harvest (כמאה שגרים), of Yahweh blessing him (ויברכהו יהוה), and the emphasis on his increasing prosperity (ויגדל האיש ויולך הלוך ונגדל עד כל גדל מאד). On the other hand, the reference to flocks, herds, and servants is reminiscent of the Abraham stories. But even here there are distinctive differences:

Gen 26.14 מקני צאן ומקני בקר ועבדה רבה

Gen 12.16 צאן ובקר וחמרים ועבדים ושפחת ואתנת וגמלים

Gen 20.14 צאן ובקר ועבדים ושפחת

Gen 20.16 46אלף כסף

The Genesis 20 story does not include an expulsion scene. Instead, Abimelech graciously invites Abraham to settle wherever he chooses.⁴⁷ In Genesis 26, therefore, wealth is gained by different means than in the Abraham stories, and neither wealth nor expulsion are connected with the motif of deception. The deception motif has been kept separate from the other two motifs by the narrator's use of two clearly defined episodes.

The note that the Philistines had filled in the wells dug in Abraham's time (v 15) is inserted into the report of their envy for Isaac's success. However, it is not clear that their vandalism and envy should be connected. It is possible that the wells had been filled in for some time,⁴⁸ which would explain why the Philistines had not met with the same agricultural success as Isaac. At any rate, v 15 links vv 12-16 with the following episodes which are concerned with the digging and possession of wells.

At the end of the series of notices concerning wells, and separated from them by the account of the theophany at Beersheba (Gen 26.23-25), stands the notice that Isaac's servants dug another well, this time at Beersheba (v 25b). That notice, along with the report that his servants informed him of the discovery (v 32f.), provides a framework for the final episode of the Isaac narrative, the account of the covenant between the Patriarch and Abimelech (vv 26-31). That account, in turn, provides the basis for the aetiological explanation of Beersheba (v 32f.).

e) The Covenant at Beersheba, Genesis 26.26-33: The account of Isaac's covenant with Abimelech, entered into at Beersheba at the latter's initiative, is paralleled by the earlier story of such a treaty between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21.22-34).⁵³ In the Abraham version of the story, the initiative also comes from Abimelech (v 22) who, along with Phicol his commander-in-chief,⁵⁴ approached Abraham with the assertion $\text{אלהים עמך בכל אשר אתה עשה}$ (v 22).⁵⁵ This assertion is followed by a request, based upon the good will which the petitioner had displayed in all his dealings with the Patriarch (v 23), that Abraham should swear an oath not to deal falsely with Abimelech or his successors. Abraham is said to have complied with this request (v 24). This short scene (vv 22-24) appears to stand as a form of introduction to the fuller account of the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech in vv 25-34.⁵⁶

After Abraham had agreed to swear the oath of fair dealing with Abimelech, he complained to him about a well which had been seized by his servants (v 25) but Abimelech denied knowledge of the offence, asking why he had not been informed of it earlier (v 26). Both the negotiations and the form of covenant-making ceremony completed by the participants are more

complicated in Gen 21.22-34 than in Genesis 26. In the Abraham version, the Patriarch does not appear to consider Abimelech's approach a threat. The contention between the two parties arises out of a past event, the seizure by Abimelech's servants of a well which had been dug by Abraham. The gift of sheep and oxen made by Abraham to Abimelech (v 27) seems to mirror the gift which Abraham had received earlier (Gen 20.14), and indicates something of a reversal of roles between the two. This reversal, however, is by no means as clear as in Genesis 26, although no gifts were given there.⁵⁷ At Gen 21.28, a special gift of seven ewe lambs which Abraham is said to have set apart from the flock is related closely to the making of the covenant. In response to Abimelech's query about the meaning of these seven lambs (v 29), Abraham replied that in taking them from him Abimelech would be recognizing his just title to the well which he had dug (v 30). An aetiological sentence (v 31) is inserted prior to the account of the conclusion of the covenant between the two parties (v 32). Finally, Abimelech and Phicol returned home (v 32), and Abraham planted a tamarisk tree and worshipped Yahweh the everlasting God (יהוה אל עולם) at Beersheba (v 33). The chapter is concluded with a notice that Abraham sojourned for some time in the land of the Philistines (v 34).⁵⁸

Gen 26.32f. explains the name Beersheba by referring to the oath which was sworn there between Isaac and Abimelech (cf. v 31: *איש לאחיו*), but in the Abraham version the position of the aetiological sentence (v 31), *על כן קרא למקום ההוא באר שבע כי שם נשבעו שניהם*, associates the name with seven ewe lambs (*שבע כבשת*) on the one hand (vv 28-30), and with the oath which was sworn there or, more precisely, with the act of oath swearing (vv 22-24, 31) on the other. In Genesis 21, the account is more concerned with the negotiations, and with Abraham's complaint and the proposed

remedy, than with the events surrounding the covenant making. It is not even narrated that Abimelech accepted Abraham's proposal although that is certainly implied; it is simply related that they swore an oath and made a covenant. In Genesis 26, on the other hand, the account of the covenant includes mention of the feast, of the participants eating and drinking (v 30), of their making an oath the following day, of Isaac's hospitably setting them on their way (cf. Gen 18.16), and of their departure in peace (בטלום). At Gen 21.32, Abraham is said to have planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba and worshipped there at the conclusion of the covenant, whereas in Genesis 26 Isaac built an altar and worshipped there prior to the covenant ceremony.

f) Allusions to the Name Isaac: According to the present arrangement of the Genesis narratives, the name Isaac first occurs in the Priestly account of the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen 17.19, 21).⁵⁹ Abraham is said to have thrown himself on his face and laughed (ויצחק) when he was informed by God that Sarah his wife, who is said to have been ninety years old at the time, was to bear a son (vv 15-17). The deity responds by repeating the promise, this time with the instruction that the boy should be called Isaac (יצחק, v 19). In the same narrative, Isaac is referred to again (v 21) when God affirms that he will fulfil his covenant with him. These two references provide the first of several puns which are made on the name Isaac in the Genesis tradition.

There are four allusions to Isaac in Genesis 18, although his name does not in fact appear. First Sarah is said to have laughed (והצחקת) on overhearing a visitor promising Abraham that she would have a son (v 12). The other three allusions occur in the course of a humorous encounter with

Yahweh.⁶⁰ Yahweh asks Abraham why Sarah had laughed (למה זה צחקה שרה, v 13) and, when she denies it (לא צחקתי, v 15), he further asserts that she had indeed laughed (כי צחקת, v 15). One can scarcely fail to see the name Isaac reflected in the fourfold use of the verb צחק associated with a prediction of his birth. Such a humorously depicted scene as this should be read with a smile. Indeed, in view of the other puns on the name Isaac which will be noted below, it may not be too fanciful to suggest that the Genesis narrators found the name an ideal subject on which to exercise their playfulness.⁶¹

When Isaac is finally born, Sarah is once again associated with laughter (Gen 21.6). But this time her laughter reflects joy (צחק נשה לי) rather than scepticism. The second part of this verse again uses the verb צחק in the phrase כל השמח יצחק לי. The force which should be given to לי has occasioned some debate. Some commentators refer it to the good natured sharing of others in Sarah's joy,⁶² while others find here the uncomprehending derision of those who have no faith to see the significance of the event.⁶³ And some have even argued that vv 6a and 6b should be attributed to E and J respectively,⁶⁴ although this attempted division of sources hardly emanates from the different senses in which the verb is alleged to have been used.⁶⁵

Another pun follows in the second account of the expulsion of Hagar (Gen 21.8-21.⁶⁶ Here it is said that Ishmael, Abraham's son by Hagar, (cf. Gen 16.1-16), was observed by Sarah while he was "playing" (קחצו, v 9). The considerable ambiguity in MT here is only partly resolved by the usual suggestion that the LXX explanatory phrase, μετὰ Ἰσαακ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἀβραάμ, reflects an omission by haplography.⁶⁷ It is difficult to decide what was the nature of the activity implied by קחצו, or why it aroused

Sarah's envy. At least three solutions have been proposed: a) the scene reflects the play of two boys innocent of social distinctions;⁶⁸ b) Ishmael was observed mocking Isaac;⁶⁹ and c) Ishmael was seen molesting Isaac, and some form of sexual abuse is implied.⁷⁰ I shall not discuss the relative merits of these solutions to this difficult problem, but it may be noted that even if a sexual connotation is intended it is not essential to follow LXX in supplying Isaac as the indirect object. Perhaps Sarah should be thought to have observed Ishmael participating in some form of sexual activity related to the celebrations, and was thus reminded that her rival's son was already attaining manhood. At Exod 32.6, where some such activity is almost certainly intended, the indirect object remains similarly unexpressed.⁷¹ Whatever is intended by פתח, it may not be unreasonable to assume that it was a form of behaviour associated with the feast given by Abraham to mark the weaning of Isaac, and it is unnecessary to assume that Ishmael is depicted as either laughing at or molesting his young half-brother.

Finally, at Gen 26.8, Abimelech observes a scene sufficiently intimate to warn him that Isaac and Rebekah were not brother and sister. The fact that the conjugal caress was reputedly visible from a window of the king's house makes certain demands on the reader's credulity. But neither the proximity of Isaac's dwelling to Abimelech's palace, nor the public embrace of a couple whose security depended on maintaining the deception that they were siblings, are impossible in story, even if they might be incongruous in real life. The story requires that Abimelech should learn of the deception so that he can both extend his official protection to Isaac and Rebekah and prohibit the men of Gerar from entering into an adulterous relationship which would bring guilt upon the whole community (v 10f.).

These word-plays on the name Isaac constitute a trajectory through the material leading up to Gen 26.1-33 which seems to provide some insight into the method underlying a number of the Genesis narratives. An essential playfulness runs through much of the narration, and this playfulness comes to the surface regularly in the wide variety of plays upon the Patriarch's name.⁷² The pun on the name Isaac in Gen 26.8 should not be understood in isolation of way the name is treated in the preceding material.

g) **Conclusion:** The foregoing attempt to construct a narrative background against which the Isaac narrative can be read has followed a number of trajectories through Genesis 12-25, concentrating on stories which run parallel to the events narrated in Gen 26.1-33. These trajectories take into account the fact that the reader of the Patriarchal Narrative, in encountering each new story, brings to it a fund of memories based on the material he has read up to that point.⁷³ The method of narrative background permits the interpreter to organize that fund of memories in a systematic fashion, and to set out in a careful and disciplined manner the respects in which the parallel material, which in the Patriarchal Narrative forms such a considerable portion of the narrative background, is both similar to and different from the text under discussion. The discussion has therefore been concerned not only with similarities, but has also emphasized the differences between the stories. And these comparisons have enhanced the literary analysis of the Isaac narrative, providing it with a greater depth than might otherwise have been possible.⁷⁴

Chapter Four

Literary Criticism of the Isaac Narrative

The foregoing studies in the structure and interpretation of the Isaac narrative have included where necessary some brief discussion of method, and sufficient has been said at each stage to preclude the necessity of resuming in a systematic way issues which have already been discussed. Instead, I intend to say something about the aims and validity of these studies, particularly with respect to the total effect which they achieve.

My approach has been guided by a desire to understand precisely what is going on in the text of Gen 26.1-33, and has involved the investigation of two fronts. The first attempts to elucidate the effect which the text achieves, and the second is concerned with how that effect is achieved. Thus, in the preceding chapters, the Isaac narrative has been treated as a story which requires interpretation, and I have attempted to curtail discussion of how the narrative may have functioned in ancient times, although such matters have sometimes intruded. When they have, I have made no attempt to excise them. One can hardly read a text, from whatever milieu, without some sense of historical consciousness.¹ And so, the very fact that such a text must have been known in Israel, from a certain period of her history onwards, quickly becomes an integral part of the reader's understanding, even when its date of origin and compositional history have not been clearly defined. Some rudimentary knowledge of the geography of Palestine can also be expected as part of the reader's pre-understanding.²

But more important, if the kind of study which has been pursued above is at some level compatible with the historical-critical analysis of biblical texts, it may be neither possible nor advisable to compartmentalize completely the one form of study or the other.³ Some degree of cross-fertilization is surely necessary if biblical studies are not to experience the diminishing returns which must inevitably follow from asking the same questions of the same texts too often.

I have also avoided treating the Isaac narrative as if it provided little more than the raw materials of theology,⁴ either for ancient Israel or for the present. Clearly the events and peoples which are described, whose times and actions are elucidated, and whose interrelationships are discussed, all inhabit the world of the text: they belong to the story. That is not to say that the biblical narrative may never be used in theology, but one must be aware that whenever this is done the story is being subsumed under a category which does not necessarily describe form, content, or even original intention, most accurately.

Although these literary studies have been concerned with the final form of the text on the one hand, and with the literary comparison of the Isaac narrative with the Abraham narratives of Genesis 12-25 on the other, I have not sought to achieve a "canonical" reading of the text after the fashion of Childs.⁵ The trajectories I have traced through Genesis 12-25 have been appropriated on a level which tends to support a literary rather than a theological interpretation of the text, and to lead towards a deeper literary appreciation of the story. If that deeper insight also includes a theological dimension, it arises out of the nature of the text and not out of a specifically theological procedure.⁶

In these studies, I have referred in general terms to Gen 26.1-33 as "story", or "narrative", which requires a "literary interpretation". I have resisted the application of the term "theology" as a category under which the story can be readily subsumed, and I have not even considered "history". It is now necessary to define more clearly the term "story", which I take to be more or less interchangeable with "narrative", and to justify the literary approach. Barr has well characterized the narratives of the Old Testament:⁷

The long narrative corpus of the Old Testament seems to me, as a body of literature, to merit the title of story rather than that of history. Or, to put it in another way, it seems to merit entirely the title of story but only in part the title history; or, again, we may adopt the term used by Hans Frei and say that the narrative is 'history-like'.

Barr enumerates the ways in which this story resembles history, (a) it is, "broadly speaking, a unitary story"; (b) it is "provided with a chronological framework which sets it against a time scale"; (c) some of its segments "constitute a fairly reliable source of historical evidence of the period in which the narrative is set"; and (d) in places, it "can be counted as coming close in certain aspects to actual history writing".⁸ Yet it also differs from history: (a) it contains "large elements which no one seriously considers as history", such as myth and legend; (b) it "moves back and forward, quite without embarrassment between human causation and divine causation"; (c) in it "other forms of motivation than the historical can easily be detected"; and (d) such story writing "is devoid of... some critical evaluation of sources and reports".⁹

Barr's characterization of the biblical narratives is entirely to the point, and is consistent with Thompson's conclusions concerning the patriarchal stories:¹⁰

the stories about the promise given to the patriarchs in Genesis are not historical, nor do they intend to be historical; they are rather historically determined expressions about Israel and Israel's relationship to its God, given in forms legitimate to their time, and their truth lies not in their facticity, nor in their historicity, but in their ability to express the reality that Israel experienced.

Thompson has since stated his case concerning the narratives of Israel's origins more strongly, with particular reference to the David stories:¹¹

Of these narratives as well as all of the narratives of the pentateuch, the historical problem is not so much that they are historically unverifiable, and especially not that they are untrue historically, but that they are radically irrelevant as sources of Israel's early history.

Although it has met with considerable opposition, particularly in conservative quarters,¹² the position is certainly not indefensible. This is especially true in those areas where the story is most "history-like", and where the premises upon which one might separate reliable historical source material from unreliable are extremely problematic. Stated less baldly, Thompson's position demands a full examination of the comparative Near Eastern story materials, their motifs, themes, standard episodes and plots, on the one hand,¹³ and a "detailed historical understanding which is independent of the tradition in question",¹⁴ on the other. When this has been achieved the biblical critic will be in a better position to judge the historicity of the traditions.¹⁵

Thompson's programme includes the use of "ancient Near Eastern fiction with a view to elucidating Old Testament narrative".¹⁶ It is therefore necessary to enquire into the relationship of the biblical narrative to fiction, particularly since the use of this term is likely to be thought scandalous, just as the use of the term "myth" with respect to the early chapters of Genesis was at one time similarly thought scandalous in many quarters. It seems to me that the fictive impulse was certainly a very

strong factor in the composition of many of the patriarchal narratives,¹⁷ and that to call them fictitious is not wholly inappropriate. Yet the biblical writers composed their stories according to the canons of writing operative in their own time, and that has certain implications for interpretation. If the biblical writers did not self-consciously write their fictions as fiction, it may be unfair to judge their efforts strictly by to the canons of a later time. And such judgement may also distort the resulting estimate of their achievement.

In a fascinating discussion of the interpretation of narrative, with particular reference to the Gospel according to St. Mark, Kermode has argued that "parts of the (gospel) narratives were generated from Old Testament texts, and are therefore interpretations of these texts, and so fictive".¹⁸ The same can be said for many of the narratives in the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets. These books do contain narratives which were generated by other Old Testament texts,¹⁹ and which are therefore interpretative fictions whatever the nature and date of origin of the sources from which they have been derived. Even so, it is most improbable that these narratives were understood in ancient times in a sense analogous to the way in which a modern reader would understand a work of fiction. More likely they were read and understood in a sense much closer to the way in which a modern reader, particularly one untrained in historical method, would understand history.²⁰

There is therefore a tension for the critic in that writing which is in many respects identifiably fictitious has undeniably functioned as "history" from early times. This tension, however, is in some respects dissolved by a recognition of the "history-likeness" of the biblical narratives, a trait which these narratives certainly share with a lot of

much more self-consciously fictitious writing. In a practical way this recognition helps to account for the confusion concerning the appropriate function of the narratives which in the past has often led to their being understood as history by their audience.²¹ It also permits a full recognition of their fictitiousness as well as their "history-likeness" as an integral part of the literary critical method of interpretation.

From such a recognition it follows that the characters and events of the patriarchal narratives -- since they inhabit the world of the text -- inhabit a world of times and places which is quite distinct from any other "world" which might be reconstructed by means of archaeology or any other historical method.²² Their world is a story world, the world of the text which performs and functions in the realm of imagination, an imagination which is informed by the reality of the text and, very often, by tradition. These analyses attempt to encounter the characters of the story, principally Isaac and Abimelech, within a world created by the text itself.

First of all, an attempt was made to confine this world where Isaac and Abimelech are encountered to the story of Gen 26.1-33. This permitted a sharp focus upon these two characters (and their representatives) and on their relationship. It also permitted a concentration upon two very important features of the narrative. First, the way in which the text of Gen 26.1-33 is itself built out of a series of components which could be classified generally in terms of their narrative function, viz., "promise", "threat", and "limited (partial) resolution". And second, the way in which the text is in fact structured to bring about a series of "reversals" or "transformations", particularly with respect to the roles played by the principal characters at the beginning and the end of the story.

It was quickly apparent, however, that the world of the text of Gen 26.1-33 cannot be constructed by drawing solely upon information which arises within these verses, even if this initial reading was to provide a form of control over subsequent investigations. Thus it was necessary to take notice of a broad series of signals which are raised by the text and which integrate the world of Isaac and Abimelech into the broader world of the Patriarchal Narrative. Chief among these signals are the narrative doublets which link the Abraham and Isaac stories, the theophany-promises to the Patriarch, the names Abraham and Abimelech, and the place names Egypt, Gerar, and Beersheba. Recognition of such signals has led in Chapter Three to the discussion of a number of matters which build up and enrich the reader's knowledge of the world of the text of the Isaac narrative. This task involved a comparison of these several elements with other narratives in order to identify more clearly how the Isaac narrative related to them, and it involved some discrimination between narratives, plots, themes, motifs, characters, and the like. The assumption that there are three wife-sister stories in Genesis which evidence a high degree of similarity with each other,²³ was seen to be somewhat misleading. I have therefore sought to distinguish between narratives and their components in the belief that one can best account for the high degree of repetition in the patriarchal narratives only when, by the exercise of literary distinctions and discriminations, their differences are also highlighted. In spite of the similarities the stories are different and, apart from the surface differences usually noted by the commentators,²⁴ they occur in different contexts which have to be taken seriously as indicators of the meaning of the narratives.

An examination of the three versions of the so-called "wife-sister" story has revealed a number of significant differences in context. At Gen 12.10-20, the story is integrated loosely into its narrative context.²⁵ It is preceded by a collection of divine promises, and notices concerned with change of location and with altar building (Gen 12.1-9). It is also separated from the following story (Gen 13.5-13) by an itinerary notice (13.1) which mentions Lot, a summary of the riches gained by Abraham in Egypt (13.2), and some further itinerary material (13.3f.). In short, the present narrative context of the story is quite artificial. A collection of brief notices has been used to get Abraham and Sarah down to Egypt and back again, and to combine the story into a sequence with the following story of Abraham and Lot. Once this was done, the narrator rounded off the sequence with further divine promises, itinerary, and altar building (13.14-18). Although the context does little to disguise the circumstance that the episode may originally have existed independently, it does not in fact demonstrate that the narrative is a late insertion.²⁶ Rather, it appears that the context has been shaped in order to accommodate this story among others into a cycle of patriarchal stories.²⁷

At Genesis 20, the story is more clearly integrated into its narrative context. Although it may derive from a different hand from much of the surrounding material, it appears to share a thematic concern with a number of these stories.²⁸ It may therefore be reasonable to suspect that the story has been positioned deliberately by an author who wanted to make this thematic connection. Thus the connection between the story and its present context, although somewhat contrived, is rather different from the connection between Gen 12.10-20 and its context. By virtue of their discussion of a number of interrelated themes, the narrative materials

collected at Gen 19.1-21.3 are much more closely integrated than those of Gen 12.1-13.18.

At Gen 26.7-11, the "wife-sister" motif no longer constitutes an independent story. Here the motif provides the basis of a single episode which forms part of the story of Isaac and Abimelech. The connection between the episode and the surrounding narrative materials, although not perfect, is sufficiently strong to count against the validity of treating it as an independent story. The continuity of this episode with the rest of the Isaac narrative has been demonstrated above. Because these episodes are constructed primarily of traditional materials, often of materials elsewhere associated with Abraham,²⁹ the transition from episode to episode is not always as smooth as might be expected of a narrative arising out of a different literary culture. It would be wrong, however, to permit this slight roughness of transition between episodes to detract from the conclusion that the Isaac narrative is better treated as a single story than as the aggregate of several originally independent stories.

The claim that there are three versions of the "wife-sister" story in Genesis is therefore misleading. It is more appropriate to say the "wife-sister" motif occurs three times. The motif twice gives rise to stories which are loosely integrated, although to differing degrees, into their respective narrative contexts. In Genesis 26, however, the motif constitutes an episode which is combined with several others into a more complicated narrative structure. This conclusion entails an important methodological consequence, for it counts against the usual form-critical assumption of the priority of the smallest possible units of tradition and grants the kind of literary critical exercise undertaken above a methodological priority over form-critical investigation.³⁰

The validity of this exercise is well supported by the fact that the Isaac narrative than might have been achieved by the application of the historical critical method alone. The conclusion that the "wife-sister" motif in Genesis 26 does not constitute an independent story implies a different orientation for the historical critical study of the Isaac narrative, and also a different composition history. If this reorientation proves fruitful, it will provide further support for the validity of these literary studies.

Throughout the discussion of Chapters One-Three, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two fronts on which the literary critical task has been carried through. Although I have attempted to clarify both the effect which the text achieves and how it is achieved, these two aims have sometimes been indistinguishable. Thus the disclosure of those transformations which take place between the beginning and the end of Gen 26.1-33 contributes to one's understanding of the meaning of the story on one level, as well as to one's knowledge of the storyteller's art on another. Clearly this does not amount to an attempt to discover the purpose of the author of the Isaac narrative in writing his story, but I have gone some way towards the point where such a question might be raised. Although I do not hold that the meaning of the story and the intention of the narrator were necessarily identical, it would be most surprising if they were totally unrelated. One's knowledge of the storyteller's art also tends to facilitate the possibility of answering successfully the question regarding his intention. The forms, themes, characters, motifs, and conventions available to him imply certain limitations as well as certain possibilities with respect to his purpose. And so does the literary tradition which gave rise to his work. The attempt to set out the narrative background

against which it is appropriate to read the Isaac narrative might be extended by explicitly excluding accidental associations,³¹ and to a some extent this has already been done.³²

The first step in the literary analysis of Genesis 26 was to construct a reading of its literary structure in terms of those narrative components which have been employed by the narrator in fashioning his story. The aim of this analysis was to elucidate the meaning of the Isaac narrative, so much of which has been obscured by form criticism's concentration on simple units comprising single episodes. Even where they have noted an attempt to construct a more unified story event out of the small traditional units,³³ form critics have done less than justice to the efforts and intention of the putative redactor who is held to have made this attempt.

I would endorse the judgement that "the structure of the narrative is our best key to its meaning",³⁴ and the structural analyses which have been set out above constitute an attempt to promote a deeper appreciation of the Isaac narrative as story.³⁵ The conception and aims which underlie this enterprise are different from those which underlie form criticism. Form criticism is mainly concerned to elucidate what is typical of the genre (or Gattung) under discussion,³⁶ whereas these analyses have been concerned with every aspect of the unique narrative to which they have been applied, and especially with the interrelations which exist between the several narrative elements which combine in a particular way to generate meaning. That discussion demonstrated that by varying the order in which certain elements occur, and their role in the narrative, the narrators have been able to construct different stories. It is the structural organization of the narrative elements which bears the primary semantic load, rather than the narrative elements themselves. The method of analysis which is

appropriate to any Old Testament narrative is something which, in certain respects, may have to be worked out afresh in each literary encounter with a new text. Only a growing familiarity with the text under investigation permits the critic to come to terms with text and method. Neither structure nor meaning is necessarily self-evident, and one's appreciation of both can only gradually be deepened. I make no claim that the steps followed in these analyses should be considered normative for the study of other biblical texts.³⁷

The analysis of the literary structure of the Isaac narrative led to an examination of several transformations which take place between the situations and relationships which obtain at the beginning and at the end of the story respectively. Then, in Chapter Two I examined the structure of the individual episodic units which combine to form the Isaac narrative.³⁸ These analyses helped to disclose the means whereby the narrator succeeded in bringing about a satisfactory conclusion for Isaac, while avoiding a corresponding deterioration in Abimelech's situation.

The final step in my literary analysis of Gen 26.1-33 was to set out the narrative background against which it is appropriate to read the story. In some respects, narrative background is not unlike the method of "narrative analogy" which has recently been applied to biblical studies by several scholars.³⁹ Nevertheless, its aim should be distanced from the aim of "narrative analogy", and it also leads to somewhat different results.⁴⁰

So far as I understand it, "narrative analogy" presupposes that the sets of texts it examines enjoy something of a complementary relationship. At least, so far as the method has been developed by Miscall, texts are

read as analogous and treated as if they provide "oblique commentary" on each other.⁴¹ My own aim has been to provide a sharper focus on the Isaac narrative by examining it in relation to other narrative materials which in a sense provide sufficient background to give the analysis more scope and depth. Such comparison distinguishes the material under consideration from other stories which, although similar in many respects, are certainly different. At the same time, these other stories evoke memories of the narrative under discussion for in different literary contexts narratives which are similar in many respects achieve different effects. And so I have been unwilling to follow Miscall in this respect, especially since the order in which the stories are encountered may be significant. Thus, when one reads of Abraham deceiving Pharaoh with respect to the true nature of his relationship with Sarah (Gen 12.10-20), this event is without narrative precedent. Although there are two other narratives in which the same motif is employed, knowledge of these later story events is somehow held in suspense so that Abraham enters the situation more innocently than he does at Genesis 20. At Genesis 20, however, there is a narrative precedent, and this precedent is part of the knowledge which the reader brings to the text. Further, the author explicitly states that this is not the first time that such a deception has been perpetrated (v 13). The shadow of the event narrated at Gen 12.10-20 is therefore cast over the story of Genesis 20 in a way which the first story escaped.

An incidental point may be noted here. In Genesis 20, where Abraham is said to have claimed that Sarah was indeed his half-sister, commentators have tended to accept the truth of this claim, although it is not supported elsewhere in the patriarchal narratives. The Terah genealogy does not include Sarah among his children, but only as the wife of his son Abraham.

The fact that her parentage is not recorded may indicate that it has been dropped in an attempt to harmonise the passage with Gen 20.12, especially as the father of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, is named. At any rate, Sarah is described as Terah's daughter-in-law at Gen 11.31, which is odd if the tradition knew her as his daughter. It is therefore possible to suppose that Abraham told a second lie to cover up the first, although the text does not provide decisive evidence to decide between this possibility or the more usual view that Abraham told the truth.⁴²

Thus, when one comes to Genesis 26, one reads of events, people, and places which have already acquired a background in the preceding narrative. One cannot read of Isaac's attempt to deceive the Philistines except under the shadow cast by Abraham's deceitful acts. The narrator, by making several obvious allusions to Genesis 12 and 20, suggests that such a method of reading is entirely appropriate.

If one were examining either Gen 12.10-20 or 20 rather than Gen 26.1-33, it would be necessary to construct a narrative background different in certain respects from the one which has been constructed. Even if precisely the same set of texts were used, it would be necessary to view at least some of them prospectively rather than retrospectively. But, apart from that, Genesis 26 would become a part of the narrative background for whichever text was being investigated, at least in the sense that the reader might be aware that at a later stage in the Patriarchal Narrative an event would occur which was similar in certain respects to the story he was reading.

Text, Tradition, and Coercion: Under this heading, I shall examine some of the respects in which narrative background may be related, admittedly in a limited sense, to the concept of tradition.

For the study of ancient texts, it may be considered axiomatic that a literary text does not come into existence apart from the prior existence of a tradition of storytelling. In stating this principle, I do not imply that every written text which derives from ancient times must inevitably reflect a prior oral tradition, similar to it in extent, structure, and content. No ancient text, however, is likely to have broken completely with the wider body of traditions, both oral and written, which were known in the community from which it arose. Thus, provided ones knowledge of the traditions of that community is sufficiently complete, and allowing that it is impossible to recover traditions which were not written down, it must be possible to discover at least some of the antecedents of the text. Nevertheless, the fact that one possesses only some of the texts known in ancient times, and these only in canonical form, has consequences for interpretation which should be clearly understood.

The existence of texts from ancient times in written form does not preclude the loss of texts which were not fixed in writing. Further, many written texts may have been lost, both accidentally and deliberately. It is therefore impossible to gain a firm methodological control over the full range of traditions known to the authors of biblical texts, even if certain things can be inferred. This consideration alone suggests that narrative background is appropriate to literary rather than historical investigation. Similarly, the various backgrounds against which a text may have been adapted and reinterpreted in the course of its transmission is never completely accessible.

From the time of its composition until now, a biblical text may have been subjected to a whole history of interpretation, whether or not its words have remained unaltered. The degree to which interpretation has varied throughout transmission may be different for different texts, as some are more susceptible than others to variety in interpretation.⁴³ And biblical texts which have been transmitted through a number of religious traditions have become laden with meaning, even if such "meaning" does not always closely resemble some putative "original meaning of the text" reconstructed by scientific scholarship.⁴⁴ The interpretation of biblical texts is therefore a different matter from the interpretation of texts only lately rediscovered by archaeological research, for the latter are relics of one period which have lately been exposed to another.⁴⁵ The extent to which the interpretation of biblical texts may have been modified in the course of their transmission, however, is an area which remains in need of much clarification.⁴⁶

The written text implies some event of speaking in the past, one which was understood by those who heard it in terms of the tradition to which they were heirs and within which they appropriated that event of speaking as an event of hearing and understanding.

When one gains knowledge of a written text at the end of a more or less continuous transmission, when it is one of a number of texts all deriving from the same general milieu, and when, as with biblical texts, it belongs to a particular tradition with which one may have some familiarity, it may be that many more texts which were related to it and at some level impinge on the way it was understood remain available for investigation than is the case if a text is known only through archaeological discovery. Yet under even the most advantageous circumstances access to narrative

background in this wider sense is obscured by at least two factors. First, not every related text has survived intact and many have been irretrievably lost. Second, the biblical tradition, primarily because of its continuous transmission, may have been subjected to a number of varied discontinuities of meaning. Unbroken transmission does not imply that the text has always been understood in precisely the same way. It is not easy, and perhaps not even possible, always to discern the nature of these discontinuities, or why they occurred. But so far as it is possible, this is the task of the history of interpretation, and one which cannot be undertaken here.

The foregoing studies provide a practical attempt to achieve a reading of one ancient (biblical) text which, although not exhaustive, nevertheless examines extensively the relationships which appear to exist among the various incidents, themes, and persons which make up the Isaac narrative. No doubt the interpretation could have been extended further. Perhaps it could even have been offered side by side with a number of other (equally well documented) interpretations of the story. Yet I have attempted to offer a plausible and consistent reading of the text, one which arises naturally out of the story itself. Nevertheless, this reading cannot reflect precisely how the narrative was read in ancient times, although it may in certain respects approximate to such a reading. For reasons such as these, the investigation undertaken in Chapter Three was restricted to an exploration of the narrative background provided by Genesis 12-25, rather than the wider range of biblical traditions which might also be thought to relate to the Isaac narrative.

When a text was read in ancient times,⁴⁷ the reading may have acted more coercively upon its readers than it does upon those who read it today.⁴⁸ With their knowledge of the tradition, those readers listened at

a level which must have been different to the level at which one listens to the same text today. Consequently they heard things which are no longer heard. The world view, as well as the background of related texts and traditions against which the text was heard, elicited a recollection and response which is not fully accessible to the modern reader. All this seems to imply that while an historically valid "tradition background" (i.e., the full range of traditions which might have impinged on the way a text was read in ancient times) is beyond the critic's reach, the literary construction of a narrative background provides a partial insight into such a construct.

In reading the same text today, one's recollection is certainly different, no matter how well one knows that part of the tradition which remains accessible.⁴⁹ This is precisely because the tradition over against which one hears the text is different -- and must always be different -- from the tradition against which it was heard in ancient times. His historical situation vis à vis the community and tradition may have permitted such a reader access to a number of levels of meaning which are no longer accessible. Because the tradition acted upon him in a somewhat coercive way, his understanding of the text must have been more immediate and the parameters of his understanding more clearly defined.

When reading the text today, one's understanding is also conditioned, at least in part, by the coercive forces inherent in one's own tradition.⁵⁰ These forces, however, are very different from the forces which acted upon the reader in ancient times, and an awareness of one's own tradition and its coercive influence upon one's reading of the ancient texts may prove invaluable as a first step towards opening up the texts to a more full and adequate understanding than is now possible.

The historical critical method has also tended to obscure a proper understanding of Old Testament narrative texts because of its concern with their "original" meaning.⁵¹ It is indisputable that great gains have resulted from the application of this method. Nevertheless, methods must be developed which will deal more adequately with the text as a whole.

The method of narrative analysis pursued throughout Part One, when used in conjunction with the historical critical method, might contribute towards this aim so far as narrative background retrieves a clearly defined area of the fuller background of traditions against which a biblical text might be read.⁵² But this is an artificial construct, an attempt on the literary level to take into consideration whatever can be recovered of the traditions which were known when the book of Genesis was composed. It is quite clear that it is impossible to recover the sort of full tradition background which reflects accurately a particular historical situation - as opposed to a narrative background. This limitation curtails, but does not destroy, the possibility of arriving at a reasonably full and comprehensive understanding of the text. Because a fairly full background might be recovered in the case of certain narrative texts, this curtailment need not necessarily be severe.⁵³

This discussion of the literary criticism of biblical narrative has not been concerned with many of the more technical issues involved. Justification of the method lies in successful demonstration rather than much theoretical argument.⁵⁴ In Part Two, I shall address a different method to the text of the Isaac narrative and I shall address a number of questions which are rather more historical in their orientation. I hope that a number of considerations of a literary nature which have been raised already will help to inform the more historical studies which follow.

PART TWO

The Isaac Tradition - Some Historical Concerns

Chapter Five

The Isaac Narrative: Form and Tradition History

Introduction: The point of form criticism in Old Testament studies is to use analogy in order to identify and illuminate the literary genre to which the unit under investigation belongs. The form critic examines the structure of that unit, and by analogy with others which display similar structural characteristics he attempts to say something substantive about form, function, intention, and Sitz im Leben. The application of analogy is possible only if it can be assumed with some degree of probability that in typical circumstances, typical vocabulary and typical patterns of speech will be used to effect typical responses,¹ and the form-critical research of several generations of Old Testament scholars has by now so established the method that this assumption must in principle be granted.²

The analogical principle enshrined in the form-critical method is generally regarded to hold good for oral as much as for written forms,³ and it is used primarily as a means to get back behind the period to which the text must be dated in its written form to an earlier period by invoking a (sometimes lengthy) stage of oral transmission. In view of the results of the field-studies of folklorists,⁴ however, it is now more difficult to be confident of the stability of oral narrative tradition over a long period than it was only a decade or so ago.⁵ And so form criticism may have to

adapt to the study of written rather than oral forms if it is to continue to prove a useful method for the study of biblical narrative.

But the identification of form remains a problem so far as the study of Old Testament narrative is concerned. The helpfulness of the labels applied to narrative forms is limited by the fact that "tale", "saga" and the like disclose so little about specific content.⁶ On the whole, form-critical terms referring to narrative units tend to be much less precisely descriptive than terms which apply to formulas. For example, "tale" and "novella" are much less specific than "complaint", "confession of guilt", "itinerary", or "self-revelation".⁷ Accordingly, it seems that the form-critical identification of the smaller, often formulaic, components which comprise the narrative units proper are more likely to give some impression of content. Similarly, the occurrence of a non-narrative form as a component of a narrative may help to set up a more precise expectation of the nature of content, since labels like "proverb", "song", "annal" and "genealogy" seem to offer a more precise description.

Finally, recent discussion has tended to redefine some of the labels applicable to narrative forms, and to further the confusion associated with the translation of Sage. Gunkel applied the term Sage, which he defined as "volkstümliche, altüberlieferte, poetische Erzählung, die Personen oder Ereignisse der Vergangenheit behandelt",⁸ to the smallest individual narrative units. He drew a strong contrast between Sage and Geschichte,⁹ holding that the former was the oral product of "unkultivierten Völker".¹⁰ And he believed that the Sagen were already old and subject to a long history of (oral) transmission before being committed to writing,¹¹ a process which by no means predated the beginning of the collection of the legends into cycles.

On the other hand, although saga has often been used, perhaps ill-advisedly, to translate Sage, recent critics have applied the term to the "long, prose, traditional narrative having an episodic structure developed around stereotyped themes or objects",¹² while the unit designated Sage by Gunkel has come to be known as Erzählung or "tale".¹³ At this stage, I shall do no more than note that current form-critical terminology is in a somewhat fluid state,¹⁴ since there will be occasion to deal with some of these matters a little more fully below.

A. The Form of Genesis 26.1-33

Source critics have found it almost impossible to distinguish between the episodes narrated in Gen 26.1-33 on the basis of literary style. As a result, the section has been assigned almost universally to J,¹⁵ although several small insertions and redactional touches are usually identified.¹⁶ But form critics have argued that the Isaac narrative comprises a number of originally independent units, usually five or six in number, and it would be useful to examine one recent attempt to identify some "six discrete units" of tradition in the narrative.¹⁷ Although he claims that he has identified these by "literary critical" analysis,¹⁸ Lutz has tended to invoke form-critical criteria in making his analysis.

After dating the written narrative to around 950 B.C., in dependence upon Anderson and von Rad, Lutz expresses the following view:¹⁹

The material probably dates back many centuries and most likely circulated in oral form for a very long period... before the Yahwist finally wrote it down. The clearest evidence for this is that the material in Genesis 26 is composed of several separate units, each one portraying a brief episode in the life of Isaac.

Lutz identifies Gen 26.1-6 and 7-11 on the basis of introductory and concluding statements.²⁰ He identifies Gen 26.12-17a (omitting v 15), on the basis of "content", although he expresses some dissatisfaction with this criterion, since it does not lead to a "decisive conclusion". He further confesses that the pericope ends on a note of mystery since it provides no indication of where Isaac went when he was expelled from Gerar. Lutz uses "content" again to establish the limits of Gen 26.17b-22 (omitting v 18). But his discussion of the opening of Gen 26.23-25a provides the strangest criterion of all:²¹

This tradition contains a story which is quite distinct from that which precedes it. There is a definite break in normal spacing in the Kittel Text, which may be interpreted to mean that those who worked on this text felt a definite break in thought here.

Then, following Noth,²² Lutz tentatively identifies v 25b as the end of the unit. As if to justify a lack of decisiveness here, he states:²³

It makes little difference where one breaks Gen 26.23-33 into two units... What matters is that we have two distinct units of tradition here, both of which concern events occurring at Beersheba.

But this will scarcely do. Where the break cannot be demonstrated with some certainty, there is correspondingly less foundation for the conclusion that two units exist.

After identifying Gen 26.25b-33 as the final unit, Lutz concludes:²⁴

It is obvious that we have at least six distinct pericopes in verses 1-33 of Genesis 26. Each unit of tradition is indicated to a large degree by literary form but basically by content.

Lutz expresses the hope that a comparison of the Isaac traditions with their Abrahamic doublets might help to determine the original importance of Isaac. He holds that E is at least a hundred years later than J,²⁵ and so dates the literary fixation of parallel E material later than Genesis 26. Where two versions exist, both ostensibly from J, he finds the literary

evidence for determining their relative ages inconclusive.²⁶ This impasse prompts him to attempt to solve this question by seeking to penetrate the pre-literary phase of oral tradition by means of "form-critical analysis".

Lutz's attempt to distinguish six units of tradition is unsuccessful. It depends largely upon the assumption that each narrative unit can contain no more than the one distinct episode. If this assumption is discounted, his arguments respecting form and content are hardly strong enough to substantiate his case.

As I argued in Chapter One, each new episode of Gen 26.1-33, with the exception of the first one, depends on the previous unit(s) for information which it lacks and which is essential to its being properly understood.²⁷ Since these episodes are more or less coterminous with the pericopes usually identified by form critics, it would be needlessly repetitive to rehearse the same information in support of my contention that this mutual interdependence permits, and even encourages, the form-critical analysis of the Isaac narrative as a single unit. Although Gen 26.1-33 clearly consists of several episodes, the analysis of these as originally independent units would demand the identification of several lacunae which could be dealt with only by the hypotheses that in each case something had been dropped out of the text as a result of redactional activity.

In view of this, it is interesting to notice that in his recent form-critical commentary Coats has divided Gen 26.1-33 into two units.²⁸ Moreover, he defines vv 1-17 as a "tale" and vv 17-33 as an "itinerary", and so far as he has included v 17 in both of these units it would appear that he has experienced some difficulty in making the division.²⁹ This difficulty encourages me to examine his analysis with a view to discovering

why Coats divides the narrative into two around v 17, and whether his reasons for doing so are adequate.

Coats identifies the "threat to the ancestress" incident, like its counterparts at 12.10-20 and 20.1-18, as a "tale".³⁰ He defines tale in his Glossary:³¹

TALE (Sage, volkstümliche Geschichte oder Erzählung). A short narrative characterized by a minimum number of characters, single scene, and plot. It employs exposition, development of tension, and resolution. Complexity of plot is limited.

But Gen 26.1-17 is plainly much more than a single scene. The theophany (vv. 2-5), and the report of Isaac's successful husbandry (vv. 12-16), cannot simply be subsumed into a single scene governed by the wife-sister story without a great deal of special pleading. If vv. 2-5 are to be included, it is not sufficient to say that these verses "have no parallel in the two counterparts and no primary connection with the story which unfolds here". Nor can it be argued that "The conclusion in vv. 12-17 can be considered a part of the story in a very loose manner". These passages introduce extra characters (Yahweh and the Philistines), comprise at least two additional scenes, and extend the plot perhaps beyond what may be permitted by Coats' definition of "tale". Further, a comparison of chapters 12 and 26 shows that in the final form of Genesis the promises to Abraham (12.2f.) do precede the first wife-sister story in a loose sort of way, even if they do not belong to the same pericope.

Despite the fact that he includes v 17 in both pericopes, Coats divides the Isaac narrative at roughly the point where the narration of events gives way to brief notices. He divides vv 17-33 into three stages, of which the third is quite complicated. Each stage is introduced by an itinerary formula (vv 17, 22a, 23). The first, introduced by v 17,

"embraces three well etiologies" (vv 18, 19-20, 21). But this observation ignores the fact that this report of well-digging is not developed into an aetiology, just as it fails to take sufficient account of the fact that v 18 is more closely related to v 15 than to the following verses.³²

The brief second stage, according to Coats, consists of "only one etiological scheme, developed with a report of a well completed without a quarrel" (v 22). And he further argues that in its peaceful orientation "The tradition is... quite the opposite of that embraced by the first stage, even though the form is identical".³³ But it is at least arguable, unless one places excessive emphasis upon the alleged function of the three itinerary formulae as introductions to clearly distinct stages of the pericope, that v 22 provides an appropriate conclusion to a series of reports about well-digging.

Coats admits that "The third stage expands the form markedly by introducing a report of theophany, vv. 24-25a, and greater narrative detail for the etiology, vv. 26-33".³⁴ But it is hardly a case of the form of the first two stages being expanded here. In the section vv 23-33, only vv 23, 25b, 32-33, correspond to the itinerary-aetiology pattern which Coats has discerned in vv 17-22. If this same pattern is to be identified here, it is only as a framework for a theophany report (vv 24-25a) and a brief narrative account of a treaty (vv 26-31), and the whole has been woven into a single piece with the itinerary-aetiology material.³⁵

By emphasising the three itinerary formulae, Coats has been able to characterize the whole section (vv 17-33) as a "well itinerary" or, more precisely, "an itinerary LIST embracing a series of ETIOLOGIES".³⁶ But this assessment of the section does not account adequately for vv 24-25a,

26-31. Further, although Coats admits that the first of these is "redactional, a point of connection between the Isaac narrative and the narrative motif of promise so common for Abraham",³⁷ the fact that the aetiology of v 33 is rooted in the plot of vv 26-31 seems to prevent him from identifying these verses as a "tale".

Coats admits the redactional nature of the itinerary list, and judges that it is "a means for connecting the various well etiologies with the context, particularly with the account of the threat to the ancestress".³⁸ This judgment, however, along with a number of his other comments, raises to a critical level the question why the Isaac narrative should be divided between the "tale" of vv 1-17 and the "itinerary list" of vv 17-33. Besides his indecision concerning the status of v 17, Coats is able to regard vv 12-16 "in effect as the introduction to the itinerary as well as the conclusion to the narrative about a threat to the ancestress."³⁹ In addition, he accepts vv 2-5 as an integral part of vv 1-17 although it has "no primary connection with the story that unfolds here".⁴⁰

It is not simply a matter of his identifying two different genres in Gen 26.1-33, for Coats seems to believe that the two passages developed by means of different processes. The first (vv 1-17) provides evidence of several traditio-historical layers,⁴¹ while the second (vv 17-33) has developed by means of a complicated redactional process. But elsewhere, in comparing Gen 26.1-17 with its parallels, he not only observed that it has a "more diffuse" structure, but argued that "The genre is clearly breaking down here, showing signs of development into something new".⁴²

It seems to me that Coats has presented sufficient evidence to permit the conclusion that Gen 26.1-33 comprises an artificially unified structure which combines a number of brief episodes and formulae into the form of a composite narrative. Two features of his argument have perhaps prevented this conclusion: (i) his theory of genre description, and (ii) his view that vv 1-17 and 17-33 stand at the end of quite distinct compositional processes. But, since he has already observed that "the genre is clearly breaking down" in Gen 26.1-17, he has greatly reduced the force of these arguments. One need only admit that the development of vv 1-17 may have been more closely analogous to that of vv 17-33 than is implied by a theory of traditio-historical growth to allow for a compositional history which envisages the Isaac narrative as a single complex literary form.⁴³

Having examined the analyses of Lutz and Coats,⁴⁴ I shall now offer my own analysis of the structure and content of Gen 26.1-33 in which I shall attempt to identify the various formal elements and matters of content from which the narrative has been composed. The analysis is carried out from the standpoint of my own understanding of the genre, viz., that it is a composite narrative. This understanding must be stressed since it implies that, although incidents narrated in Gen 26.1-33 resemble, to varying degrees, literary genres identified by form criticism, the narrative is not a collection of previously independent literary units but a single unit based on a literary revision of material which did not originally refer to Isaac. This understanding also precludes the association of Gen 26.1-33 with the sort of Sitze im Leben usually attributed to the genres which its incidents resemble. Following this analysis of structure and content, I shall resume my discussion of the features which are disclosed by it. In Part B, I shall examine some matters pertaining to tradition history.

a) The Structure of Genesis 26.1-33:

v 1 Introduction

provides motive for change of location
change of location formula

vv 2-5 Theophany and Divine Speech

1. Theophany formula
2. Admonition:
3. Promise: being with/blessing
land
fulfilment of the promise sworn to Abraham
great progeny
land for progeny
blessing for the nations
4. Motive: because Abraham kept Yahweh's commandments

v 6 Response/Statement of location

vv 7-11 Wife-Sister Episode

1. The Problem: "men of the place" ask about Isaac's wife
2. The Response: Isaac's lie
motive for lie
3. Statement: concerning the passage of time
4. The Discovery: Abimelech discerns the truth
accusation; and question concerning motive
Isaac's answer
further question/possibility of the
Philistine incurring guilt
5. The Guarantee: apodictic law guarantees safety
of Isaac and the people of Gerar

vv 12-16 Report of Prosperity

1. Action: Isaac sows the land
2. Result: an abundant harvest
the blessing of Yahweh
great riches
flocks, herds, servants
the envy of the Philistines
3. Statement: Abraham's wells blocked by Philistines
4. Expulsion: Abimelech expels Isaac (= motive for
change of location)

vv 17-22 Reports of Strife over Wells

change of location

1. Statement: redigging and renaming Abraham's wells
2. 1st Report: Isaac's servants dig well
possession of well contested (by Gerarite herdsmen)
possession of well conceded (by Isaac)
well named "Esek", and name explained
3. 2nd Report: Isaac's servants dig another well
possession of well contested (by Gerarite herdsmen)
possession of well conceded (by Isaac)
well named "Sitnah"
change of location
4. 3rd Report: Isaac's servants dig another well
possession of the well is not contested
well named "Rehoboth", and name explained

vv 23-25 Theophany and Promise

change of location

theophany formula (appearance of Yahweh to Isaac)

divine speech: self-identification formula
admonition, "do not be afraid"
promise, "I am with you and will bless you"
great progeny
motive, "for the sake of Abraham"

Report of altar building:
worship

Report of well excavation

vv 26-31 Report of Treaty

notice of Abimelech's approach

confrontation: accusation

response a) recognizes Yahweh's "being with" Isaac
b) requests a covenant with Isaac
c) states his innocence towards Isaac
d) recognizes Yahweh's "blessing" Isaac

ritual: Isaac makes feast
sharing of feast
swearing of oath (the following morning)
dismissal in peace

vv 32-33 Report of new well

notice of time

completion of well reported to Isaac

report of naming of well

aetiology

In my analysis of the structure of Gen 26.1-33, I have assumed that the whole should be understood as a single unit. This assumption has distanced the analysis from the classic form-critical assessment of this chapter.⁴⁵ On the other hand, a measure of support is gained from some recent studies.⁴⁶ Above all, however, the high degree of unity disclosed by the literary-structural investigation of the Isaac narrative presented above in Chapter One encourages the investigation of the unity of the narrative from a form-critical perspective.⁴⁷

Throughout the following discussion, the fact that I discuss the Isaac narrative as a series of episodes should not be allowed to detract from the assumption of unity. I have resorted to this form of discussion for the sake of convenience and, I hope, clarity.

b) Genesis 26.1-6: As an examination of the secondary literature shows, form critics and source critics alike have experienced great difficulty in determining the limits of the so-called "wife-sister" episode.⁴⁸ As a matter of convenience, I have elected to examine vv 1-6 and 7-11 separately since it is arguable that these verses comprise two episodes. Moreover, although the theophany (vv 2-5) has been so incorporated into the structure of the wife-sister incident that many critics have found it difficult to separate them completely, it may be that the theophany has a relationship not only to the wife-sister episode but to the entire Isaac narrative.

The opening phrase (וַיְהִי רֵגֶב בְּאֶרֶץ) clearly introduces a new section of narrative.⁴⁹ The reference to the earlier famine of Abraham's time anchors v 1 firmly into its context in the Patriarchal Narrative. Many critics have held that this is a redactional reference which has been added to account for the existence of different wife-sister stories in Genesis 12

and 26,⁵⁰ but this position depends largely upon the assumption that Isaac is prior to Abraham in the tradition, and this assumption may be less well founded than has sometimes been imagined.⁵¹

The reference to Abraham in v 1 seems to have been included because the narrator felt it necessary to suppress the tensions inherent in the existence in Genesis of three versions of the one story. And although the awkwardness with which this reference to the previous story is included here has often led critics to assume that it must be redactional, the assumption that redactors were necessarily less adept Hebrew stylists than authors is at least open to question. Van Seters, although admitting this awkwardness, explains it differently, attributing it to the writer's desire to remind the reader of the two previous versions (Genesis 12 and 20) of the following story (26.7-11).⁵²

I accept this point, but not Van Seters' suggestion that the designation of Abimelech as "king of the Philistines" (Gen 26.1) points to a negative assessment of this character.⁵³ It seems to me that the phrase serves to provide additional information about Abimelech. And I have already shown that the narrator is not unsympathetic to Abimelech and his people whose situation improves throughout the narrative, although in the course of the story Isaac is elevated over them.⁵⁴

Verses 2-5 tell of a theophany in which Yahweh appears to Isaac to make several promises to him (vv 2-5).⁵⁵ This scene is framed by material which relates to the location (vv 1, 6), and also accounts for Isaac's presence at Gerar. Verse 1a provides a motive for a change of location, and v 1b duly confirms that the change has taken place. Verse 6 closes the scene by restating the location, and confirms that Isaac

obeyed Yahweh's command. In addition, it performs a double-duty so far as it sets the scene for the following wife-sister incident (vv 7-11).

Yahweh's appearance to Isaac in v 2, like the theophany narrated at v 24, is couched in terms which suggest a visual manifestation, and employs the niph'al of the verb הִרְאָה (cf. Gen 12.7; 17.1; 18.1; 35.1).⁵⁶ This usage, which appears to have been a technical term for theophany, is associated in other contexts with particular holy places, such as Shechem (Gen 12.7), Mamre (Gen 18.1), and Beersheba (Gen 26.24). But such connections do not warrant the assumption that the tradition recorded at Gen 26.2 once referred to a particular holy place,⁵⁷ since there is also no specific connection between the theophany and a holy place in a number of other contexts where the same technical vocabulary is used (cf. Gen 17.1; 35.1). One need not, therefore, attempt to distinguish at Gen 26.2 between an account of a theophany from which an original reference to a particular holy place has dropped out, and an account of a revelation at Gerar.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, vv 2-5 contain several apparent repetitions, which have suggested to most scholars that the section is composite.

First, $\text{שֹׁכֵן בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים}$ (v 2) is said to parallel $\text{גֵּר בְּאֶרֶץ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים}$ (v 3), and so long as these two admonitions are thought to refer exclusively to the narrative of vv 1-11, this objection has some force. But, if the whole of vv 1-33 is kept in view, it is possible that "the land that I will show you" of v 2 and "this land" of v 3 refer to different areas. The land in which Isaac is to dwell permanently (שֹׁכֵן , v 2) is finally reached when he arrives in Beersheba, but in the meantime he must obediently sojourn (גֵּר , v 3) at Gerar (גֵּרָר) in the land of the Philistines.⁵⁹

Second, the section contains two references to the promise of land. Nevertheless, there is some progression in the thought of these two references. The promises divide into two groups: (i) with respect to Isaac (v 3), and (ii) with respect to Isaac's descendants (v 4f.).

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| (i) blessing/being with: | ואהיה עםך ואברוך |
| land: | כי לך ולזרעך אתן את כל הארצת האל |
| fulfilment of promise to Abraham: | והקמתי את הטבעה אשר נשבעתי לאברהם אביך |
| (ii) great progeny: | והרביתי את זרעך ככוכבי השמים |
| land for progeny: | ונתתי לזרעך את כל הארצת האל |
| blessing for nations: | והתברכו בזרעך כל גויי הארץ |
| Motive: | עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי וישמר משמרותי מצותי חקותי ותורתתי |

The series begins with a promise of blessing/being with for Isaac. I have already eschewed the division of the phrase **ואהיה עםך ואברוך** into two separate promises, for in this context they are entirely complementary.⁶⁰ When land is first promised, it is "to you and to your descendants", and the phrase **כל הארצת האל** seems deliberately to contrast with "this land" in which Isaac has been instructed to sojourn.⁶¹ The next element promises fulfilment of "the oath (הטבעה) sworn to Abraham your father". It recalls the content of the various promises made to Abraham, and therefore anticipates the following section in which these promises are in large measure repeated. At another level, this element foreshadows the motive provided by v 5 guaranteeing the fulfilment of all the promises.

The promise of great progeny (v 4) refers back to a promise already made to Abraham (Gen 16.10; 21.12), and, so far as it promises that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars of heaven, to Gen 15.5; 22.17.⁶² Although the promise of land in v 4 is not a verbatim quote of any example of this promise outside of Gen 26.2-5, it reflects the promise

to Abraham in several respects. So far as this promise, although directed to the Patriarch, concerns his descendants, it reflects Gen 12.7; 15.18; 24.7; and 48.4. But it is surely significant that *כל הארצת האל* is identical with Gen 26.3, although the phrase does not occur elsewhere. This verbal identity is certainly a difficulty for anyone who wants to consider vv 3 and 4 as doublets.⁶³ And if the existence of two versions of the land promise in succeeding verses is attributed to a redactor,⁶⁴ it must be demonstrated that there is good reason why a redactor should have invented a second such promise while the original author should not. This second promise of land *לזרעך*, is distinguished from the first *לך* *ולזרעך*, and emphasizes that the fulfilment of this promise will survive the Patriarch.

The promise of blessing for the nations also mentions the descendants of Isaac rather than Isaac himself. This element of the promise is most problematic, and because the discussion is necessarily extensive, I shall deal with it in section (c) immediately below. Verse 5, which reinforces the final phrase of v 3, clearly functions as a guarantee to Isaac that the promise will be fulfilled. At the same time it makes explicit Yahweh's motive for making the promise. Verse 6, as I have already observed, has a double function in recording Isaac's obedient response to the divine admonition and also establishing the location of the following episode.

c) **The Promise of Blessing for the Nations:** The promise of blessing occurs five times in connection with "the nations" in the Patriarchal Narrative,⁶⁵ but the exact meaning of this promise is disputed. A major difficulty is that although the verb which is used is always *ברך*, it occurs in two different forms: three times in the niph'al (Gen 12.3; 18.18;

28.14) and twice in the hithpa^cel (Gen 22.18; 26.4). The use of these two forms has led to some controversy with respect to their precise meaning and, although the view that the niph^cal at least should be taken passively has not been without support,⁶⁶ the majority have held that both forms should be considered to carry a reflexive meaning.⁶⁷ Thus, it is alleged, these texts promise that the nations will "bless themselves" by wishing upon themselves or each other such happiness, good fortune, or blessing as was typified by the name of Abraham and/or his descendants.⁶⁸

At this stage, I shall make several general observations concerning the sentences in which the promise occurs. It is often assumed that these five sentences provide two different formulations of the same promise, and only the form of the verb and the substitution of one stereotyped phrase for another differs from case to case. But it may be argued that the sentences evidence a broad variety of usage, in the context of which the use of two different verbal forms is less startling. Where the niph^cal is used, the formulation of the promise differs to some extent from one example to another. The entire phrase at Gen 12.3, which is part of a group of promises addressed to Abraham, is repeated at 28.14, in a group of promises addressed to Jacob, but with the addition of ובזרעך. At 18.18, on the other hand, which is more precisely an allusion to the promise, the phrase בו כל גויי הארץ is substituted for the בן כל מטפחת האדמה of 12.3 and 28.14. Where the hithpa^cel is used (22.18 and 26.4), the phrase והתברכו כל גויי הארץ is repeated verbatim, and in both cases is followed by a clause which is introduced by עקב, but the motive advanced in each clause is quite different. Similarly, although the phrase כל גויי הארץ is found at 18.18, 22.18 and 26.4, at 18.18 it forms the last part of a rhetorical question and is followed by an answering clause which is introduced by כי.

When the promise is first given to Abraham, it is made בן (12.3); when Yahweh muses to himself whether to inform Abraham of the coming destruction of Sodom, לו is used (18.18), and when the promised son is spared, the promise becomes בזרעך, and the reason is given עקב אשר שמעת בקלי (22.18). In the Isaac story the promise is made בזרעך, but this time because... שמוע אברהם בקלי. And when it is made to Jacob, it is made בן, while ובזרעך is added at the end of the clause.⁶⁹

In spite of the recurrence of certain stereotyped phrases, these five sentences evidence a varied rhetoric, and it is possible that the author(s) of these passages made a genuine attempt to avoid the monotony of verbatim repetition. This possibility should be considered as an alternative to the view which posits a steady development in the promise under the pen of a whole series of authors and redactors.⁷⁰

Westermann has argued that the combination of "promise" and "blessing" at Gen 12.1-3 (J) involves two basically different theological concepts (in the one "God's saving action is central" and in the other "his blessing action is central").⁷¹ Moreover, the taking up of the blessing into the promise provides the connection between the Patriarchal Narrative and the Exodus. The essence of this contradiction is well stated by Ridenhour:⁷²

In the ancient understanding of blessing, the blessing became effective at the point when the blessing was spoken and not at a future point in time. Thus in Genesis 12.1-3 the Yahwist has taken the conception of blessing and united it with the promise motif. Here one is dealing with a later stage in the history of tradition of the patriarchal narratives.

This "ancient understanding of blessing" is based on Pedersen's belief that blessing was transmitted by the very word in which it was spoken.⁷³ Isaac's refusal to bless Esau after having mistakenly given the blessing to Jacob (Gen 27) is generally considered vital evidence for this point.⁷⁴

Because Isaac had already spoken over Jacob the efficacious words of blessing, they could not be recalled, and so the blessing must rest upon Jacob in spite of Isaac's intention.⁷⁵ But insufficient attention has been paid to the possibility that Isaac had become reconciled to permitting the blessing to rest upon Jacob.⁷⁶ And an Israelite audience may have taken great delight in Esau being doubly duped in the one narrative, first by Jacob's trick, then by his father's excuse. Some details of the story are clearly less than realistic, and Isaac's dealings with both his sons display some ambiguity. The humorous depiction of Isaac as one who could be deceived by the cold skin of a kid should not be taken too seriously.⁷⁷

However the promise and blessing might have become combined in the tradition, and whether or not blessing originally was irrevocable, in Genesis its irrevocability depends upon Abraham's obedience (Gen 22.18; 26.3, 5) and not upon anything inherent in the nature of blessing.⁷⁸

In recent discussions of the meaning of the promise of blessing for the nations, too little attention has been paid to the evidence of LXX, which translates both hithpa^cel and niph^cal of ךך by ἐνευλογηθήσονται.⁷⁹ This word, which occurs also in the New Testament at Acts 3.25 and Gal 3.8, seems to indicate that the LXX translators understood the two Hebrew forms as passives. Although this circumstance is by no means decisive, it may suggest that one should not opt too quickly for a reflexive meaning.

Albrektson admits that a reflexive rendering causes the promise passages to "become less charged with theological profundity",⁸⁰ but he would not have expected "so advanced a universalism as the rendering by the passive form implies" from the Yahwist anyway. But it is hazardous to preclude a possible meaning on such subjective grounds.⁸¹

It has been observed that the pu^cal, which occurs 13 times in the Old Testament would give a passive sense,⁸² and in addition that, while the niph^cal may sometimes be passive the hithpa^cel cannot be. Yet these grammatical considerations do not clarify the issue completely, and one recent influential attempt to treat the problem has been Schreiner's proposal that the niph^cal should be translated, "(für) sich Segen erwerben, sich Segen verschaffen".⁸³

This translation avoids the weak sense of those renderings which speak of other nations using the name of Abraham and/or his descendants as a paradigm of blessing, e.g., "all the nations of the earth will pray to be blessed as you/they are blessed". Not only does this promise little, but it is entirely inappropriate as the climax to a whole series of promises as it is at Gen 12.3; 22.18; 26.4; 28.14; and, to a lesser extent, 18.18.

The history of the promise tradition developed by Alt and Noth deprives the promise sections of any congenial narrative context which might help to clarify their meaning. But the structural analysis of Gen 26.1-33 (Chapter One) has demonstrated a high degree of correlation between the various promises, particularly this promise of blessing for the nations, and the narrative episodes which surround them. Indeed, there is a sense in which the covenant formed between Isaac and Abimelech at Gerar could be considered paradigmatic of the way in which the foreign nations might eventually come to participate in the divine blessing by allying themselves with Israel, and through Israel with Israel's God.

Such considerations, are not conclusive proof of the meaning of the phrase. They provide additional support, however, for rendering the promise of blessing for the nations along the lines proposed by Schreiner.

If the phrase means no more than "to wish oneself blessed", it is difficult to reconcile the promise of Gen 26.4 with the declaration of Abimelech to Isaac at Beersheba, "We see that Yahweh is with you (**גִּסְרְךָ**)... You are now the blessed of Yahweh (**בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה**)", which is so closely linked with the desire to form a covenant (**בְּרִית**, v 28f.). The idiom seems to imply that the nations will come to participate in the blessing promised to the Patriarchs when they actively seek to obtain it for themselves.

d) The Wife-Sister Episode: The so-called wife-sister motif (vv 7-11) has been much discussed in recent years. Some scholars have been impressed by the alleged parallels between the custom which is said to underlie those narratives in which the Patriarch represents his wife as his sister (Gen 12.10-20; 20; 26.6-11) and a custom allegedly attested in certain of the Nuzi texts, and which is inferred to have been widespread in Hurrian society.⁸⁴ It is argued that these parallels are sufficiently strong to shed light on actual customs of the "Patriarchal Age" on the one hand, and to explain the occurrence of the motif in the Old Testament on the other.⁸⁵ But the theory has been subjected to several trenchant criticisms, and to such effect that the case of those who hold it must fail, for the evidence adduced now seems to be sadly lacking in conviction.⁸⁶

I have already discussed a number of other accounts of the structure of this episode,⁸⁷ but must add a few observations to fill out my own analysis. The context of this story is provided by the preceding material (vv 1-6) which supplies both a location and the divine promise over against which the incident derives its meaning. Verses 1-6 place Isaac in Gerar in a relationship of dependence to Abimelech; they also represent him as the recipient of Yahweh's promise of blessing which pertains among other

things to a multitude of descendants and the promise that these descendants will become a source of blessing to the nations.

Coats, in defining vv 1-17 as a "tale", considers Isaac's "deceptive introduction of his wife as his sister" as the "complication" essential to the structure of the genre. But there are three related elements subsumed here under this term:

1. the question concerning Isaac's wife
2. Isaac's lie
3. Isaac's motive for lying

Moreover, these elements are not followed immediately by the "resolution", but with a statement concerning the passage of time which is then connected to Abimelech's discovery of the truth, and that is not so much a resolution as a further complication. Abimelech accuses Isaac of deception, demands to be told the reason for it, and Isaac proffers his excuse. Abimelech repeats the accusation,⁸⁸ raises its possible consequences, and issues a decree guaranteeing protection to Isaac and Rebekah.

This amounts to a structure which cannot be subsumed simply under the category of "tale".⁸⁹ It has been noted above that the episode relates to the preceding material. It also relates to the material which follows, especially the material relating to Isaac's accumulation of wealth following the blessing of Yahweh. In Genesis 12 and 20 the motifs of Abraham's lie and great wealth are incorporated into a single episode. But in 26.7-16 the motifs have been distinguished to the extent that they have generated two episodes in the story of Isaac rather than one. Nevertheless, the association of the two motifs remains sufficiently close to suggest that the narrator has deliberately formed two episodes from them in order to make the point that Isaac's wealth does not derive from his lie.

The law promulgated by Abimelech protecting Isaac and Rebekah (v 11), may be mentioned here. This decree closely resembles the apodictic form identified by Alt,⁹⁰ but it would be wrong to conclude without further investigation that Abimelech's decree was an authentic law of this type or that it could be attributed to the Sitz im Leben usually associated with such laws. For, unless it can be shown that Gen 26.1-33 reports actual events, it may well be that the forms which it employs have been generated and are governed by a situation in literature rather than life. Even if it has been modelled on the apodictic form, the more precise Sitz im Leben of the injunction is to be located somewhere within the institution of storytelling.⁹¹ The law in Gen 26.11 is unambiguously the ad hoc creation of the narrator which resolves a narrative tension by guaranteeing the safety of Isaac and Rebekah on the one hand, and the Philistines on the other.⁹² In the decree issued by Abimelech, the words באיש הזה ובאשתו exhibit a specificity which is not found elsewhere in this form. In the usual apodictic form the object is specified only by its relation to the subject, but here it is "this man or his wife". Here, too, the formulation exceeds the usual five beat line described by Alt.⁹³ Yet in its terse phrasing, in its introductory participle, and in its concluding death sentence מוֹת יוֹמָת, Gen 26.11b clearly resembles apodictic law. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that this law finds its proper setting in the narrative and not in the cultic setting of apodictic law.

Nor does the occurrence of this law in the Isaac narrative provide any reliable indication of how such laws were promulgated in ancient Israel. Not only is the law found here on the lips of a foreign king, but this is the only narrative text in the Old Testament in which such an apodictic law is laid down.⁹⁴ It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the narrator

had sufficient knowledge of this form and confidence in its availability to be able to transform it for his own literary purposes, for it cannot be argued that he was restricted to just this form by circumstances pertaining to the composition of his narrative. He has exercised his free choice by utilizing a slightly adapted apodictic form. This indicates that the form had obtained common currency by the time the narrator composed this law.⁹⁵ It may finally be observed that this complete loosening of Gen 26.11 from any possible cultic or legal situation provides possible evidence that the present form of the narrative is relatively late.

The foregoing examination of the structure and form of the wife-sister episode does not permit the identification of an originally independent unit of tradition, but relates Gen 26.7-11 closely enough to its context to encourage the judgment that it has been integrated into a single piece with the theophany and promise on the one hand, and Isaac's deriving great wealth from Yahweh's blessing on the other.⁹⁶ It remains to be seen how closely vv 1-16 is integrated with vv 17-33 into the Isaac narrative.⁹⁷

e) The Wealth of Isaac, Genesis 26.12-16: The most important question here concerns the relationship of Gen 26.12-16 to vv 1-11: should the whole of vv 1-16 be understood as a single unit? or is there a decisive break in the narrative between vv 11 and 12? Gunkel, for example, held that Isaac's wealth corresponds in the narrative to the wealth which Abraham accumulated in the form of lavish gifts from heathen kings.⁹⁸ But although I believe that the Isaac narrative originated as a unified whole, I do not want to regard the wealth Isaac gains as a simple equivalent of Abraham's.⁹⁹

Narratives in which a Patriarch attempts to deceive a foreign ruler with respect to the true status of his wife occur three times in Genesis (12.10-20; 20; 26.6-16), and in each case there is some close connection between the motifs of deception and wealth. The question arises whether the two motifs are integral parts of one story in each context where they occur together, and whether there is a connection made in each narrative between the act of deception and the receipt of wealth.

Abraham twice receives gifts from the foreign ruler in whose land he sojourns, although for different reasons in each case.¹⁰⁰ At 12.16 he receives great wealth in return for Sarah, and Pharaoh is said to have treated him well for her sake just as he had planned.¹⁰¹ This gift is made, however, before Pharaoh realizes that he has been deceived. But in Genesis 20 Abraham receives gifts only after his deception has been found out, apparently as a reparation for the wrong Abimelech had done so unwittingly (vv 14-16), and also as payment for Abraham's intercession to reverse the plague of barrenness inflicted on Abimelech's household as a punishment for his apparent adultery.¹⁰² Genesis 20, unlike Gen 12.10-20, does not include the motif of "expulsion by the foreign ruler".¹⁰³ Instead, Abraham is given the freedom of the land (v 15).

Genesis 26, however, is strikingly different. Isaac leaves the city of Gerar before he becomes wealthy, and his wealth derives from Yahweh's blessing rather than Abimelech's gift. Although his departure from the city into its environs arises so that he might engage in farming and not because of expulsion, Abimelech's decree of v 11 so resolves the narrative tension created by Isaac's lie, that vv 12-16 can hardly be considered as other than a separate episode. That is not to say, however, that the unit once existed independently in the oral tradition, for it most certainly

would be incomplete without the location established by vv 1-11.¹⁰⁴ On the assumption that the author of Gen 26.1-33 knew 12.10-20 and 20.1-18, it is likely that he has deliberately dissociated Isaac's accumulation of wealth from his attempted deception of the Gerarites. As a result, his expulsion by Abimelech has also been dissociated from the deception.

By such means, the author has distinguished the Genesis 26 narrative from 12 and 20, using the same motifs to create a different story.¹⁰⁵ In the Isaac version, Yahweh rather than Pharaoh or Abimelech has become the donor, while Abimelech drops out of the narrative after v 11 and does not reappear until v 16. It remains true, however, that the connection between vv 1-11 and 12-16 is stronger than the connection between vv 1-16 and the subsequent narrative.¹⁰⁶

In Genesis 26, the narrator has in v 11 used the resolution of the supposed danger which had originally given rise to the deception in order to effect the separation of the motifs of deception and wealth. These two motifs clearly lie at the root of separate episodes in the Isaac narrative, although they are combined in a single episode in their Abrahamic versions.

f) **Material Relating to the Possession of Wells:** Isaac's progress from Gerar to Beersheba is narrated in a series of notices relating to the possession or secession of a number of wells. Among the materials used in Genesis 26, these notices are perhaps related to the Abrahamic materials least clearly. Yet vv 15 and 18 refer to Abraham, although these verses are often judged to be redactional.¹⁰⁷ Connected with this judgment, it is sometimes suggested that "there was once told about Abraham something like what is told about Isaac... and that for some reason the former story

was omitted in the composition of Genesis".¹⁰⁸ But such a suggestion may imply a most complicated tradition history, particularly if it is combined with the assumption of the priority of the Isaac tradition. It implies, at the very least, that an original Isaac tradition must have given rise to a parallel Abraham story (on the basis that the later figure borrows from the earlier). This new Abraham tradition then required the redactional addition of vv 15 and 18, to Genesis 26, but was later lost from the final form of Genesis!¹⁰⁹

The necessity of positing a complicated tradition history dissolves, however, if one assumes the reverse situation, that the Isaac narrative is heavily dependent upon Abrahamic traditions, and a close examination of the verses in question shows that this is probably the case. To regard vv 15 and 18 as glosses is to overlook their structural importance for the narrative as a whole. These verses bind together vv 1-16 and 17-33, thus connecting the two main parts of the Isaac narrative. But they do more than that: even if they tend to stand out from their contexts, neither is wholly inappropriate. Verse 15 provides an example of Philistine envy, perhaps suggesting that they were consistently envious, and v 18 relates Isaac's well-digging activity to his father's.

This portrayal of Isaac as one who follows in his father's footsteps is not inconsistent with the rest of Gen 26.1-33.¹¹⁰ Further, the lack of any tradition of well-digging as a characteristic activity of Abraham is no more a difficulty for the view that vv 15 and 18 were introduced by the author of Gen 26.1-33 than for the view that they were introduced by a redactor, for there is no obvious reason why a redactor need have been more careless than an author, less aware of stylistic infelicities.¹¹¹

In another respect, v 18 is no mere repetition of v 15. Verse 15 reports that the Philistines had filled Abraham's wells with dust, while v 18 reports that these wells were re-excavated by Isaac's servants, and their former names revived. This seems to imply that they have been more carefully composed to fit their present context than is sometimes granted.

Gen 26.17, 19-22, a series of notices relating to Esek, Sitnah, and Rehoboth, bear some resemblance to an itinerary,¹¹² so far as they enable Isaac and his company to move from the environs of Gerar to Beersheba (v 23). They also relate the course of the strife between Isaac's servants and the Gerarite herdsmen as they contest the possession of water-rights. Isaac's servants dig the wells, but are driven away from two of them by the local herdsmen. There is an element of artificiality in the connection of this sequence with v 23, for Isaac's speech (v 22), which provides a resolution to the whole account of strife over the wells, does not require a further removal to Beersheba.

The structure of this section is rather artificial in character:

Reports of Strife over Wells (vv 15, 17-22)

- | | | |
|-------|-------------|---|
| (v 15 | Statement: | Abraham's wells blocked by Philistines) |
| v 17 | | change of location |
| (v 18 | Statement: | redigging and renaming Abraham's wells) |
| v 19 | 1st Report: | Isaac's servants dig well |
| v 20 | | possession of well contested (by Gerarite herdsmen) |
| | | possession of well conceded (by Isaac) |
| | | well named "Esek", and name explained |
| v 21 | 2nd Report: | Isaac's servants dig another well |
| | | possession of well contested (by Gerarite herdsmen) |
| | | possession of well conceded (by Isaac) |
| | | well named "Sitnah" |
| | | change of location |
| v 22 | 3rd Report: | Isaac's servants dig another well |
| | | possession of the well is not contested |
| | | well named "Rehoboth", and name explained |

Even if Gen 26.1-33 is narrated from a point of view which regards Isaac as the hero, it is somewhat incongruous that he should be portrayed as the one who names the two wells he secedes to the Gerarite herdsmen. Usually a place would have been named by its inhabitants, not by someone who was being forced to leave. Isaac's naming Esek and Sitnah therefore emphasises the artificiality of the structure, which is also demonstrated by the way several brief and somewhat similar notices have been stitched together. These notices have not only been assembled consecutively, but have been artificially integrated into their present context by means of the insertion of v 15 into the previous section and v 18 between the change of location (v 17) and the first of these notices (v 19).

Taken together, these materials relating to the possession of wells [vv 15 (16) 17-22] anticipate the references to a well at Beersheba (vv 25, 32-33) and so bind together the events narrated at the beginning and end of Gen 26.1-33. Although vv 15, 18, refer to wells dug in Abraham's time, there is no corresponding Abraham tradition, except for Gen 21.22-34, which is more properly paralleled by 26.(25)26-33.

g) The Theophany at Beersheba: Although v 22 reveals no reason for Isaac to move on from Rehoboth, the narrative has him move directly from there to Beersheba, וַיֵּצֵא מִטְּסַח בְּאֵר שֶׁבַע (v 23). And without that linking of the two locations, the theophany which follows would have no context.¹¹³

The language descriptive of theophany has already been noted.¹¹⁴ The deity's words echo the promises made to Isaac at vv 2-5, although Yahweh's speech is briefer and not all the earlier promises are repeated. The speech begins with a self-identification formula (אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֲבִיךָ)¹¹⁵ which is followed by a negative particle (לֹא, cf. v 2). This is an

interesting rhetorical device, for although the same particle begins the divine speech in v 2, where it forms a negative command (אל תרד מצרימה), here it functions as ein Zuspruch Gottes,¹¹⁶ and so provides encouragement.

The complex of divine promises (v 24) contains three main elements which refer to the earlier divine speech (vv 3-5). The first promise, "I am with you (אתך אנכי), and will bless you", provides a significant transformation on the earlier version of this promise. In the earlier speech, this promise implies a future fulfilment (v 3), but in this speech it seems to refer to a present reality. The other term וברכתך, however, seems to speak of the future. I have already observed that at v 3 the two parts of the phrase are entirely complementary.¹¹⁷ That complementary relationship persists even here in v 24 where the two parts of the phrase speak of the present and future reality of the experience of blessing.

The second promise, "I will multiply your descendants (והרבית אתך זרעך)", repeats precisely a promise made at v 4, but without the earlier reference to "the stars of the heavens". Verse 24, however, does not repeat the earlier promises of land (v 3f.), and it is not clear whether this promise has been omitted because of the summary nature of v 24, or because with the arrival of Isaac at Beersheba a foothold in the land has been obtained (cf. v 16). The final phrase of the divine speech in v 24, והרבית אתך זרעך evokes the lengthier motive clauses contained in the first promise speech (vv 3, 5). The designation of Abraham as "my servant" may refer not only to the loyal service referred to in v 5, but also the relationship whereby Yahweh bound himself by oath to Abraham (v 3).

Isaac responds to the divine speech by building an altar (v 25, cf. Gen 12.7, 8; 13.18; 35.7) and worshipping Yahweh at Beersheba (cf. 12.8; 13.4; 16.13; 21.33); actions which are typical responses to divine speeches in the Patriarchal Narrative. The end of v 25, which notes that Isaac's servants dug a well at Beersheba, along with vv 32-33, where the finding of the water is reported to Isaac and the well is named, form a framework for the narrative account of the covenant between Isaac and Abimelech. The aetiology of the well (v 33) is related loosely to the content of vv 26-31.

h) Report of Treaty, vv 26-31: The section begins by reporting Abimelech's totally unexpected coming to Isaac at Gerar.¹¹⁸ Here, unlike v 1, the subject is placed before the verb for emphasis. The apparent reversal of the situation which obtained in v 1 suggests a relationship between the two verses.¹¹⁹ But Abimelech does not come alone. His companions, Ahuzzath and Phicol, his adviser (friend) and the commander in chief of his army, suggest an altogether more powerful figure than Isaac in v 1.¹²⁰

McCarthy has discerned "a remarkably constant pattern" in the Old Testament narratives concerned with the making of secular covenants or political treaties.¹²¹ Although admitting some flexibility, he proposes the following structure:¹²²

- 1) Negotiations based on existing relations;
- 2) Clearer definition of the relation;
- 3) Symbolic affirmation;
- 4) Notice of covenant making;
- 5) Association with a shrine.

According to McCarthy, the setting of this "widely known genre" is "the constant human need to create relationships beyond those of kinship", and he suggests that it provides "a solid set of connotations" to בְּרִית:¹²³

it always involved bilateral obligations, whether these were stated or not. The agent of covenant making could be almost anyone, superior, inferior, equal. Much could be left unsaid because social usage had established it clearly as a necessary corollary to making a covenant. Most important... is the fact that covenant making began from an existing relationship and confirmed it.

Most of these observations are no doubt correct and can be verified by examining a number of the relevant texts.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, I question his point that "Much could be left unsaid". Reports of covenant-making, such as Gen 26.26-31, do not demand that the reader fills in gaps, but provide precisely those details which the narrator hoped would achieve the required dramatic effect. I do not deny that such narratives contain details which reflect authentic secular covenant-making ceremonies, but unless historical reliability can be clearly demonstrated, it should not be assumed that every detail is authentic, and that it only remains to add other authentic details in order to reconstruct an actual event of covenant-making.

The covenant account (vv 26-31) has the following structure:

notice of Abimelech's approach
confrontation: Isaac's question (accusation)
 Abimelech a) recognizes Yahweh's "being with" Isaac
 b) requests a covenant with Isaac
 c) states his innocence towards Isaac
 d) recognizes Yahweh's "blessing" Isaac
ritual: Isaac makes feast
 sharing of feast
 swearing of oath (the following morning)
 dismissal in peace

With respect to the structure outlined by McCarthy, only the narrative context provides the episode with a clear association with a shrine, and indeed that context also specifies the location. Isaac's question (v 27) defines his perception of his relationship with Abimelech,¹²⁵ but the latter's perception (v 29), which here becomes the basis upon which he makes his request (v 28), is somewhat different. In spite of the wide

gulf between their respective perceptions of their relationship, Isaac accedes to Abimelech's request by making a feast for his visitors, sharing a meal and exchanging oaths with them.¹²⁶

It is difficult to discern McCarthy's elements, "Negotiations based on existing relations" and "Clearer definition of relation", in Isaac's and Abimelech's perception of their relationship. In view of the preceding narrative, it may be that neither perception reflects their relationship accurately. From this initial exchange, the narrator moves directly to the successful conclusion of the negotiations.¹²⁷

While Abimelech was the one who initiated the covenant, he did so as petitioner, and it was Isaac who granted it (v 30). This is explicit in the phrase **וַיַּעַשׂ לָהֶם סֵטוּחַ**. Isaac made the feast, and they (all) ate and drank. It is implied that Abimelech and his retinue remained with Isaac overnight, for it is said that "they rose in the morning" (whether from sleep or from feasting is not specified), and that both parties swore an oath (the content of the oath is unspecified). Finally Isaac set them on their way, and they departed from him in peace (**בְּשָׁלוֹם**).¹²⁸

These two verses (vv 30-31) comprise the following six elements:

- 1) he (Isaac) made a feast for them
- 2) they ate and drank
- 3) they rose early in the morning
- 4) each swore to his brother (treaty partner)
- 5) Isaac sent them from him
- 6) they departed from him in peace

Although these elements together bring the report of the making of a covenant between Isaac and Abimelech to a successful conclusion, a further conclusion is added in v 32f.¹²⁹ These verses, which provide an aetiology for the place name Beersheba,¹³⁰ are connected with the notice in v 25 (**וַיִּכְרֹוּ שָׁם עֵבֶרִי יַצְחָק בְּאֵר**), so far as they refer to the well which is

mentioned there. They are also connected loosely to the intervening material by טבחה (v 33) which recalls ויטבחו (v 31), and by the phrase גל כן שם העיר באר טבחה. These verses consist of four elements:

Report of New Well, (vv 32-33):

notice of time
digging of well reported
naming of well
aetiology

Long has argued that "The pericope spanning v. 23-33... resists full assimilation to its literary context",¹³¹ and that "the Beersheba account originated quite independently of these surrounding Isaac traditions" (i.e., vv 17-22, 34).¹³² But the reasons he gives for holding this view do not necessarily withstand scrutiny. Certainly v 34 (P) is unrelated to Gen 26.1-33, but it is not true that the absence of the dispute motif separates vv 23-33 from vv 17-22, for the dispute motif is already absent in v 22. Neither is the alleged lack of harmonisation between vv 26ff. and v 16 sufficient reason to posit their original independence.

1) Concluding Remarks: The analysis of the structure of Gen 26.1-33 and the related form-critical discussion have together served to substantiate the suggestion made above that the Isaac narrative should be considered as a composite narrative.¹³³ Although this classification is necessarily less precise than terms such as "tale" and "itinerary" which have been used in recent form-critical discussion, it has the merit of taking proper account of those features of the Isaac narrative which tend to support the conclusion that it is best considered as a unified whole on the one hand, and of discouraging the view that the narrative is probably an aggregate of previously independent units somehow held together by the theme "Isaac and the people of Gerar" on the other.

In spite of the usual critical view that it comprises a collection of disparate forms, the Isaac narrative provides evidence of unity at a number of levels which have been noted both in the present chapter and the earlier literary-structural analysis (Chapter One). In view of that discussion, I need only summarise that evidence here.

First, Gen 26.1-33 as a whole concerns the same set of characters: Isaac and Abimelech are the leading human characters throughout, and other characters who appear are either their representatives (Isaac's herdsmen/servants, the Philistines/herdsmen of Gerar) or their close associates (Rebekah, Ahuzzath and Phicol).¹³⁴ Closely associated with this concern with the same set of characters is the fact that the narrative appears to be concerned with the changing nature of their relationship. The first episode (vv 7-11) is preceded by the note that in time of famine Isaac went to Abimelech at Gerar, and in this action he clearly enters into some sort of relationship with Abimelech in which he depends for his security upon the latter's good will. This relationship is reversed by the last episode (vv 26-31) when Abimelech comes from Gerar to Isaac (at Beersheba) in order to enter into a form of peace treaty with him, and by this action implies that it is now he who depends upon Isaac's good will.

Second, besides the human characters, Yahweh also plays a prominent part in the story. He appears in theophany to Isaac at Gerar and promises him blessing - the basic promise (ואהיה עמך ואברכך) is expanded in a number of ways - and this promise is referred to explicitly several times in the later narrative (vv 12, 28, 29). It is recapitulated in abbreviated form in the report of a theophany at Beersheba (vv 23-25), and it is also alluded to at v 22 and perhaps at v 16 as well. These references to the promise run like a thread through the narrative, as indeed do references to

Yahweh (vv 2-5, 13, 22, 24f, 28f.) which are so regularly connected to the references to the divine promise.¹³⁵

Third, as noted in Chapter One, vv 15 and 18 help to integrate the two main sections of the Isaac narrative by making a concern with wells, which is such a prominent feature of the second section, also an interest of the first. In this way these verses contribute to the impression of narrative unity, even if the reference to the Philistines stopping Abraham's wells with earth in v 15 has been considered a little clumsy by some critics.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, is the undoubted fact that after the note that Isaac lived in Gerar (v 6), each succeeding episode requires details which are only provided by (the) preceding episode(s) in order to provide it with an intelligible context. Since this point has been noted already,¹³⁶ I will mention only one example. The note that Abimelech went to him from Gerar does not mention where Isaac was at the time he received the visit (v 26). The location (Beersheba) is specified by v 23, and it may be considered that the reference to Gerar would sound harsh if it were not already known from the first part of the narrative.

In all these ways, Gen 26.1-33 evidences a degree of unity which would be surprising in a composition which had come about simply by a collector stringing together everything which was known in the tradition about Isaac and organizing it in terms of a theme such as "Isaac and the people of Gerar. The status of Gen 26.1-33 as a composite narrative may therefore be explored further by examining its tradition and compositional history.

B. Genesis 26.1-33: Tradition History

While form criticism has sought to relate genre to the conventional situation which best accounts for the shape of the text and how it functioned in society, traditio-historical method has been used in Old Testament studies as a means of illuminating the origins and growth of the biblical traditions, and relating them to specific locations which are said to have been their place of origin.¹³⁷ The comparison of doublets has been an important feature of traditio-historical research, so far as it has been used to demonstrate how actual traditions are supposed to have developed.¹³⁸ On the other hand, such study seems sometimes to have been undertaken with a view to identifying the most ancient features of the tradition.¹³⁹

Since the time of Gunkel, the question whether Abraham or Isaac was the prior figure in Israelite tradition has been constantly debated, and in spite of Gunkel's weighty opinion to the contrary, the majority of scholars have concluded that Isaac was the earlier and that stories about him were later transferred to Abraham. In this connection, Noth's lengthy discussion has proved influential,¹⁴⁰ and I shall now examine the arguments he used in advancing the priority of Isaac over Abraham.

a) **The View that Isaac is Prior:** Noth begins his discussion of Isaac and Abraham by observing that "Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Hauptproblem bei Isaak und Abraham ist die **Frage der Priorität**".¹⁴¹ In discussing this question, he advances three main arguments to support his view that Isaac is prior. First, he argues that it is an indicator of Isaac's priority

that "gegenüber dem offenbar später entwickelten Abraham so in den Hintergrund tritt", and so we can still detect "das überlieferungsgeschichtlich verhältnsmässig junge Weiterwachsen der Abrahamstraditionen an dem Fortschritt von G ~ E zu J".¹⁴² Second, it is clear that "zuerst Isaak als Vater zu Jakob hinzugetreten ist, während Abraham nur durch den schon vorher zugewaschenen Isaak Verbindung mit Jakob und damit mit dem Ganzen der Pentateuchüberlieferung erhalten hat".¹⁴³ Third, except for the reference to Beer-lahai-roi in Gen 25.11b, "nur das in Gen. 26 J zusammengefasste Überlieferungsmaterial, in dem charakteristischerweise Stücke im jüngeren ausgeführten Sagenstil völlig fehlen".¹⁴⁴ For Noth, Gen 26.1-33 evidences a 'völlig „profaner“ Form',¹⁴⁵ and he believes that "Im ganzen machen diese Isaakgeschichten einen überlieferungsgeschichtlich noch urtümlicheren Eindruck als die Geschichten selbst von westjordanischen Jacob".¹⁴⁶ These views were fully endorsed in von Rad's influential commentary:¹⁴⁷

Eigentliche Isaak-Überlieferung enthält nur das Kap. 26, das freilich nicht eine Erzählung, sondern gleich ein ganzes Mosaik von Isaak-Geschichten darbietet. Erst die neuere Forschung ist aber auf ihr hohes Alter, ihre Ursprünglichkeit und ihren Quellenwert aufmerksam geworden.

It should not be forgotten that Noth's discussion of these questions forms only a part of a much larger project which is concerned to present a traditio-historical account of the development of the entire Pentateuchal tradition, nor that the kind of methodology and presuppositions which have led him to those conclusions which are of specific interest for the present question belong also to that larger enterprise.¹⁴⁸

In the essay introducing his translation of Noth's study,¹⁴⁹ Anderson has abstracted six "guidelines" which Noth followed in his investigation. According to Anderson, Noth used these six guidelines as "clues which, when mutually reinforcing one another and considered in the context of tribal

relationships, illumine the problem of the origin and development of the traditions."¹⁵⁰ Anderson cites the following:¹⁵¹

1. Earliest traditions are formulated in small units and in concise style in contrast to later material which tends to appear in large units and in discursive (ausgeführt) style...
2. Earliest traditions are attached to places... and frequently end with an etiology of the place name...
3. Earliest traditions are usually "cultic" or "theophanic" in character...
4. Earliest traditions tend to be anonymous and to deal with typical figures... later traditions are more specific and individualized...
5. Earliest traditions usually lie in the background and stand out awkwardly in the received Pentateuchal narrative...
6. ... the cases of bracketing together (Verklammerungen) of discrete units of tradition are secondary...

Anderson observes that these guidelines "work hand in hand and mutually reinforce one another",¹⁵² but both this point and the validity of these guidelines have been well criticized by Polzin.¹⁵³ In a critical review article he has picked up a point made by Anderson in his discussion of the "shorter is older" guideline much used by Noth. Anderson writes:¹⁵⁴

it may be argued that one should not expect oral tradition to follow a course of development from simple to elaborate. In archaic societies the movement of tradition may have been in the opposite direction: the spinning out of thematic material in long rhythmic elaborations may have been prior to -- or at least contemporary with -- the chaste precision of the small unit.

But if this criterion is as ambiguous as Anderson suggests, Polzin's point is devastating, "truly ambiguous evidence is no evidence at all",¹⁵⁵ and nothing follows from it.

Polzin examines the guidelines 3, 4, and 5 together, and attempts to show that "Noth often uses them even though he uses, in other places, their mirror image to arrive at exactly the opposite conclusion."¹⁵⁶ This charge carries serious implications against the validity of conclusions arrived at following Noth's guidelines. For, if they are so ambiguous in their application, one cannot be very confident of the soundness of judgments

based upon them, and the whole enterprise is thrown into question because of the evident subjectivity which controls his decisions. It is therefore necessary to examine the charge which Polzin has made.

First Polzin demonstrates the ambiguity in the use of the guideline which opposes the "religious" or "cultic" to the "secular" or "worldly". By juxtaposing a number of quotations from Noth's work,¹⁵⁷ he shows that it is possible to construct a diachronic typology of narrative content/style which reveals the source of the ambiguity:¹⁵⁸

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. "still profane" | : | the Isaac stories
then |
| 2. "cultic, religious" | : | the West Jordan Jacob stories
then |
| 3. "worldly, secular" | : | the East Jordan Jacob stories |

Polzin is correct when he claims that this example reveals 'the quite ambiguous distinction between thematic and stylistic elements of a very early "profane tradition" and those elements of a very late "worldly or secular tradition".¹⁵⁹ It is not easy to see precisely what would distinguish the early, still profane Isaac traditions from the worldly or secular East Jordan stories of Polzin's example. In some cases, perhaps, Noth might differentiate between the respective lengths of the two types of tradition, but Polzin has already ruled out this court of appeal.¹⁶⁰

With respect to the guideline that earliest traditions tend to be anonymous and deal with typical characters, Polzin points to Noth's conclusion that the earliest stage of the tradition at Exodus 5 and 24 involved the more anonymous and typical "foremen of the people of Israel", and representatives of the people respectively.¹⁶¹ Yet elsewhere, Polzin observes, the "worldly" East Jordan Jacob has become "a type which characterizes the whole people and their life".¹⁶² Here Noth argues from

the specific character to the typical representation, and so appears to be moving in the opposite direction to that laid down by the guideline. Once again, it seems, he can move easily in whichever direction he wants.

According to Anderson's reading of Noth, earliest traditions usually lie in the background in the received pentateuchal narrative,¹⁶³ and this guideline permits Noth to demonstrate the lateness of Abraham in the development of the Pentateuch. A similar argument explains the extensive development of the theme, "revelation at Sinai".¹⁶⁴ But, asks Polzin, "Why does he argue that Moses is, with the possible exception of Jacob, the oldest figure of the pentateuchal narrative, and offer this as an explanation of why Moses became, in the end, the most prominent figure of the present pentateuchal narrative?"¹⁶⁵ If Abraham is prominent because he is late, why should Moses' prominence lead to him being considered early? These conflicting arguments can arise only because an ambiguity surrounds the application of this guideline to figures and features of the pentateuchal narratives.

Polzin has therefore shown that some ambiguity surrounds the ways in which Noth has applied these guidelines, both explicit and implicit, to the solution of the traditio-historical problem of the Pentateuch. Polzin's argument does not prove that Noth's intuition was necessarily wrong in every case, but it shows that his position may depend more on intuition than scientific method, and it suggests that one may not simply take over Noth's results as "the fundamental presuppositions for correct solutions" without being bound to search for more adequate reasons for holding them. Noth's view that Isaac is prior to Abraham in the tradition has been placed in doubt, and the matter is open for further consideration.

Noth's methodological presuppositions have also been challenged by Van Seters who argued that his hypothetical source G and the redactors posited by other source critics "are unnecessary if it can be shown that the various writers who succeeded one another (and who were admittedly also compilers and editors) were directly dependent upon the works of their predecessors and incorporated these works in their own".¹⁶⁶ He also contends that "In the actual practice of literary criticism the redactor functions mainly as a deus ex machina to solve literary difficulties."¹⁶⁷

Van Seters also examines Noth's thesis that the Pentateuch represents a long history of development from its pre-literary beginnings to its final literary form - a process which is quite different from that involved in the composition of the literary histories of the Old Testament - and denies that this can be the case.¹⁶⁸ In this denial he makes use of Childs' point that "in the treatment of the exodus by the credos of Deuteronomy 26 and 6 the Reed Sea is omitted, and in this they are consistent with Deuteronomic usage".¹⁶⁹ This raises the serious question (against von Rad as well as Noth) whether any of the thematic structures of the Pentateuch can be traced back to an originally oral tradition basis.¹⁷⁰ He concludes that there is "no alternative but to base the tradition-history of the Pentateuch on the basis of redaction criticism".¹⁷¹

Van Seters criticizes Noth's work on the "promise to the Patriarchs" on three counts: (i) he makes no attempt to demonstrate that the promise is primary to the traditions and not just a framework for them;¹⁷² (ii) he does not attempt to account for the transmission of these traditions by any identifiable group in the central highlands;¹⁷³ and (iii) his association of the traditions with particular places does not work well in some cases, and sometimes more than one Patriarch is associated with the same place.¹⁷⁴

Van Seters concludes that Noth has demonstrated neither the antiquity of the Genesis narratives nor their basis in oral tradition.¹⁷⁵ There can be no doubt that Van Seters' critique of the traditio-historical method is unashamedly iconoclastic, as is his consistent attack on the documentary hypothesis.¹⁷⁶ Although Rendtorff claims that "Van Seters... adheres to the traditional literary-critical methodology and distinguishes sources and layers that are literarily distinct",¹⁷⁷ he may be open to the accusation that he has not understood Van Seters correctly.¹⁷⁸ Employing source and redaction criticism, and taking account of the observations of Winnett,¹⁷⁹ and the analyses of Wagner¹⁸⁰ and Sandmel,¹⁸¹ he explains the development of the pentateuch by means of a supplementary hypothesis.

Noth is not immune to the criticisms which have been made by Polzin and Van Seters. Abiguity appears to be built into some of the criteria he uses to help him assess the comparative antiquity of the pentateuchal traditions, and it is probable that the oral basis for the traditions was not as prevalent as he thought. Noth's contention that Isaac is prior to Abraham in the tradition is therefore open to revision, and I shall address that question now in discussing the composition history of Gen 26.1-33.

b) Genesis 26.1-33, Composition History: Some of the general observations made by Noth concerning the Isaac narrative are undoubtedly sound, not only when he notes that much of it is related to the Abraham tradition, but when he continues:¹⁸²

Andrerseits macht Gen. 26 in der überlieferten Form nicht den Eindruck von etwas Ursprünglichem und organisch Gewachsenem; vielmehr erscheint dieses Kapitel mit seiner Aufreihung von allerlei teilweise nur mehr angedeuteten und in sich nicht recht geschlossenen Überlieferungseinheiten an dem Faden des Themas "Isaak und die Leute von Gerar" als eine gemachte literarische Komposition; und um eine solche handelt es sich offenbar auch.

I agree with Noth's assessment of the apparent artificiality of the Isaac narrative. But I am not persuaded that the conclusions he drew from this observation are valid. The incompleteness which he observed in vv 7-11 derives from the literary activity of the author of Gen 26.1-33, and not from the passage being a "summarisch zusammengefassten literarischen Formulierung". Gen 26.1-33 is certainly "eine gemachte literarische Komposition". But if Noth is wrong about the priority of Isaac in the tradition, and if it cannot be shown that independent parallel oral traditions existed concerning both Abraham and Isaac, it may be that the conclusion that the Isaac narrative was composed largely of stories which had previously been told concerning Abraham is inescapable.¹⁸³

Such a conclusion has been upheld in somewhat different forms in the recent contributions of Van Seters and Westermann.¹⁸⁴ Van Seters has argued cogently that "the whole Isaac tradition is a complex literary composition worked out entirely by J and using as his sources not old oral traditions, but elements and motifs from the Abraham tradition".¹⁸⁵ In discussing "The Problem of the Beautiful Wife", he begins by examining the form of the so-called "wife-sister" stories in Genesis (12.10-10; 20; 26.1-11).¹⁸⁶ After reviewing the positions of Gunkel and Noth,¹⁸⁷ Van Seters sets out his analysis of the structure of the folktale model for these stories.¹⁸⁸ Besides fulfilling "the basic structural requirements of Olrik's laws",¹⁸⁹ and providing "the basis of a great variety of story themes", "this same structure appears" in Gen 12.10-20.¹⁹⁰ A discussion of this structure leads Van Seters to conclude:¹⁹¹

12:10-20... corresponds rather closely to a folktale model. It contains an obvious narrative structure and other compositional characteristics well suited to popular storytelling. There is very little adaption of the story to the Abraham tradition as a whole, either in terms of its internal content or in terms of its connections with its present literary context.

But that narrative structure is less well defined in Genesis 20,¹⁹² and even less so in Gen 26.1-11.¹⁹³ Detailed analysis of these passages reveals a literary dependence on Gen 12.10-20 in the case of Genesis 20,¹⁹⁴ and that Gen 26.1-11 similarly depends on both Gen 12.10-20 and 20.¹⁹⁵

Even if Gen 12.10-20 does most closely resemble a folktale model, it should not be assumed for that reason alone that it is thereby closer to an oral tradition.¹⁹⁶ Gen 12.10-20 may be as much a literary composition as either of its variants. At any rate, conformity to Olrik's laws alone is no real proof of orality. Van Seters himself admits when he introduces his structural analysis of the narrative form, 'This structure... is much broader than the motif of the "beautiful wife" and forms the basis of a great variety of story themes although it is not necessarily the only pattern for folktales'.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, just as folktales might follow other patterns, folkloristic motifs can occur in stories which have originated in scribal contexts, especially in societies where such motifs are well known.

Nevertheless, Van Seters' analysis adequately supports his contention that Gen 26.1-11 is a literary reworking in which the other two versions of this "story" have been conflated and revised.¹⁹⁸ There are in fact examples of "resumptive or proleptic style" as well as a number of "blind motifs, foreshortenings, and backward allusions" in Genesis 20 and 26.1-11 which generally suggest a process of literary revision along the lines argued by Van Seters.¹⁹⁹

With reference to Gen 26.1-11, Van Seters shows that v 1 has combined elements from the other two stories,²⁰⁰ and that in each of vv 7, 9-11 there are a number of words and phrases which originate from first one and then the other of the parallel stories.²⁰¹ Moreover, v 8, which "presents

a complete departure from the earlier two stories" deals with the serious problems created by Gen 12.1-10 which Genesis 20 attempted to answer, viz., "how did the king discover that the woman was really the wife of the patriarch? And was the chastity of the woman ever in jeopardy?"²⁰² The solution offered in this verse, however, evidences a lack of interest in the folktale theme.²⁰³

A comparison of the confrontation scene of vv 9-10 with the other versions of the story discloses evidence of the conflation of these sources in Genesis 26, and this has resulted in "considerable awkwardness and lack of logical sequence".²⁰⁴ The apodictic command of v 11 "has been changed from general law to a quite specific case", and in a "rather ingenious double entendre" has succeeded in combining the different senses of the verb אָדָּן evidenced in 12.17 and 20.6.²⁰⁵

Van Seters argues that, since the author of Genesis 26 knew the other versions of the "wife-sister" incident, he also knew the framework of Gen 12.10-20, and therefore his story "very likely included the theophany to Isaac". Moreover, because he holds that "The theophany plays no role whatever in the rest of the story", he believes that "there is no reason to see only part of it as original and the rest as the work of a redactor".²⁰⁶

Turning next to the accounts of the covenants between the Patriarchs and Abimelech, Van Seters examines Gen 21.22-34. By source critical means, he isolates vv 25-26, 28-31a, but concludes that this brief episode, although coherent, "hardly constitutes a real story or conforms to any basic genre of legend". Since "it assumes complete knowledge of Abraham's relationship to Abimelech, the identity of Abimelech, and the general locale in which the events take place", its beginning is defective. He

resolves this problem by placing 21.25-26, 28-31a immediately after 20.17 (18).²⁰⁷ He denies that vv 22-24, 27, 31b-34 is "Elohistic". The terminology of this section bears a striking resemblance to that of Genesis 26, and so may be attributed to the same source.²⁰⁸

Van Seters further denies that two previously independent accounts have been spliced together by a redactor who inserted vv 31b-32a, for these verses are clearly presupposed by vv 32b-34. Nor is it possible to regard vv 22-24, 27, 31b-34 as a self-contained unit, and so these verses must be regarded as "a secondary supplement to the earlier account",²⁰⁹ made with the purpose of broadening "the limited legal act into something like an international treaty".²¹⁰ Abimelech acknowledges the deity's involvement with Abraham (Gen 21.22), just as he does later to Isaac (Gen 26.28f.) For the author, the Patriarchs represent the later Israel, and he seeks here to make the same point in Genesis 21 as in Genesis 26.

Van Seters attacks the usual critical division of Gen 26.12-33 into several originally independent units, based on "the frequent use of etiology in these verses". Etiology "need not reflect any oral tradition at all, but can be a useful literary technique as well". Gen 26.12-33 in fact continues from vv 1-11, dealing with the wealth motif differently to Genesis 12 and 20, for here the king does not supply the Patriarch's wealth.²¹¹ The expulsion motif in Gen 26.16 corresponds to Gen 12.20.

Gen 26.17 and 19-22 "represent a conflation of themes from the two Abraham stories (Gen 12.10-20 [including the disputes with Lot's herdsmen (Gen 13)] and 20, 21.22-34) into a new episode in the life of Isaac".²¹² Further, vv 15 and 18 belong to the same literary process, filling in the statement of Gen 21.34 in retrospect.²¹³ The divine promise speech of

v 24 is "simply a shortened version of the earlier one in vv 2-5", and concerning the remaining features of the story, Van Seters writes:²¹⁴

the story about the well of Beersheba... is used as a framework for both the theophany and the covenant-making episode. The building of the altar (v. 25; cf. 21:33) is more logically tied to the theophany, while the naming of the well is linked with the swearing of the oath between the Philistines and Isaac.

Van Seters' observations are in close agreement with the general tenor of my discussion of the form of Gen 26.1-33 in the earlier part of this chapter, and a number of the literary observations made in Chapter Two above would provide additional general support. Even if other aspects of his discussion of the Abraham narratives require some refinement,²¹⁵ his conclusion with respect to the Isaac narrative is surely warranted:²¹⁶

In the case of chap. 26, the whole Isaac tradition is a complex literary composition worked out entirely by J and using as his sources not old oral traditions, but elements and motifs from the Abraham tradition. There is no evidence whatever of an oral base, nor is it possible to suggest a process by which the Isaac tradition could have been the origin for the Abraham stories.

Westermann too holds that 26.1-33 is "eine bewusste Komposition",²¹⁷ but posits a more complicated compositional history. The core consists of well-notices (vv 15, 18, 19-25, 32-33), which originally belonged to an itinerary (vv 17, 22a, 23, 35b [sic!]), and this has been framed by the "Hauptteil" (vv 12-17 [excluding 15], 26-31) which is identified as the oldest "Überlieferungsschicht"²¹⁸ Vv 1-11 (in which vv 2-5, with the possible exception of 2a, 3a) have been used as an introduction, and connected with the "alten Tradition vom Graben der Brunnen" by means of the narrative (vv 12-17, 26-31) which frames the core.²¹⁹ In this way, Westermann locates the origin of the Isaac tradition in the material concerned with wells which has been handed down in the form of an itinerary.²²⁰

Although Westermann accepts Van Seters' arguments that vv 1-11 contain a number of blind motifs and are dependent on 12.10-20 and 20.1-18, and regards vv 1-33 as "eine selbständige und in sich geschlossene" story,²²¹ he nevertheless differs from Van Seters in this account of the composition history of the chapter. So far as it permits the identification of the core of an ancient Isaac tradition, this is an important difference. But Westermann parts company with those, like Coats, who hold that the notices concerning the wells reflect a truncated narrative tradition. The notices belong to itineraries which preserved essential information concerning the location of watering places for the patriarchal migrations. But it is a problem for Westermann's position that these notices relating to wells are concerned with such a limited area and that two of the places mentioned by them are apparently out of bounds to Isaac and his people. Van Seters may therefore be correct in holding that the series of well-aetiologies, which are of varied construction,²²² derives from a compositional technique. The examination of these traditio-historical matters therefore supports the form-critical conclusion that Gen 26.1-33 should be designated a composite narrative and earlier forms of the Isaac narrative, whether as a series of independent units or as a core of tradition which was later expanded by the addition of other materials, probably cannot be reconstructed.

Concluding Remarks: The analysis of the structure of Gen 26.1-33, and the related form-critical discussion, undertaken in Part A of this chapter has shown that the Isaac narrative is more properly regarded as a unified composite narrative than the combination, whether at a pre-literary or a literary level, of previously independent Isaac material. An examination of the traditio-historical arguments advanced by Noth for the priority of the Isaac tradition has shown that some of these are of an ambiguous nature

and indeed one could go on to show that scholars taking opposite sides over the question of priority have used remarkably similar arguments in support of their differing views.²²³ The discussion of traditio-historical priority led to a brief examination of the composition history of Gen 26.1-33. Here a traditio-historical approach was eschewed in favour of redaction criticism, and the discussion largely followed lines already laid down by Van Seters.²²⁴ For this reason, it was unnecessary to set out all of the relevant arguments in full.

On the basis of the study of the form of Gen 26.1-33 undertaken in Part A of this chapter, it is not possible to be too precise either in dating the composition or locating the situation out of which it arose. Nevertheless, two solid pieces of evidence have been disclosed which have some bearing on these matters. In Part B I have concluded, following Van Seters, that much of the material contained in the Isaac narrative appears to be a revision of previously existing patriarchal material,²²⁵ including material usually attributed to the Elohist. In Part A the interest of the narrator in the meaning of the promise of blessing for the foreign nations was noted. Such an interest is nowhere evident in the Old Testament tradition until the time of the exilic and post-exilic prophets.²²⁶

Both pieces of evidence point in the direction of a late dating for the narrative, but it would be imprudent to be more specific on the basis of the foregoing examination of the Isaac narrative, although further supporting evidence may be found in the examination of the use of the name "Isaac" in Old Testament tradition outside Genesis which follows in Chapter Six. A full examination of the composition of the patriarchal narratives, placing Gen 26.1-33 in a context in which it is more clearly related to other materials, would be required before a more precise judgment could be

made. In Chapter Six I shall examine all the references to Isaac outside Genesis with a view to discovering whether or not they support a late dating for Gen 26.1-33.

The present chapter supports the view that Gen 26.1-33 originated as part of a literary revision of a previously existing patriarchal tradition in which Isaac can have played little part if any. Such a revision would probably have been undertaken under official auspices, but a more precise identification of its purpose cannot be made except in relation to all the other material which might have been a part of the same revision, and clearly that is beyond the scope of the present work.²²⁷

The intention of the Isaac narrative cannot easily be discerned by the usual sort of form-critical arguments which associate intention so closely with genre and Sitz im Leben.²²⁸ But while a "tale" might be told with the intention of entertaining an audience, or the account of a "theophany" might be delivered in order to establish the legitimacy of a holy place, it is difficult to identify any clear association for a composite narrative. The intention underlying the composition of such a narrative must have been altogether more closely linked to the particular combination of materials, whatever their previous association or intention, than could possibly have been the case where a particular genre could be clearly linked to a social or a cultic context. I have therefore delayed commenting upon intention until my discussion of the composition history of Gen 26.1-33 was complete.

Although Coats' relates the Isaac narrative to a literary setting, he discovers a somewhat different intention underlying Gen 26.1-17 and 17-33. The former is characterized in the following terms:²²⁹

This story describes relationships with people outside the tribal group. The relationship is broken, but not by what the patriarch does. The broken relationship, which ends in a somewhat friendly manner with the patriarch farming enough land to make him wealthy, nevertheless characterizes the life of the principals.

This provides an interesting contrast with the intention Coats discerns in relation to Gen 12.9-13.1 where, although conceding that "The tale is told to entertain", he holds that the narrative "intends to portray a new stage in the struggle for intimacy. Abram... loses intimacy with his wife, and only by the intervention of God is the intimacy restored".²³⁰ Then at Gen 20.1-18 he argues that the intention to entertain "is now submerged under an overarching context that tends towards a theological reflection", and the story therefore emphasises the intervention of God when the husband and wife fall into danger.²³¹

It is worth noticing that Coats' observation of a transferrance of interest from family relationships to relationships with a foreign people is an important one. This interest, moreover, is maintained in the second pericope:²³²

In the final form of the text, the itinerary shows Isaac's departure from Abimelech, indeed, his final break with the king of Gerar. It thus functions as a part of the larger narrative context, particularly the context composed of ch. 26. Narrative tradition also places Isaac in the midst of strife (so, vv. 12-16), a strife that leads finally to an arrangement that shows the goodwill of the patriarch toward his hostile opponents. The popular tradition thus maintains an element of political propaganda.

These statements seem to me to be based above all on an abbreviated reading of those elements of content which Coats believes are indicative of intention. But I believe that the reading which Coats makes is faulty to the extent that it regards Abimelech as a hostile opponent at the end of the narrative. I have already taken issue with Van Seters, upon whom Coats expresses his dependence, over this point.²³³

In conclusion, the intention of the Isaac narrative must be discovered in relation to its depiction of the developing relationship between Isaac and the Philistine king Abimelech. So far as Isaac experiences increased prosperity and the nature of his relationship to Abimelech is reversed from inferior to superior, and these benefits result from Yahweh's blessing, an optimistic attitude is enjoined on those who relate to him. And so far as the narrative reaches its climax with the conclusion of a peace treaty between Isaac and Abimelech, the narrative intention seems to be related to the provision of an explanation of those conditions which must obtain before the blessing is fulfilled and peace and prosperity are attained not only for those with natural affinity with Isaac, but for the foreigners as well. In this way, the intention of the narrative seems to involve a depiction of those conditions which must obtain if the promise of Yahweh is to be completely fulfilled. It may be noted that this intention is almost certainly a political as well as theological in nature.²³⁴ There seems to be an eschatological overtone in Abimelech's coming to Isaac at Beersheba after the manner in which later prophecy predicted the coming of foreign kings to Jerusalem, and the narrative seems to outline the conditions under which that eschatological theme might be made reality in a way, moreover, which offers a political outcome.

Chapter Six

Isaac in Old Testament Tradition

The name "Isaac" occurs some one hundred and twelve times in the Old Testament;¹ four times in the anomalous form קִישׁוֹ (Ps 105.9; Jer 33.26; Am 7.9, 16), but otherwise the more usual קִישׁוֹר is used. A good majority of these occurrences are in the Patriarchal Narrative, with only eighteen in the remainder of the Pentateuch, and fourteen elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. This compares with the frequency of the other major patriarchal names as follows:

Table 1

	Abraham	Isaac	Jacob
Genesis	191	80	181
Pentateuch	18	18	32
Elsewhere	26	14	140

This Table shows that, outside of Genesis, Jacob is by far the most popular and commonly mentioned patriarch, even without taking into account the many instances where the term יִשְׂרָאֵל is used with reference to him.² Abraham, perhaps surprisingly for a figure of such apparent stature, is heard of scarcely more often than Isaac outside of Genesis.³ Table 1, however, fails to indicate the almost total absence of independent material referring to Isaac outside of Genesis.⁴ For, of the thirty two references indicated, twenty nine refer to the name in some form of collocation with

אברהם and יצקב (ישראל),⁵ and most of these suggest a formulaic usage. Of the three cases remaining, the name occurs at 1 Chr 1.28 in a context where it is closely related to אברהם, while at Am 7.9, 16 it is closely related to ישראל.

Since the name occurs twenty-five times in formulaic association with Abraham and Jacob (Israel),⁶ the usage, as a whole, appears to have arisen only after this genealogical connection had been established. Thus, there are few contexts where the name Isaac appears outside of Genesis which might possibly be prior to the combination of his name with those of the other two patriarchal figures.⁷

The question arises, therefore, whether references to Isaac exist outside Genesis which might comprise an independent witness to any of the Genesis traditions concerning him, and whether any such references might have arisen early in Israel's history or reflect an early tradition. In response to this question, I propose to survey the references to Isaac which occur outside Genesis. I shall begin with an inspection of the patriarchal formula wherever it occurs in its strictest sense. Then I shall examine those contexts where, although all three names occur in the same context, the collocation is rather less formulaic. Finally I shall examine the few cases where no such formulaic usage obtains.

a) The Formula "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel): A survey of all the relevant texts reveals that the formula often occurs in contexts where it is associated with the Promise to the Patriarchs, or with the theme of covenant, and that the verbs זכר, שבע and נתן occur frequently in such collocations. The content of the promise is generally the land, but sometimes it also concerns progeny, while the covenant is often related to

the gift of the land. The association of the covenant with both the promise of the land and the patriarchs, indeed, seems to reach something of a climax in the late historical summary of Ps 105.⁸ Here the formula has degenerated under the influence of the poetic structure, so that each Patriarch is associated individually with the covenant, and, perhaps simply to complete the parallelism, the third is called both "Jacob" and "Israel" (v 10).

There are three other distinct uses of the formula. First, grouped together in Exod 3.1-4.17, there are four references to the "God of the Fathers". Second, there is the unique reference at Exod 6.3 where Yahweh is identified as El Shaddai. And third, there are three references, all in the historical books, to "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel".

Table 2 summarizes the various ways in which the formula is used in the Hebrew Bible outside Genesis. As a matter of convenience, I have included Ps 105.9 (par. 1 Chr 16.16) although it is not strictly formulaic, and Lev 26.42 where the names occur in an unusual order. Nevertheless, the three names occur in each of these references which also show an interest in the themes of promise and covenant.

In Table 2, the following sigla have been employed:

- * = the reference is to "Abraham, Isaac and Israel".
- @ = the names occur in an unusual order.

Table 2

	Promise	Covenant	Land	Progeny	זכר	שבע	נתן	Other Remarks
Ex 2.24		x			x			God of the Fathers
3.6								God of the Fathers
3.15								God of the Fathers
3.16								God of the Fathers
4.5		(v 4)						God of the Fathers
6.3		(v 7)						"El Shaddai"
6.8	x		x			x	x	
32.13*	x		x	x	x	x	x	
33.1	x		x					
Lev 26.42*		x	x		x			negation of promise
מנא 32.11								
Dt 1.8	x		x			x		
6.10	x		x			x		
9.5	x		x			x		
9.27					x			
29.12		x				x		
30.20			x			x	x	
34.4	x		x			x	x	
1 Ki 18.36*								יהוה אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב
2 Ki 13.23		x						
1 Ch 16.15		x			x			יהוה אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב
29.18*								
2 Ch 30.6*					x			יהוה אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב
Ps 105.9		x			x			
Jer 33.26		(v 25)						

First, I shall discuss those references in which the formulaic usage of the patriarchal names is connected with promise and covenant. Table 2 shows that the formula is used five times in Deuteronomy and three times in Exodus in contexts which contain a reference to the promise of land to the Patriarchs. In addition, the formula is connected with the promise only at Num 32.11, where the concern of the writer is precisely with the negation of the promise of possession of land for the Exodus generation.⁹

Of the three occurrences in Exodus, 6.8 certainly comes from P, while Noth holds that both 32.13 and 33.1 occur in additions which betray Deuteronomistic style.¹⁰ The five occurrences in Deuteronomy are found in framework passages, where the style is evidently Deuteronomistic. Thus the formula may be considered to be later than the main law code (ch 12-26) of the book.¹¹ The other two occurrences in Deuteronomy are not connected with a reiteration of the promise of land. Nevertheless, one is concerned with the fulfilment of the promise (Deut 9.27) and the other is concerned with the fulfilment of the covenant promised to the people and sworn to the Patriarchs at a time immediately preceding the entry into the land (Deut 29.13). In Deut 9.27, Yahweh is urged to remember his servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, rather than the failure of Israel, so that the foreign nations might not have occasion to claim that he had been unable to fulfil his promise of land. In Deut 29.13, the promise stands on the brink of fulfilment. Once again, both occurrences are found in framework passages.

These observations begin to suggest that the connection of the patriarchal formula with the promise of land did not begin to penetrate the pentateuchal literature outside of Genesis prior to the time of the Deuteronomistic writer,¹² and that the theme does not seem to have much affected other biblical literature. Although this circumstance does not

point unambiguously towards the connection between the Patriarchs and the promise of land being of Deuteronomistic coinage, it is at least clear that in Deuteronomy both the law code and the framework passages are concerned with the land and the laws applicable after it is occupied. Those who composed the framework of Deuteronomy may therefore have been inclined to adopt and develop any available tradition which connected the Patriarchs with the promise of land. Their use of the formula may therefore reflect either an original coinage or a reference to the developing patriarchal tradition, with the latter being perhaps the more likely.

It is of interest that the promise referred to in these formulations is always the promise of land, and that progeny is mentioned specifically as an additional element only at Exod 32.13. Nevertheless, this text, as well as Deut 1.8 and 34.4, indicates that the promise of land is for the descendants of the Patriarchs rather than the Patriarchs themselves, and so the promise of progeny is implied in these cases.

The references where the formula occurs in contexts connecting the Patriarchs with the covenant must now be considered. Here the discussion must be extended to include some references from outside the Pentateuch.

Psalms 105.9 (par. 1 Chr 16.16) appears to presuppose a situation where the possession of land is not a present reality; "the psalm invites Israel to praise and seek the God who has promised land to them, regardless of whether they possess it in fact".¹³ Accordingly this reference has to be dated late, and Clifford may well be correct in placing the psalm in the sixth century.¹⁴ 2 Kgs 13.23 is cast in the form of a summary, rather similar in content to 2 Kgs 13.4-6, and like this latter passage must be held to be an intrusion.¹⁵ The verse appears to be of Deuteronomistic

origin and expresses something of its author's theory of history. The concluding "until now", far from being a pious addition,¹⁶ probably shows that the verse has emanated from a time rather later than the events of which it purports to speak, and functions in a manner reminiscent of the aetiological formula "until this day".¹⁷

Turning now to the pentateuchal material, Deut 29.12, which associates covenant with a promise sworn to the Patriarchs, speaks of a unilateral covenant into which the generation of Israelites about to enter the land will be incorporated according to the promise made to them by Yahweh, and according to his oath sworn to the Patriarchs. This verse belongs to the Deuteronomistic framework, while Exod 6.3, 8 derive from P and Exod 2.24 appears to be a late connecting piece, also from P, which serves to provide an element of continuity between the Patriarchs and the Exodus.¹⁸

The connection between the patriarchal tradition and the covenant is particularly strong in Lev 26.42. But in this passage, which is not strictly formulaic, the Patriarchs are mentioned in an unusual order.¹⁹ The passage takes the form of a divine speech in which Yahweh declares that, provided the people confess their guilt, he will remember his covenant with the Patriarchs. In this case the structure is rather uneven, and I am inclined towards the view that the original formulation may have referred only to Jacob and the land. The references to Isaac and Abraham may well have come from (a) later hand(s).²⁰

There is therefore no evidence in the material outside of Genesis that the connection between the patriarchal formula and the covenant was an early one, just as there is no evidence that the connection between the formula and the promise of land to the Patriarchs was early. Rather,

these connections seem to have arisen about the time of the Deuteronomistic writer in whose work they are most commonly to be found. There they served the function of connecting the Deuteronomic land ideal and the patriarchal traditions, thus transferring the guarantee of tenure of the land from the obedience of the people to the promise to the Patriarchs and thereby to the gift of Yahweh. From there it seems to have penetrated the Priestly work where it must have served the function of integrating more comprehensively the traditions of Genesis into the Mosaic material.²¹

b) The God of the Fathers: Four times the name Isaac occurs in connection with the God of the Fathers:

Exod 3.6	אנכי אלהי אביך אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב
Exod 3.15	יהוה אלהי אבותיכם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב
Exod 3.16	יהוה אלהי אבותיכם נראה אלי אלהי אברהם יצחק ויעקב
Exod 4.5	יהוה אלהי אבתם אלהי אברהם אלהי יצחק ואלהי יעקב

I have set out in full the relevant part of the text of each of these references because, although they do constitute a distinct group, no two of them are framed in precisely the same way. It is interesting to notice the differences in phrasing which occur from one reference to another, if only to enhance rhetorical appreciation of what is taking place in the several formulations. These variations are slight and mostly involve a difference of person or number in the pronominal suffix, but the omission of אלהי before both יצחק and יעקב (Exod 3.16) and the omission of יהוה (Exod 3.6) should also be noted. This last omission is crucial to the purpose of the story; the name has to be omitted from the self-disclosure formula so that Moses might demand knowledge of the deity's name. The double omission of אלהי at Exod 3.16 might be explained as the avoidance of

precise repetition in consecutive verses, but without the loss of emphasis involved in repetition. Most scholars assign Exod 3.16; 4.5 to J and Exod 3.6, 15 to E.²²

All four references occur within the Moses Call Narrative (Exod 3.1-4.17), a passage which is of vital importance for the integration of Genesis into the continuing pentateuchal narrative. The debate concerning the scope of this narrative and the problem of its sources is particularly complex, but its course has been reviewed recently by Childs,²³ who has provided a summary of the present state of research. At the same time he has presented his own cautiously stated view that the unit begins at Exod 3.1 and ends at 4.17,²⁴ and he agrees with Habel "that, in spite of the presence of literary sources, there is more unity in the present text than has been generally recognized."²⁵ He distances his view of the extent of the unit from Noth's, but their views are perhaps closer than he allows. For, although he treats all of Exod 2.11-4.23 together in his commentary,²⁶ Noth does not rescind his previously published view that from a literary standpoint the central section Exod 3.1-4.17 proves to be an addition in J besides, from a traditio-historical perspective, being a secondary element in its present context.²⁷ Moreover, in his later work, Noth states quite clearly at the beginning of his discussion of Exod 2.11-4.23 that 2.11ff and 4.18ff are held to provide a framework for the whole section.²⁸

Childs also objects to Noth's view that Exod 2.23a was originally joined to 4.19, but, irrespective of the merits of his objections,²⁹ so far as Noth clearly held Exod 3.1-4.17 to be the true extent of the unit,³⁰ which he attributed in large measure to a single source secondarily inserted into J, his view is not so different from Childs'.³¹ Indeed, the main differences appear to lie in Childs' rather less ambiguous

identification of the extent of the unit - a difference which is more apparent than real - and his more cautious statement with respect to the analysis of sources.

Although Noth originally favoured the view that the Moses Call Narrative was inserted only after the literary fixation of J,³² in his commentary he later maintained that the tradition that God had appeared in the wilderness to Moses is part of the older material of the pentateuchal narratives and that it is represented in both J and E in spite of its belonging to a relatively late stage in the history of traditions.³³

It is with this traditio-historical lateness of the Call Narrative that I am concerned. Noth based his main argument for this lateness upon the discovery in the narrative of all the pentateuchal themes with the exception of the "patriarchal" one, and he claimed that they have all contributed to its formation.³⁴ Recent studies have challenged the view that the main pentateuchal themes had already become firmly connected at the pre-literary stage of the transmission, and have emphasized the extent of the creative literary endeavour which accompanied the latest stages in the growth of the literature, and in line with these I am inclined to date the entire passage in its present form to the exilic period.³⁵ Perhaps there was an earlier version of the Moses Call Narrative, but my concern is with the patriarchal formula which has thoroughly permeated the structure of the present story, making it much more than simply a story about Moses to which references to the Patriarchs have been appended in order to forge a connection between the patriarchal and Mosaic traditions. In his later work Noth observes that the structure of Exod 3.1-6 is like that of many of the patriarchal narratives, particularly that of Jacob at Bethel (Gen 28.11-22, JE),³⁶ but this does not amount to a retraction of his view

that this narrative contains no reference to the patriarchal theme. For Noth the "patriarchal theme" means nothing other than the promise to the patriarchs and, even if the appearance of Yahweh to Moses (Exod 3.1-6) does recall the theophany to Jacob, there is no explicit reference to the promise contained in these verses.

I shall not attempt to go behind the present form of the Moses Call Narrative in order to build up a history of its development. It is sufficient to state that I can find no grounds upon which to base any claim that this narrative contains an early use of the patriarchal formula. On the contrary, the usage which refers to the "God of the Fathers" seems to have left no impression elsewhere, apart from a few places in Genesis which may well derive from the same stage in the development of the tradition.

c) El Shaddai: The formulaic reference to the patriarchal names is connected with the divine name "El Shaddai" only at Exod 6.3, in the P version of the Moses Call Narrative (Exod 6.2-7.7) where the entire section appears to have carried a thoroughly programmatic significance for this author. According to P it is at this point that God revealed himself by the name Yahweh for the first time. In P he had been referred to as Elohim prior to the time of Abraham when he had revealed himself to the Patriarch as El Shaddai (Gen 17.1).³⁷ Throughout P, the deity is known by that name from his appearance to Abraham until the time of Moses.

At Gen 17.1, God is said to have appeared to Abraham, identifying himself with the formula, אֱלֹהֵי שָׂרֵי, before making a covenant with him (vv 2-21). The motif of covenant is exceptionally important throughout this section. It is promised to Abraham in v 2, and to the unborn Isaac in vv 19 and 21. In between, the term בְּרִית occurs no fewer than eight

times (vv 4, 7(x2), 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14), usually with the first person singular pronominal suffix and always in divine speech. The human sign of entry into this covenant is circumcision, and the remainder of the chapter is concerned with Abraham's fulfilment of the rite (vv 23-27), after God had gone up from him (v 22). In the description of Abraham's response to the divine commandment, by circumcising every male in his household, the word *ברית* is not used. It may be that this omission demonstrates that for the author the covenant is entirely a divine initiative and gift.

At Exod 6.2, the self-identification formula *אני יהוה* occurs, and it is picked up at several places throughout the narrative (Exod 6.6, 7, 8, 29). This is followed in v 3 by the statement, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name Yahweh I did not make myself known to them". Next, there comes a reference to the covenant promising possession of the land in which the patriarchs had resided as aliens. The phrase in v 4, *ארץ מגריהם*, picks up the *ארץ מגריך* of Gen 17.8. Thus this second Moses Call Narrative must be seen to form an effective bridge between the Patriarchal Narrative in its final form and the Exodus-Sinai complex, since the subsequent verses go on to anticipate the divine initiative in the Exodus event.

The divine name "El Shaddai" occurs in Genesis also at 28.3; 35.11 and 48.3 (all P), as well as at 43.14 where, according to Noth, the source is doubtful.³⁸ Elsewhere in the Old Testament the title appears only at Ezek 10.5, although the connected form *שדי* occurs rather more frequently, sometimes in apparently older material (Gen 49.25; Num 24.4, 16),³⁹ but more often in late Old Testament writings, particularly in Job, where it recurs as a mysterious and archaic sounding name for God.⁴⁰

The occurrences of the divine name אל שדי at Gen 17.1 and Exod 6.3 seem hardly to be older than their present contexts, and it is improbable that Exod 6.3 contains an early occurrence of the patriarchal formula.

It is appropriate to comment briefly here on the other "El Shaddai" references in Genesis. At Gen 28.3f., Isaac invokes a blessing on Jacob: "El Shaddai bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you... May he give the blessing of Abraham to you, that you may take possession of the land of your sojournings (ארץ סגריך) which God gave to Abraham". This statement picks up the typically Priestly verbs פרה and רבה , found, for example, at Gen 1.28 and 9.1; but in place of the ומלאו את הארץ of the earlier texts there is now והיית לקהל גמים in recognition of the fact that there are other nations upon the earth. Similarly, at Gen 35.11, the self-identification formula אני אל שדי , is followed by a number of concerns which are typical of the priestly interest in the promise to the Patriarchs. These include the conveyance of the land, previously given to Abraham and Isaac, to Jacob and his descendants, a substantial part of this speech is transmitted from Jacob to Joseph at 48.3. Only at Gen 43.14 does a reference to El Shaddai fail to exhibit characteristically Priestly concerns. This circumstance, however, is of no immediate moment for the present discussion, and need not be considered further here.⁴¹

Although Exod 6.3 states that God had appeared to each of the three Patriarchs as El Shaddai, P contains no account of an appearance to Isaac. One should not conclude, however, that such an account once existed, but has been lost. It was probably enough for this writer that Isaac should be observed to have uttered the blessing of Gen 28.3f. which recognizes El Shaddai as the patriarchal deity. Thus, although Exod 6.3 may seem to presuppose the appearance of El Shaddai to Isaac, it is likely that his

name was included here under pressure from the well established patriarchal formula, but P did not feel himself under any compulsion to invent such an appearance story.

The connection between the patriarchal formula and the divine name "El Shaddai" therefore occurs within a passage which functions as a most important transition between the Patriarchal and the Exodus Narratives. This point is sufficiently demonstrated by a comparison of the main concerns of this passage with those of the other "El Shaddai" passages in P. And so there is no reason to assume an early date for this reference which does not appear to offer any illumination on the possible origins of the patriarchal formula.

d) Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel: This phrase, which occurs only at 1 Kgs 18.36; 1 Chr 29.18; 2 Chr 30.6, is somewhat reminiscent of the references to the God of the fathers in the first Moses Call Narrative (Exod 3.1-4.17), although the relationship between the two phrases is by no means clear. Unlike the references to the God of the Fathers, however, this phrase is not employed in divine speech as a divine self-disclosure.⁴² But it does occur twice in prayers. In Elijah's prayer on Carmel, it is used in a plea that Yahweh should demonstrate his power (1 Kgs 18.36). It occurs again in David's prayer at the dedication of the offering which had been levied for the proposed building of the temple (1 Chr 29.18). In both prayers Yahweh is addressed as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; but in the latter the Patriarchs are further identified as אֱבְרָהָם, a term which may have been incorporated as a reflection upon the usage in Exod 3.1-4.17. Elsewhere the phrase occurs only in the edict issued by Hezekiah concerning the renewal of the Passover (2 Chr 20.6).

In his prayer, Elijah calls forth fire from Yahweh to consume the sacrifice.⁴³ It is possible that an intentional literary transformation links the fire which consumed Elijah's sacrifice with the fire which did not consume the bush in Exodus 3. This is an intriguing possibility; in one narrative the fire is invoked while in the other it is not, yet in both narratives the fire symbolizes a manifestation of the divine. In view of the strong literary connections between the Moses and Elijah traditions,⁴⁴ this connection may be entertained, not least because Elijah's invocation formula on Carmel was so markedly similar to the divine self-disclosure formula in the Moses Call Narrative. The difference in formula might find its explanation either in the two narratives having arisen in circles which preferred different names for the third Patriarch,⁴⁵ or in a reluctance to place on Elijah's lips a formula otherwise unique to Exod 3.1-4.17.

Since the reference of 1 Kgs 18.36 is without parallel in the Former Prophets, and is repeated in the Hebrew Bible only in the late work of the Chronicler, it can hardly be assumed to go back to Elijah himself without further support, and such support is by no means certain. Although the usual view that the Elijah cycle of narratives was already essentially complete by the ninth century has attracted the support of many scholars,⁴⁶ there is considerable latitude respecting the time when these stories were combined with the Elisha cycle on the one hand, and incorporated into the narrative of Kings on the other.⁴⁷ As to provenance, it is often held that the narratives of 1 Kgs 17-19, 21 are "masterpieces from the best period of North Israelite prose literature."⁴⁸

Although it is often argued that they were made especially attractive to the Deuteronomic historian by their interest in Yahwistic prophecy, there is also a widespread belief that in their present form the Elijah

stories show little evidence of having been shaped by him.⁴⁹ Commentators have therefore been able to speak quite positively about the unity of the Elijah narratives from a very early stage in their transmission.

My present concern is not with the unity of the narratives as a whole, but with the status within the narrative of 1 Kgs 18.31-38. This passage displays several connections with pentateuchal tradition, some of which cannot point unambiguously to a North Israelite provenance. First, it is noted (v 31) that "Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob" and built them into an altar to Yahweh. Perhaps the tradition that Israel comprised twelve tribes was ancient, but there is no evidence in the material usually attributed to the Elohist of a connection between the twelve tribes and the twelve sons of Jacob. Indeed, interest in this connection seems to have been a characteristic of P.⁵⁰ Second, and closely connected with this interest, 1 Kgs 18.31b apparently quotes Gen 35.10 (P): *ישראל יהיה שמך*.⁵¹ Third, some critics have suggested that the notice in 1 Kgs 18.36 which sets Elijah's prayer at the time of the offering of the Minnah might be a late gloss, reflecting the practise of the Second Temple.⁵² And fourth, in addition to all this there is the address of the prayer to Yahweh, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel which is unparalleled in the Hebrew Bible except in the work of the Chronicler.

The combination of these factors support the case that they occur in a late addition to the narrative, especially when it has been noted that the style of 1 Kgs 18.31f., 34-36 is rather more "verbose" than the surrounding narrative.⁵³ Moreover, there are a number of unevennesses in the present form of the narrative which arise from the presence of doublets in 1 Kgs 18.31f., 34-36 and the surrounding context. In particular, Elijah is said both to have repaired the derelict altar of Yahweh (v 30) and to have built

an altar to Yahweh (v 31). Clearly Elijah's altar was only a temporary structure since v 38b describes its consumption by fire. Besides this, so-called Erkenntnisformel may be discerned both in v 36 and v 37.⁵⁴

It is therefore probable that the occurrence of the patriarchal formula at 1 Kgs 18.36 belongs to an addition to the earliest version of the Elijah narrative. In view of the temporary nature of the altar Elijah builds, it is rendered wholly subservient to the contest between Yahweh and Baal and their respective prophets. As a result, it may even have satisfied the Deuteronomic view that sacrifice must be offered only at the Jerusalem Temple, and it is therefore conceivable that the additions of 1 Kgs 18.31f., 34-36 derive from a post-deuteronomic editor.

e) Isaac in the Book of Amos: The name Isaac occurs twice in Amos (Am 7.9, 16) in contexts which are not formulaic, and one might expect to discover here, if anywhere, a readily datable and independent reference to this name among the prophetic traditions. Yet doubt has been expressed whether these references occur within genuine Amos material,⁵⁵ although most critics do not appear to be greatly concerned with this question.⁵⁶ Even so, Wolff is probably correct in separating v 9 from the vision of vv 7ff.,⁵⁷ for the judgement contained in v 9, although specifying the destruction implied in the interpretation of the plumb-line (v 8), betrays no immediate connection with that vision. On the other hand, the verse picks up several aspects of the language of Am 7.10-17 and facilitates the transition from the visions (vv 1-8) to the narrative (vv 10-17). It also corrects the reference to Jeroboam in v 11.⁵⁸ Jeroboam appears to have died peacefully enough at the end of a long reign, but his son Zechariah reigned for only six months before he was assassinated (1 Kgs 15.10).

These observations suggest that Am 7.9 originated - at least in its present form - some time after the violent death of Zechariah (747 B.C.), when that event could well have led to a reinterpretation of v 11. The apparent lack of interest in Zechariah's successor may then point to v 9 having originated in Judah, although it may simply point to its lateness.

The narrative of Am 7.10-17, although not from the prophet's own hand, must have originated somewhat closer to Amos's ministry, perhaps from the personal memory of one of his followers. Wolff has aptly observed that this writer matches the style and themes of Amos almost exactly,⁵⁹ and since the threat against Jeroboam (Am 7.11) remained unfulfilled it is probable that the narrative was composed before the king died in 747 B.C.

These conclusions are plausible. But, although the preservation of prophetic material demands some kind of explanation, the existence of Wolff's "Old School of Amos"⁶⁰ may be doubted. This is surely too formal a designation for any group of disciples which might be supposed to have preserved and, within so narrow bounds as he describes, enlarged upon the work of Amos. Indeed, v 9 and vv 10-17, which share an interest in the fate of Jeroboam, might even have originated from the same hand, even if they must have been composed at different times.

The problem of the references to Isaac in Amos is not settled by these observations on authorship and date. The situation is complicated by the versional evidence. With respect to Am 7.9, LXX reads βωμοὶ τοῦ γέλωτος which appears to reflect Hebrew קנש תמות ("high places of laughter/derision"), while Symmachus here, and LXX at 7.16, have λακωβ rather than ~~ισαακ~~. Further, at 7.9 the Syriac version supports LXX while the Vulgate translates "idoli" in both instances. This evidence is not

decisive against an original קטשׁ in either verse, particularly as the versions do not point unanimously in the same direction. Yet the failure of the versions to agree with MT gives rise to some uncertainty, especially in view of the general paucity of references to Isaac from an early period, his absence generally from the prophetic tradition, and the fact that it is here alone that his name is used with geographical or national reference.

It is possible that τοῦ γέλωτος (v 9) might reflect a censorship process similar to the substitution of בטת for בגל in numerous biblical texts;⁶¹ that it might have issued out of the translator's attempt to deal with this rather unusual reference to Isaac in the prophetic literature;⁶² or that it might have its source in a copyist's error in the Hebrew text used by the translator. But it might equally be the case that an original קטשׁ could have attracted the prefix י׳ to provide קטשׁי, particularly in the vicinity of the parallel ישראל. It might even be possible to explain the substitution of קטשׁי for an original יעקב in v 16 along similar lines, although with perhaps a greater degree of difficulty.

There is no doubt that at Am 7.16, בית ישחק is the more difficult reading,⁶³ for the phrase is found only here in the Old Testament, whereas בית יעקב occurs twice in Amos and nineteen times elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible,⁶⁴ with בית ישראל seven times in Amos and frequently elsewhere.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, if קטשׁי is not original here, such an alteration from יעקב to קטשׁי could only have occurred under the influence of a prior change from קטשׁ to קטשׁי in v 9.

The key to the problem therefore appears to lie in v 9, and involves the question whether במות שחק or במות ישחק is more likely to have been the original reading. The verb שחק / צחק has a wide range of meanings in

biblical Hebrew, and in Genesis it has given rise to numerous plays on the name "Isaac". In general the word is used with reference to rejoicing, although its meaning might be extended to involve the sense of "derision" in one direction, and may involve a sexual connotation in another.⁶⁶ The verb also occurs in Ugaritic, and generally refers to exultant laughter. Usually it is a deity who is said to have laughed.⁶⁷ And so it is not impossible, bearing in mind the close association of this word with an activity apparently characteristic of the gods,⁶⁸ that the phrase might have occurred with reference to the nature of the religious observances which took place at such **תודל**. It is pertinent to remember that the verb **פנש** is used in the Old Testament to describe the actions carried out by the participants in the worship of the golden calf (Exod 32.6), where it apparently carries a sexual connotation,⁶⁹ and it may be that a similar sexual sense is intended in the use of **פנש** at 2 Sam 6.5, 21. Even so, it is impossible to be certain whether or not the occurrence of **פנש** at Am 7.9, if indeed this word occurred in the text used by the LXX translators, might have referred to a sexual aspect to the cultic practise which is condemned there.

On the other hand, if MT does preserve the original reading, and few commentators appear to have doubted this, the versional evidence might be explained in one or another of the ways mentioned above, for the variants which are found in the Greek versions, LXX and Symmachus, might find adequate explanation if they are considered to be attempts to deal with the difficulty arising out of the unparalleled use and anomalous spelling of "Isaac" at Am 7.9, 16.⁷⁰

The problem whether MT or LXX preserves the more original reading at Am 7.9, 16, is more finely balanced than the commentaries seem to suggest, and it is difficult to reach a solid conclusion. At any rate, one cannot discover an independent witness to the Isaac tradition in the book of Amos. Even if one could be certain that פִּי־יִצְחָק is original to these two verses, and that cannot simply be assumed, there is little indication of how these references might be linked to the traditions of Genesis.

f) Other References to Isaac outside of Genesis: The five references to Isaac outside Genesis which remain can be discussed briefly.⁷¹

First, the name occurs twice in Jos 24.3f., in the account of the speech which Joshua is said to have made to the assembly at Shechem when he made a covenant there between Yahweh and Israel (Jos 24.25-27). These references occur in a passage which von Rad considered, along with his two main examples of the short historical creed, to be very early indeed (Jos 24.2b-13; cf Deut 26.5b-9; 6.20-24).⁷² He argued that the form which had been utilized in the speech was basically unchangeable and, although he allowed recognition of "allerlei Floskeln und Zutaten", he held that it could have permitted only minor adjustments.⁷³ The period following the publication of von Rad's essay has seen first its widespread acceptance and then its equally widespread rejection.⁷⁴ Thus, although the speech of Jos 24.2b-13 might have been considered until recently to represent a fine example of the ancient creed, it is now more usually considered a late Deuteronomistic construction.⁷⁵ In a recent study, however, McCarthy has subjected the whole of Jos 24.1-28 to a detailed source analysis in which he has sought to minimize the amount of Deuteronomistic material which may be contained in the passage,⁷⁶ and he summarizes his analysis as follows:⁷⁷

it is basically old in all its parts. The locale described and the ideas involved in the description in 25-27 are unique. The introductory and concluding notices (1. 28) are traditional material for assemblies. Joshua's opening speech uses the language of prophecy or treaty and old royal narrative material (2a). It reflects traditions found in J (2-4. 5-7. 6-8), E (ibid. plus 8-11aA), and Amos (6-8). Vs. 13 may well reflect immemorial ancient near eastern material. There is language from old royal annals in 15. There are parallels with E constructions and vocabulary in 15, 17b, 18, 19b, 20 and 23b. There is an old cult distich in 19. There is ancient legal usage in 22. Moreover, the traditions of the ancient sacred locale of the exchange have influenced its literary formulation.

McCarthy may be correct in contending that in substance Joshua 24 is earlier than the Deuteronomist. The fact that it reflects traditions of J, E and Amos, however, would tend to place it later than these sources, as well as the other ancient allusions which he finds, particularly when he affirms the strict unity of the passage.⁷⁸ Thus, even if the passage predates the Deuteronomist, it can hardly be allowed to do so significantly.

Further, even if the substance of Jos 24.1-28 is from a time slightly earlier than has been the case for the "Isaac" references discussed above, it is by no means certain that the references to him in Jos 24.3f. are original to their context. Although not strictly formulaic, these references depend entirely on the genealogical connections between Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob having already been established, even if the writer uses these connections with more freedom than is usual. Soggin has argued that "La mention d'Isaac, de Jacob, et d'Esau aux v. 3-4... s'agit probablement d'une glose postérieure",⁷⁹ and although McCarthy does not accept this, his reluctance to do so apparently depends on a belief that the genealogical connections had already been established in the pentateuchal scheme when the passage was composed.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, Soggin's contention that the reference to the promise of many descendants in Jos 24.3 must apply to Jacob and his children, rather than to Isaac, seems persuasive. It is

probable that the phrases in Jos 24.3f., **ואתן לו את יצחק ואתן ליצחק את** **יעקב ואת גשו**, were added later by a glossator who missed the familiar reference to the second Patriarch.

Second, the name occurs three times in genealogical notices which are found at 1 Chr 1.28, 34(x2). These references presuppose the latest stage in the development of the book of Genesis. Not only is the genealogical connection well established in the patriarchal formula known to the author of these notices, but also the connection with Ishmael and Esau. There is no question of these references throwing any light upon the early history of the Isaac tradition, or its relationship with the traditions concerning Abraham and Jacob.

The foregoing discussion suggests that the large majority of the references to Isaac outside of Genesis are formulaic in character, naming him as the second of the three Patriarchs. These can hardly pre-date the firm genealogical connection of the Patriarchs in the Genesis tradition. Even those passages which are not strictly formulaic presuppose the same genealogical connection to a greater or lesser degree. It has also become evident that there is no certain reference to Isaac outside Genesis which derives from an early period. Even where the evidence might have been expected to point in a somewhat different direction, e.g., Am 7.9, 16, it has been possible to express reasonable doubt respecting any presumption of antiquity on the part of these references.

The foregoing survey seems fully to justify the negative conclusion that there are no clear references to Isaac outside of Genesis which might be advanced as evidence in support of the view that traditions existed in Israel concerning this Patriarch much before the end of pre-exilic times.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Concluding Remarks

My principal concern in undertaking the foregoing studies has been to provide a coherent interpretation of the Isaac narrative. In doing so, I made use of both literary and historical-critical method. After defining Gen 26.1-33 as the proper boundaries of the Isaac narrative, I proceeded with an examination of the literary structure of the narrative. The resulting analysis was of fundamental importance to all that followed in Part One, and had some bearing upon the historical-critical investigations undertaken in Part Two as well.

The initial literary analysis involved reading the narrative at a degree of abstraction which permitted its several elements to be understood in terms of promise, threat, and (partial) resolution. That analysis was extended through an examination of the way the several elements subsumed under these categories fit together to constitute a coherent narrative, and showed that Gen 26.1-33 closes at a point where each threat discussed by the narrative has been successfully resolved. Moreover, when account was taken of several more specific considerations, it became clear that the narrative as a whole is concerned with the changing nature of the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech the Philistine king of Gerar. When he arrives at Gerar at the beginning of the story, Isaac is clearly Abimelech's inferior; but by the end of the story when Abimelech comes to Isaac at Beersheba to entreat him to contract a covenant with him he is just as clearly Abimelech's superior. The episodic nature of the story

which has led the majority of critics to conclude that the narrative consists of several originally independent units loosely organized around the theme of "Isaac and the people of Gerar" is in fact overcome by certain of the features which were discussed in Chapter One. These features integrate the several episodes into a unified narrative which displays a degree of coherence sufficient to support the conclusion that Gen 26.1-33 is better interpreted as a single unit than as an aggregate of independent units. There is a degree and variety of interplay among the several episodes which has been largely ignored by critical scholarship and belies the view that originally they were unconnected.

When the structure of each of the episodes narrated in Gen 26.1-33 was examined in Chapter Two, although it was possible to analyse each unit individually, these analyses were clearly limiting in two important respects: (i) apart from the first unit, each was deficient at least with respect to its beginning (in addition, some of them did not seem to exhibit a satisfactory closure), and (ii) it was apparent that the semantic potential of Gen 26.1-33 as a whole was greater than that of the sum of its parts. These limitations do not take anything away from the usefulness of the analyses of these episodes as separate entities so long as these are considered to be no more than a supplementary exercise. As such they highlight the sense(s) in which the interpretation of each unit depends upon information which is derived from other units on the one hand, and expose the means whereby Isaac's success is not achieved at Abimelech's expense on the other. This is important, for it suggests a sophistication in storytelling which would be surprising in a narrative of folkloristic origin. Although these structural analyses do not presuppose the results of the analysis of Chapter One and might have been undertaken independently

of it, there can be little doubt that on account of their narrow focus their usefulness would be severely limited if they had not been undertaken in relation to that initial analysis. Their helpfulness consists in their revealing some of the dynamics involved in a form of storytelling which depends upon the narrator achieving continuity through several episodes and leading to a happy conclusion not only for the hero (Isaac) but for his opponent as well.

The narrative background established in Chapter Three might also have been undertaken as an independent investigation, but again there can be little doubt that its usefulness as such would be rather limited in comparison to what it achieves in supplementing and further enriching the analysis of Chapter One. The investigation of narrative background discloses not only those details in which any particular incident differs from its doublets, but also those respects in which the configuration of episodes and motifs differ. Part One is rounded off in Chapter Four with a discussion of some of the methodological issues related to the literary analyses of Chapters One-Three.

The investigations of Part Two have been undertaken from an historical rather than literary perspective. Chapter Five began with a discussion of the form-critical approach to the Isaac narrative as it is exemplified in the work of Lutz and Coats. It was seen that Lutz has followed the usual practice of form critics in assuming that Gen 26.1-33 comprises at least six originally discrete units of tradition. Coats, in a rather different analysis, divides the narrative into two units which he believes resulted from rather different processes of growth. After observing that Coats seems to have presented sufficient evidence to permit the conclusion that Gen 26.1-33 comprises an artificially unified structure which combines a

number of brief episodes and formulae into the form of a composite narrative, I offered an analysis which took due notice of form-critical considerations on the one hand and sought to take seriously the sense of unity disclosed by the investigations of Part One on the other. So far as it was concerned with the form of the Isaac narrative as a whole rather than the varied forms of the putative individual units, this analysis differed considerably from the kind of form-critical work which has been carried out on the Isaac narrative in the past.

The remainder of the discussion under the heading "The Form of Genesis 26.1-33" was undertaken in order to illuminate my analysis of the structure of the narrative as a composite form. In particular, a number of features were noted which would not support the fairly widespread opinion that the narrative comprises an aggregate of originally independent Isaac traditions which have eventually been collected and arranged according to the theme "Isaac and the people of Gerar". Possibly the most important observation in this respect was one which required to be made only in summary since it had already been discussed in the literary analysis of Chapter One: following the introduction to the narrative (vv 1-6), several of the units usually identified by form critics are defective in the sense that their beginnings do not provide sufficient information to render them fully intelligible. In much the same way, the endings of some of the units may at times seem less than satisfactory.

Recent form-critical discussion of Gen 26.1-33 has in many respects been influenced by Noth's discussion of the question of traditio-critical priority in relation to the Abraham-Isaac doublets and his conclusion that material originally connected with Isaac has been secondarily transferred to Abraham. A high regard for the antiquity of the Isaac traditions has

also been associated with these conclusions,¹ but more recently certain of the presuppositions underlying Noth's work as well as his conclusions have been brought into question. In this connection, an examination of the criticisms advanced by Polzin and Van Seters has led to the conclusion that Noth's view that Isaac is prior to Abraham in the tradition is at least open to revision.

It seems to me that Van Seters' arguments that the author of the Isaac narrative has built up his composition using "elements and motifs from the Abraham tradition" provide a more adequate account of Gen 26.1-33 and the related Abraham material than does Noth's traditio-historical treatment, particularly since recent field studies by folklorists have tended to count against the possibility of remaining confident any longer in the stability of oral tradition over a lengthy period. Moreover, Van Seters' arguments that the Isaac narrative displays evidence of literary dependence on the Abraham stories have now been endorsed in certain important respects by Westermann.

Gen 26.1-33 therefore fully merits the designation composite narrative not only on form-critical grounds, but in view of its compositional history as well. As such, it is not really comparable with narrative forms of simple and clearly defined structure such as "tale", "legend", or the like. Moreover, in spite of its episodic structure, it cannot be equated with "saga" as it hardly treats its theme at sufficient length. Indeed, even if its content is thought to have a somewhat traditional ring, it has been taken over secondarily from its original hero and crafted into a relatively well-defined narrative. Neither is it analogous to the "novella" which would demand a much more complex plot development.

Finally, Chapter Six presented a survey of those contexts in which the name Isaac appears outside Genesis. This survey showed that by far the majority of references to Isaac were formulaic in character, associating the Patriarch in a genealogical schema with Abraham as his father and Jacob as his son. Clearly such a formula could not have arisen prior to the formation of the genealogical connection between the three Patriarchs in the Genesis tradition, and the formula provides no tangible evidence of an Isaac tradition independent of the Genesis material and deriving from an early period. Neither does it offer any support for an early dating of the Isaac material in Genesis, whether in 26.1-33 or elsewhere.

It is clear that the foregoing studies have employed two different styles of biblical study with a view to interpreting the Isaac narrative. In Part One a literary approach to the text predominated, while in Part Two historical-critical questions were examined. In my opinion, these two styles complement each other, and contribute at somewhat different levels to the way in which the text might be read. Yet I am aware that in the course of these studies I have applied literary and historical-critical method in ways which might require some justification. In Chapter Four, I discussed the methodological procedures I have employed in my literary-structural approach, and am well aware that literary method can be applied in different ways, as it has been by different scholars.² I shall not return here to questions which were discussed in Chapter Four, but shall concentrate in the following remarks with respect to method on several matters relating to my pursuit of historical-critical questions.

In Part Two, although considerable attention was paid to the literary form of the narrative, and the traditio-historical question of priority so closely associated with Noth's analysis of the patriarchal tradition was

reviewed, the discussion associated with these questions did not evolve along the usual lines and a brief outline of the procedures I have adopted is therefore in order. The initial procedure usually associated with form-critical research has been the determination of the extent of the unit(s) under investigation by the identification of typical introductory and concluding formulae. In this connection it has been assumed by most form-critics that the original units must necessarily have been quite brief, and when this criterion has been applied to the Old Testament narratives it is usually held that each of the original units must have consisted of no more than a single episode, and here Gunkel's dictum, "Volkstümliche Sage besteht ihrer Natur nach in der Form der einzelnen Sage",³ has had a decisive influence on subsequent discussion. In spite of an increasing recognition that such units have had a broader as well as a narrower context, form critics have tended to concentrate upon pericopes consisting of single episodes at the expense of the larger narrative unities.⁴ As a result, the biblical texts have often been reduced to fragments, and this trait of form-critical research has been criticized frequently.⁵ This is an important criticism, but it must be observed that it is most to the point where critics have arrived at mistaken conclusions concerning the extent of the original units on the one hand, or, having discussed the origins of the individual pericopes, have failed to do justice to the final form of the text on the other.⁶ If a more original form of the text can be inferred, its existence can be neither denied nor ignored simply because one has an aversion for the atomisation of texts.

In my analysis of the form of Gen 26.1-33 as a single unit rather than a number of individual units, I have avoided the assumption that narrative units were necessarily brief and consisted originally of no more than a

single episode. This avoidance is neither frivolous nor based upon the criticism that form criticism has led to the atomisation of texts. Much more to the point is the fact, noted several times already, that apart from vv 1-6 each of the episodes narrated in Gen 26.1-33 depends to some extent upon information recorded in one or more of the preceding narratives if it is to make sense. This deficiency means that, where the appropriate introductory and concluding formulae are lacking, form critics sometimes have to make the assumption that such material has dropped out in the course of either the transmission or the redaction process.

It also has to be considered that recent field-studies made by folklorists who have studied the transmission of oral prose narratives in primitive societies, and which have been reported to biblical scholars in a number of review articles, have much reduced the degree of confidence one might have in the stability of oral narrative tradition over lengthy periods. In these circumstances, it is prudent not to place too much emphasis upon the presumption that form criticism can illuminate putative earlier stages in which a particular example of a form existed as an oral entity. Field studies of oral prose composition and transmission do not cast doubt upon the fact that oral traditions existed, they simply place severe limitations upon the degree of confidence one might maintain in the stability of a fixed oral tradition.

These arguments do not mean, however, that form-critical method cannot be applied to literary texts in order to seek explanations of their origin within boundaries set by these strictures. I have therefore discussed the form of the Isaac narrative after a manner which eschews assumptions of brevity and oral antecedents. In consequence, there have been two important effects on the analysis. First, a form-critical analysis which

divided Gen 26.1-33 into a number of brief units could obviously have recourse to the sort of genre designations which are usually applied to simple units such as tale, itinerary, theophany, etc. The more complicated structure of the Isaac narrative, however, rendered the use of any such terms inappropriate. The composite nature of the narrative, so far as it uses elements which in other circumstances might have been identified as tale, covenant-report, theophany, or itinerary, suggests that a fairly neutral term like composite narrative is appropriate. Second, a literary rather than oral explanation has been sought for the origins of the narrative.

The existence of doublets in the Abraham and Isaac narratives has furnished special circumstances in which the search for literary origins can be taken further than might be possible if such doublets did not exist. An examination of Noth's traditio-critical arguments for the priority of Isaac over Abraham in the tradition led to the conclusion that his position was at least open to revision, if not untenable. Further discussion of the composition history of Gen 26.1-33, using redaction-critical rather than traditio-critical criteria and based largely upon the analyses of Van Seters and Westermann, prompted the conclusion that much of the material contained in the Isaac narrative should be considered a literary revision of previously existing Abrahamic material.

Although these studies do not constitute an essay in method, and have been primarily concerned with the interpretation of the Isaac narrative, it is appropriate enough to draw their various strands together by offering a number of observations concerning the comparative value of the styles of biblical study exemplified in Parts One and Two respectively.

The different positions from which the literary critic and the historical critic view texts have recently been contrasted in the following terms:⁷

In general, for the literary critic a text is opaque, something to be seen in and of itself. For the student of history, religion, or anthropology, however, a text is transparent--or at least something to be gotten beyond, or behind, or over to the real object of investigation.

I can see no reason why the one critic should not view any text from both perspectives, and I submit that this opinion is vindicated by the foregoing studies. The interpretations which represent the two styles of study are essentially complementary. So far as they answer different questions addressed at different levels to the same text, it is clear that without one style or the other interpretation would have less depth. That is not to say, however, that together they offer a "complete" interpretation. Equally clearly, neither can be said to represent the "correct" reading of the text, or even a reading which is more correct than the other.⁸ To my mind the point of practising the literary analysis of biblical narrative is to address a set of questions different from those applied by historical-critical research to the text, but not to produce a novel interpretation which somehow supercedes all previous interpretations. Although my form-critical analysis of Gen 26.1-33 has been informed and perhaps influenced by a number of observations which were made in the course of my literary analysis, the major difference between my results and those of other form critics have arisen from the particular way I have applied the form-critical method rather than from the incorporation of literary results into form-critical analysis. Not only have I eschewed the assumption that the text consists of a number of previously independent units each consisting of a single episode, but I have been unable to discover compelling grounds to maintain confidence in a stable oral tradition over a lengthy period.

Nevertheless, I must stress that a careful literary analysis is a necessary first stage of all careful historical-critical enquiry. Such an initial stage is essential if simple mistakes are to be avoided. Too much biblical study has suffered from an inaccurate assessment of the structure and content of texts, and even (perhaps especially) where doublets exist a clear impression of their literary nature is a prerequisite to every form of analysis. By this I mean that while either the literary studies of Part One or the historical studies of Part Two might have been undertaken independently of the other, the historical study of biblical texts cannot proceed without incorporating a certain amount of literary analysis. Yet, in connection with this point, it should be noted that if it can be said that my form-critical analysis "corrects" previous form-critical analyses of the Isaac narrative, that "correction" does not arise entirely, or even primarily out of the fact that it has been preceded by a literary analysis but because certain refinements which result in a greater flexibility in its application have been applied to the form-critical method.

In consequence of these observations, it seems to me that neither style of study can claim any decisive priority over the other, although the necessity of a careful literary analysis as an initial step of historical-critical study suggests that Polzin is correct in according literary analysis an "operational priority". Neither method, however, produces more adequate results than the other, far less does either show the other to be wrong. In theory at least the literary method is concerned with the text in itself, while historical method has so often sought to illuminate the origins of the text, paying particular attention to its author, or the community which produced to the text, and the situation out of which it arose.⁹ Literary and historical styles of biblical study may therefore

be said to represent different modes of reading the texts, and, while individual proponents of the different styles of study may sometimes make imperialistic claims concerning the style which they favour, I can see no reason why they should not be used in complementary fashion, even if now one style and now the other might be more popular or fashionable.¹⁰

The literary analysis I have pursued in Part One is valuable so far as it explores the text and illuminates a number of the relationships which exist among the several episodes of which it consists. Although the text was discussed at some length, that analysis was not exhaustive, and it is not too difficult to think of aspects of the analysis which could have been extended further,¹¹ or even of other tasks of a literary nature which might have been pursued.¹² The aim of the analysis, however, was not the exhaustion of every literary possibility, but the production of a coherent literary reading of the text, and I believe that such a coherent reading has been achieved.¹³

In Part Two, which addresses some historical considerations, I have again not attempted to be exhaustive in my discussion. Questions relating to text criticism and source analysis were barely mentioned, far less discussed in detail. On the one hand, the text of the Isaac narrative is in good condition, and in any case has been fully discussed by Westermann in his Genesis commentary, and on the other it is almost universally agreed that Gen 26.1-33 derives from a single source (although a number of glosses and redactional additions are often identified). Not least, I have regarded every question which would relate the Isaac narrative to an historical patriarchal figure as entirely irrelevant. In this connection, I have already quoted with approval Thompson's point that with respect to narratives such as this one "the historical problem is not so much that

they are historically unverifiable, and especially not that they are untrue historically, but that they are radically irrelevant as sources of Israel's early history".¹⁴

Current research into the nature of oral prose transmission suggests that the storyteller in effect creates his composition anew each time he tells it. If it can be assumed that the storytellers in ancient Israel similarly recreated their stories at each oral performance, it becomes impossible to infer back from the written biblical texts to actual historical events in connection with the characters of the narrative and the period to which the stories purport to refer. Even if some scholars have tended to speak of the "historical kernel" or the like of a tradition, unless such a kernel can be identified, or at the very least realistic grounds for belief in its existence can be demonstrated, such talk can be granted no substantive status and certainly does not constitute admissible evidence of the history of the so-called patriarchal age. In this connection, it should also be noted that the examination in Chapter Six of all the occurrences of the name Isaac outside of Genesis did not reveal evidence to suggest that traditions deriving from an early period were connected with this Patriarch. Nor did it support either an early dating of the material found in Gen 26.1-33 or the position that these materials have an original connection with Isaac, and in all these respects the discussion of Chapter Six is consonant with the rejection in Chapter Five of Noth's traditio-historical inferences concerning the priority of Isaac over Abraham in the tradition. Another factor which arises out of my historical-critical studies and which is decisive in my rejection of questions concerned with the historicity of the Isaac narrative is that the process which I have outlined with respect to the composition history of

the Isaac narrative suggests that the material related in Gen 26.1-33 is on the whole a rewriting of material already connected with Abraham.¹⁵

Part of the value of historical study, however, is to be derived from negative conclusions such as these. It is not very long since a good many scholars were confidently reaching the most positive conclusions concerning what could be said historically about the "patriarchal age",¹⁶ and even about events in the lives of individual patriarchs. But in a few years this situation has been largely overturned,¹⁷ although there are those who still favour solutions which allege a greater degree of historicity in the case of particular narratives, as well as a considerable knowledge of the "patriarchal age" which they hold to have been greatly illuminated by archaeological discovery.¹⁸

Archaeological parallels, however, no matter how exact, cannot finally confirm the historicity of events which are reported in a written source like the Bible. The admirable caution expressed by de Vaux, "Archaeology does not confirm the text... it can only confirm the interpretation which we give it",¹⁹ does not go far enough. Archaeological evidence may support an interpretation, but the occasions where it "confirms" one must be rather rare. In fact, where equally good parallels exist from more than the one period, such evidence is ambiguous, and, such is the nature of archaeological research, even where parallels exist presently from only the one period, there is always a real possibility that later discoveries will render the position more ambiguous.²⁰

It has not been my purpose, however, to discuss the historical concerns examined in Part Two in relation to the findings of archaeological research. Indeed, the exhaustive, influential, and in many respects

decisive surveys of Thompson and Van Seters have provided such a service to biblical scholars that such discussion is almost unnecessary at the present time. I have been concerned more specifically with questions which relate to the literary history of Gen 26.1-33, and it is in large measure because the narrative seems to be a late composition, secondarily derived from earlier material which was originally concerned with Abraham, that it appears that questions concerning the historicity of the events narrated are inadmissible. Indeed, internal evidence of the lateness of the Isaac narrative suggests that however interesting or exact early parallels of custom, religion, or law discovered by archaeological research might be, they are not immediately relevant to questions concerning the historicity of the Isaac narrative. The fact that a parallel exists in the period to which a narrative purports to relate does not provide strong evidence for the dating of the narrative if that parallel is also found to have existed in other periods.

The studies of Part Two have a value above and beyond the value of these negative conclusions. By applying a modified form-criticism, and in identifying Gen 26.1-33 as a composite narrative which apparently has literary origins in a period somewhat later than the one to which it has often been attributed by previous scholarship, it has been possible to reach a number of more positive conclusions.

Since the narrative is apparently a revision of stories told about Abraham, it may seem appropriate to ask why such a revision was made. I have not pursued this question, however, since my investigations relate so specifically to the Isaac narrative, and it is probable that there is other material among the patriarchal narratives which may be traced to the same

revision and which would therefore have to be taken into account in any such discussion. Nevertheless, it has been possible to discern sufficient interest in the narrative in the developing relationship between Isaac and Abimelech to relate the intention of the narrative's author generally to that interest, and in particular to the way that the narrative appears to depict the sort of conditions which must obtain if the promise of Yahweh is to attain the degree of fulfilment which is satisfactory not only to Israel (represented by Isaac) but to the foreign nations (represented by Abimelech and the Philistines).

Although the extent to which Gen 26.1-33 can be related to particular historical circumstances as a result of these investigations may appear to be rather limited, it should not be forgotten that they have also disclosed quite a wide range of data against which it will be possible to check the results of related analyses of the patriarchal materials, as well as the sort of hypotheses which might be entertained in relation to pentateuchal criticism at the present time.

In addition to the sort of values I have already discussed, I submit that it should be recognized that the examination of a relatively well defined biblical Hebrew text such as Gen 26.1-33, whether from a literary or an historical point of view, is an interesting and worthwhile pursuit in its own right. The method which I have adopted, both at the literary and the historical levels, has been in many respects thoroughly adapted to the requirements of the text under discussion. That does not, however, reduce the value of comparing the value of the two styles of biblical study which I have used. Each has directed a different set of questions to the text; but, although each has its own particular set of results, together they contribute to a broader interpretation than would have been achieved if one

had been practised to the exclusion of the other. Moreover, although it has to be emphasised that literary conclusions have to be distinguished from historical conclusions, in the context of these studies at least, certain historical issues have been informed by some of the results of the literary analysis. Finally, it is well worth noting that these studies show that form-critical method must be flexible enough to deal with special and mixed genres such as the composite narrative.

FOOTNOTES TO THESIS

In citing scholarly literature, I have sought to balance brevity with clarity. When a book or article is cited for the first time, I have given its title in full (although subtitles are not always provided). Thereafter, abbreviated titles may be given, especially if the work is cited regularly. Date and place of publication are supplied in the Bibliography, but not in the notes, except where reference is made to an edition other than the edition listed in the Bibliography. Page references to books are prefaced by 'p' or 'pp', but references to page numbers in Journals are not so prefaced.

Footnotes to Introduction

¹R. Coggins, "Keeping up with Recent Studies: X. The Literary Approach to the Bible", ET 96 (1984-85) 9-14, can speak of "the tension between a primarily literary and a primarily historical approach...in OT study" (10).

²R. Polzin, Moses and the Deuteronomist, p 1; pp 1-12 of this book have also appeared in only slightly different form as idem, "Literary and Historical Criticism of the Bible: A Crisis in Scholarship", in R.A. Spencer (ed), Orientation by Disorientation, pp 99-114, cf. 99. Polzin had previously defended such views in his Biblical Structuralism.

³Idem, Moses, p 2, cf. idem, "Literary and Historical Criticism", p 100.

⁴D.A. Lutz, The Isaac Tradition in the Book of Genesis, notes that in Genesis Isaac occurs mainly in the following passages where, apart from Genesis 26, he is portrayed consistently as the son of Abraham or as the father of Jacob (p 80):

- 1) Gen. 21.1-7, the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah;
- 2) Gen. 21.8-14; 25.9-11, Isaac and Ishmael;
- 3) Gen. 22.1-19, Abraham and the sacrifice of Isaac;
- 4) Gen. 24.62-67, Isaac and Rebekah;
- 5) Gen. 25.19-28, the birth of Esau and Jacob to Isaac and Rebekah;
- 6) Gen. 26, Isaac and the people of Gerar;
- 7) Gen. 27, Isaac's blessing of Jacob;
- 8) Gen. 35.27-29, the death of Isaac.

⁵This is also true of certain other chapters, e.g., Gen 14; 34; 38. That is not to say, however, that such chapters are unimportant, for they enrich the Genesis narrative in a number of ways.

⁶The paucity of studies devoted to the Isaac tradition was noted already by Lutz, op. cit., p 3, in 1969.

⁷The position that Isaac was prior to Abraham in the tradition is argued most fully by M.Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch (= ÜP), pp 112-127 (E.T. 102-115); G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 269); E.H. Maly, "Genesis 12,10-20; 20,1-18; 26,7-11 and the Pentateuchal Question", CBQ 18 (1956) 255-262; G. Schmitt, "Zu Gen 26,1-14", ZAW 85 (1973) 143-156; R. Kilian, Die vorpriesterlichen Abrahamsüberlieferung, pp 213-215; J. Wellhausen, Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels, p 332 n 1 (E.T. 320 n 1).

⁸The priority of Abraham has been championed most recently by J. Van Seters, Abraham in History and Tradition, pp167-183; H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 225f.; F.V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations", JBL 84 (1965) 1-19 (see p 14).

⁹G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 270), cites vv 1-6; 7-11; 12-14; 15-17a; 17b-23; 22-33. The decision to concentrate on Gen 26.1-33, rather than the whole chapter, requires little justification. Not only are vv 34f. Priestly in origin, but Gen 26.1-33 has been considered a traditional lectionary unit (סְתוּמָה) by the Synagogue.

¹⁰G. von Rad, Genesis, pp 216-219 (E.T. 270-273), in his commentary on the text deals with vv 1-6; 7-11; 12-14; 15-22; 23-25; and 26-33, rather than the units he had already indicated. His brief comments on each section are not concerned with narrative continuity.

¹¹Von Rad quotes Noth, ÜP, pp 114-118, 170f., 208f., as his authority for these assumptions. The position has been attacked by J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191; R. Polzin, Biblical Structuralism, pp 174-201.

¹²E. Krentz, The Historical-Critical Method, p 33. Although Krentz's book is issued in the series "Old Testament Guides", he tends to concentrate primarily on the application of the method in New Testament studies.

¹³D. Patte, What is Structural Exegesis? reflects a somewhat extreme form of this rejection. Others have tended to downgrade traditional forms of biblical research, e.g., L. Ryken, "Literary Criticism of the Bible: Some Fallacies", in K.R.R. Gros Louis et al. (ed), Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, pp 24-40; J.P. Fokkelman, Narrative Art in Genesis.

¹⁴R. Polzin, op. cit, p 2, holds that "the complementary relationship (between literary and historical criticism) does allow an operational priority to literary analysis at the preliminary stages of research"; cf. the formulation of J.D. Crossan, "Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Biblical Criticism", BibRes XXII (1977) 39-49, "Structural analysis is logically prior to historical analysis" (45).

¹⁵J. Muilenburg, "Modern Issues in Biblical Studies: The Gains of Form Criticism in Old Testament Studies", ET LXXI (1959-60) 229-233. Although wishing to go "beyond" form criticism (cf. idem, "Form Criticism and Beyond", JBL 88 (1969) 1-18), Muilenburg was able to appreciate the "gains" of form criticism.

¹⁶J.D. Crossan, op. cit., 40-42, speaks of biblical studies changing from a single discipline (historical-critical method) to a field of disciplines which includes anthropological, sociological, and literary methods (43f.).

¹⁷E.g., it is not exactly true to say, as Coats does, that "Gen 12.10-20, 20.1-18, and 26.1-16... share a common content, a story depicting a husband who asks his wife to introduce herself as his sister when they come to a foreign land", G.W. Coats, "A Threat to the Host", in idem (ed), Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable, pp 71-81, cf 71. In Gen 26.7-11, Isaac does not make such a request of Rebekah.

¹⁸E. Robertson, The Old Testament Problem, pp 209-231, "Old Testament Stories: Their Purpose and their Art" (p 209f.)

¹⁹Although literary critics increasingly recognize the "fictive" nature of much of the narration in the Old Testament, not many would go so far as E. Leach, Genesis as Myth and other Essays,

²⁰E.g., R. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative.

²¹R.P. Carroll, "Some Implications of Structuralism for Old Testament Studies", TGUOS XXIV (1974) 14-33; J.W. Rogerson, Myth in Old Testament Interpretation, pp 112-127, explores the question "whether a modified

structural approach to myths is possible"; and R.C. Culley, "Some Comments on Structural Analysis and Biblical Studies", SVT XXII (1972) 129-142, wants "to concentrate more on narrative structure" so that the text itself may be used as a check on structuralist procedure.

²²P.D. Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies", JSOT 6 (1978) 28-40, has applied the method of "narrative analogy" to Old Testament texts following the lead of R. Alter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible", Commentary 60 (1975) 70-77; "Biblical Narrative", Commentary 61 (1976) 61-67, cf. now, idem, The Art of Biblical Narrative. The method has also been applied to Old Testament texts by R.P. Gordon, "David's Rise and Saul's Demise: Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 24-26", Tyndale Bulletin 31 (1980) 37-64.

²³Articles outlining the current state of research in Pentateuchal studies and its history have been published at regular intervals, and the following examples provide a helpful overview of the past forty years: G.E. Wright, "Recent European Study of the Pentateuch", JBR 18 (1980) 216-225; D.R. Ap-Thomas, "Pentateuchal Criticism: Some Recent Trends", ET LXII (1950-51) 67-71; C.R. North, "Pentateuchal Criticism" in OTMS, pp 48-83; R. de Vaux, "A propos du second centenaire d'Astruc -- reflexions sur l'etat actuel de la critique du Pentateuque", SVT I (1953) 182-198; J.C. Rylaarsdam, "The Present Status of Pentateuchal Criticism", JBR 22 (1954) 242-247; C. Sant, "Catholic Pentateuchal Studies (1906-56)", MT X (1958) 52-63; M. Winter, "Reflections on the Sources of the Pentateuch", Scripture V, 12 (1960) 78-89; R.J. Coggins, "A Century of Pentateuchal Criticism", CQR CLXVI (1965) 149-161, 413-425; H. Cazelles, "Theological Bulletin on the Pentateuch", BibThB 2 (1972) 3-24; R.E. Clements, "Interpreting the Pentateuch", A Century of Old Testament Study, pp 7-30; idem, "Pentateuchal Problems", in G.W. Anderson (ed), Tradition and Interpretation, pp 96-124; A.G. Auld, "Keeping up with recent studies: VI. The Pentateuch", ET 91 (1979-80) 297-302; D.A. Knight, "The Pentateuch", in Tucker & Knight (ed), The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters, pp 263-296.

²⁴The Scandanavian emphasis on the stability of oral tradition exemplified by such scholars as H.S. Nyberg, Studien zum Hoseabuche; I Engnell, The Call of Isaiah; idem "Methodological Aspects of Old Testament Study", SVT VII (1959) 13-30; idem, "The Traditio-Historical Method in Old Testament Research", in Critical Essays on the Old Testament, pp 3-11; and E. Nielsen, Oral Tradition, has been largely eroded. A brief account of the position can be found, for example, in C.R. North, "Living Issues in Old Testament Scholarship: The Place of Oral Tradition in the Growth of the Pentateuch", ET LXI (1949-50) 292-296; F. Moriarty, "Tradition History and the Old Testament: Some Scandanavian Contributions", Gregorianum 55 (1974) 721-741; A. Halidar, "Tradition and History", BibOr 31 (1974) 26-37. D.A. Knight, Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel, provides a lengthy account of Scandanavian research alongside a discussion of the mainly German traditio-historical research of the same period.

²⁵R. Rendtorff, Das Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch (= ÜPP); H.H. Schmid, Der sogenannte Jahwist; T.L. Thompson, The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives; J. Van Seters, op. cit. These works have produced a considerable critical response; see especially, E. Otto, "Stehen wir vor einem Umbruch in der Pentateuchkritik?", VuF 22 (1977) 82-97; B. Diebner, "Neue Ansätze in der Pentateuchforschung", DBAT 13 (1978) 2-13;

T.L. Thompson, "A New Attempt to Date the Patriarchal Narratives", JAOS 98 (1978) 76-84; J. Van Seters, "Recent Studies on the Pentateuch: A Crisis in Method", JAOS 99 (1979) 663-673; E. Zenger, "Wo steht die Pentateuchforschung heute?", BZ NF 24 (1980) 101-116; H.H. Schmid, "Auf der Suche nach neuen Perspektiven für die Pentateuchforschung", SVT XXXII (1981) 375-394; A.H.J. Gunneweg, "Anmerkungen und Anfragen zur neueren Pentateuchforschung", TRu 48 (1983) 227-253; idem, "Anmerkungen und Anfragen zur neueren Pentateuchforschung (2)", TRu 50 (1985) 107-131.

²⁶J. Van Seters, op. cit.; H.H. Schmid, Jahwist; B. Diebner & H. Schult, "Thesen zu nachexilischen Entwürfen der früher Geschichte Israels im Alten Testament", DBAT 10 (1975) 41-47.

²⁷J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament, p 5, argues that "much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text". I am sure that he is right, and must confess a personal uneasiness with methodological procedures which make imperialistic claims.

²⁸If, as I have argued above, the careful observation of structure and content required by literary analysis enables the form-critic to observe more clearly the nature of the text, it is likely that the critical studies of Part Two will benefit from some of the literary observations made in Part One.

Footnotes to Chapter One

¹Gen 21.2, "And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him" emphasizes the role of Abraham, as does v 3 which tells of him naming "his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him" Isaac. Irrespective of the fact that these two verses originate from different hands, the emphasis on Abraham remains constant.

²Cf. Gen 35.16-18; 38.27-29, for further accounts of difficult births which give rise to explanations of names.

³B.O. Long, The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, pp 49-50, discusses these explanations from an historical point of view.

⁴In the final redaction of Genesis, it is interesting that the Jacob cycle ends as it begins with a mention of Isaac. Just as 25.21 mentions his prayer for his barren wife, 35.29 mentions his death.

⁵Cf. M. Fishbane, Text and Texture, pp 46-48, for a number of observations on the way Gen 26 and 34 balance each other. Fishbane's emphasis on Gen 26's role as an "interlude" between Gen 25 and 27, however, seems less helpful. The narrative clearly has value in its own right.

⁶The application of historical method to the Isaac narrative has generally resulted in its being understood as an aggregate of originally independent units of tradition. Whatever unity exists among these units is usually considered to be only synthetic and hardly meriting serious attention.

⁷The Isaac narrative contains a number of "theological indicators", e.g., the theophanies, the divine promise speeches, and acknowledgement of divine intervention or help on Isaac's behalf by the narrator (v 12), Isaac (v 22), and Abimelech (v 28f.). Such features of the narrative all have a theological value, but that value is not always easy to assess.

⁸Although the present chapter contains several methodological statements, these are necessary to guide the reader through the analysis. A more general methodological discussion will be provided in Chapter Four below.

⁹See below, (f): "Narrative Coherence and Integration".

¹⁰The structure of each episode can be examined without invoking the form-critical principle that each unit of tradition originally narrated only a single episode.

¹¹The promise of blessing for the nations belongs at a fundamental level to the divine promise received by each of the Patriarchs. It is given to Abraham (12.3), Isaac (26.4), and Jacob (28.14), on the occasion of the first divine revelation which each experiences (see too 18.18; 22.18). If my contention is correct, and the narrator employs his narrative to explore the meaning of the promise of blessing to the nations, it may be that narrative analysis provides a more adequate clue to the meaning of the promise than the usual kind of grammatical and syntactical analysis of the words of promise.

¹²R. Rendtorff, 'Der "Jahwist" als Theologe? Zum Dilemma der Pentateuchkritik', SVT XXVIII (1975) 158-166, cf 162f. (E.T. 6). Rendtorff's programme was announced in "Traditio-Historical Method and the Documentary Hypothesis", Proceedings of the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Vol 1, pp 5-11; it was developed more fully in UPP, and has recently been restated in "The Future of Pentateuchal Criticism", Henoah 8 (1984) 1-15.

¹³D. Vetter, Jahwes Mit-Sein: ein Ausdruck des Segens, provides statistics and discusses the use of this phrase throughout the Old Testament. See especially pp 6ff., for a discussion of the occurrences of the promise in Gen 26. Vetter concludes, 'das in 26,3.24 im "Mit-Sein" und "Segnen" anklang' (p 6). Generally he finds a close connection between the promise "Mit-Sein" and the promise of blessing.

¹⁴In the following reading, those aspects of threat C which arise concurrently with other threats are entered in square brackets. This concurrency gives rise to a number of paradoxes which will be noted in Chapter Two below.

¹⁵One point, arising out of the present context, might be noted here. So far as life is said to have been made bitter for Isaac and Rebekah by the marriage of Esau to foreign wives (26.34f.), the Priestly (P) context serves to emphasize the ongoing nature of the threat. Even the resolution of tension experienced in the covenant with Abimelech does not dispel every threat. On the family level, the promise of progeny is ambivalent in its fulfilment so far as one of the sons is portrayed as having made a choice (of wives) which disappoints his parents. On the wider narrative level, these verses provide the motivation in P for sending Jacob to Paddan-aram, to find a suitable wife among the daughters of Laban (27.46-28.9). More pointedly, these verses seem to work against the fulfilment of the promise of blessing for the nations. In the reading of Gen 26.1-33 which is presented in this chapter, however, these two verses serve no function, and will not be considered further.

¹⁶Perhaps the most pressing objection which might be levelled against the reading presented in this chapter is precisely that at the end of the narrative the couple remain childless. Nevertheless, the circumstances which had threatened the promise of numerous progeny have been resolved (26.11), and there is no indication of any further threat to this promise having arisen. Further, Isaac's response in v 22 may indicate an expectation of "fruitfulness" in terms of progeny as well as prosperity. The lack of any explicit reference to the birth of children might be considered to indicate that the so-called wife-sister episode is concerned more with the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech than with the relationship between Isaac and Rebekah.

¹⁷Support for the view that Gen 26.1-33 is a retrospective narration of the Isaac story, inserted by the narrator only he had introduced his primary subject, may be found in J.Goldingay, "The patriarchs in Scripture and history", in Millard & Wiseman (ed), Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives (= EPN), pp 11-42. Goldingay takes Gen 25.19-35.29 as the Isaac narrative, and has suggested that a central concern of this larger Isaac story is with the birth of his sons. Thus both their birth and the birthright incident are narrated in Gen 25, "before coming in the next chapter to incidents that seem to have happened before the twins' birth" (p 17).

¹⁸J.P. Fokkelman, Narrative Art in Genesis, pp 86-236, provides an extensive literary study of the Jacob narrative. Other studies which display similar concerns are: M. Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19-35:22)", JJS 26 (1975) 15-38; idem, Text and Texture, pp 40-62; G.W. Coats, "Strife Without Reconciliation: A Narrative Theme in the Jacob Tradition", in R. Albertz et al. (ed), Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments, pp 82-106; J.G. Gammie, "Theological Interpretation By Way of Literary and Tradition Analysis: Genesis 25-36", in M.J. Buss (ed), Encounter with the Text, 117-137.

¹⁹In making this claim, I do not deny the validity of Polzin's attempt to offer a synchronic interpretation of all three versions of the wife-sister incident, R. Polzin, "The Ancestress of Israel", Semeia 3 (1975) 81-98. But although his interpretation appears satisfactory, along the guidelines he has laid down, I would wish to resist his selective use of background, e.g., Gen 25.21-26 is used, but not Gen 25.5, 11a. I also feel that he is too quick to turn the transformations he identifies into "message".

²⁰I use this term to indicate a narrative consisting of several episodes, and also to avoid the theological overtones which are associated with a term like Ritschl's "Meta-story", D. Ritschl & H.O Jones, "Story" als Rohmaterial der Theologie, pp 22ff.

²¹H. Gunkel, Genesis, p XXXIIIff. (E.T. 46f.); K. Koch, Was ist Formgeschichte?, p 143 (E.T. 117).

²²J.A. Wilcoxon, "Narrative", in OTFC, pp 57-98, cf. p 65.

²³See below, p 109f.

²⁴The investigation of the oral pre-history of the biblical text, however, is fraught with difficulty, in some cases raising the preliminary question, "Is it possible even to be sure that an oral stage underlies the written text?"

²⁵M. Noth, ÜP, p 116 (E.T. 105), admits some condensation, at least towards the beginning of the story, in the literary formulation of Gen 26.1-33. That is, the present form of the story is incomplete.

²⁶Thus, for example, the extent of the so-called "wife-sister" story in Gen 26 is widely disputed. On the other hand, if Gen 26.1-33 originated as a compositional unity, cf. F.V. Winnett, op. cit., 14; J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 191, the disagreement of the form critics, in this instance at any rate, must arise out of the fact that their enterprise constitutes an attempt to separate the inseparable.

²⁷J. Hoftijzer, Die Verheissungen an die drei Erzväter, pp 14-23, has argued that the patriarchal narratives had already become a connected story prior to the addition of the promise theme. According to Hoftijzer, however, Gen 26.2-5; 23ff., are secondary, pp 15f.

²⁸G. von Rad, "Verheissenes Land und Jahwes Land im Hexateuch", GS, pp 99f. (E.T. 93).

²⁹The life of Benjamin is similarly threatened by his brothers (Gen 44.9), although Benjamin, unlike Rachel, has committed no theft. Although Alter notes this parallel, it is rather fanciful to relate Rachel's death in childbirth to Jacob's confident, but perhaps rash statement as he does, cf., The Art of Biblical Narrative, p 173.

³⁰Reuben's relationship with Bilhah probably precluded further sexual intercourse between Jacob and his concubine, cf. G.G. Nicol, "Genesis XXIX.32 and XXXV.22a: Reuben's Reversal", JTS NS 31 (1980) 536-539.

³¹The promise of a "great name" may also be noted, cf. A.K. Jenkins, "A Great Name: Genesis 12:2 and the Editing of the Pentateuch", JSOT 10 (1978) 41-57.

³²It is probable that Gen 14 was inserted into the Patriarchal Narrative later than the promise-threat technique. Cf. J Van Seters, Abraham, pp 296-308; M.C. Astour, "Political and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis 14 and its Babylonian Sources", in A. Altmann (ed), Biblical Motifs, pp 65-112. For a different view, see, J.A. Emerton, "Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis XIV", VT XXI (1971) 24-27; idem, "The Riddle of Genesis XIV", VT XXI (1971) 403-439.

³³U. Cassuto, "Jerusalem in the Pentateuch", Biblical and Critical Studies, Vol 1, pp 71-78, argues that this chapter refers not only to Jerusalem, but to the establishment of tithing for the benefit of the Jerusalem priesthood. G. von Rad, Genesis, p 139 (E.T 181), appears to think that the tithe is for the king ("der Gesalbte Jahwes") as much as for the priesthood.

³⁴U. Cassuto, op. cit., p 74.

³⁵Gen 26.8 וַיֵּרָא [אֲבִימֶלֶךְ] וְהָנָה יִצְחָק מִצְחָק אֶת רֵבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ

³⁶J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 181.

³⁷F.V. Winnett, op. cit., 14; J Van Seters, Abraham, p 191. N.E. Wagner, A Literary Analysis of Genesis 12-36, points in the same general direction.

³⁸Contra, R. Rendtorff, "Jahwist", 163 (E.T 6); J. Hoftijzer, op. cit., pp 14-23.

³⁹See above, p 29.

⁴⁰M. Dahood, "Abraham's Reply in Genesis 20,11", Biblica 61 (1980) 90-91, on the basis of Ugaritic and Akkadian cognates suggests ʾamr = "to see" in this context, but it seems more likely that the verb should be understood as "to think" there and in Gen 26.9. Indeed, the use of the verb might be attributed to Hebrew's preference for direct discourse, cf. K.R. Crim, "Hebrew Direct Discourse as a Translation Problem", BibTrans 24 (1973) 311-316.

⁴¹Gen 26.7(x2), 8, 9, 10, 11.

⁴²Gen 26.7, 9.

⁴³Gen 26.7(x2), 9(x2)

⁴⁴The interesting possibility that Abraham might still have been lying when he declared that Sarah is his half-sister (Gen 20.12) has been raised by P.D. Miscall, The Workings of Old Testament Narrative, p 15. Although the narrator has provided no real evidence to help decide the issue, the ambiguity must at least be noted.

⁴⁵C.J.M. Weir, "The Alleged Hurrian Wife-Sister Motif in Genesis", TGUOS XXII (1970) 14-25, cf 24.

⁴⁶Pp 43-47, below.

⁴⁷These remarks support Coats' contention that the narrative is about the "threat to the host" and not to Rebekah, cf. G.W. Coats, "A Threat to the Host". I would not wish, however, to discount completely the element of threat to wife and progeny which may also be discerned.

⁴⁸This provides a balance in the narrative, two wells each to the herdsmen of Gerar and Isaac's servants.

⁴⁹The importance of peace (שָׁלוֹם), as indicative of the resolution which has taken place in the strife between Isaac and Abimelech, should not be underestimated. Here peace is a condition arising out of the blessing of Yahweh, cf. C. Westermann, "Der Frieden (shalom) im Alten Testament", ZdZ 10 (1970) 361-375.

⁵⁰שָׁבַע also occurs in the first part of the narrative (26.3), where Yahweh remembers the oath which he had sworn to Abraham.

⁵¹M. Noth, ÜP, pp 30 n 92, 209 n 529 (E.T. 29 n 92, 192 n 529); D.A. Lutz, op. cit., pp 89f, 154; J. Skinner, Genesis, p 366, terms vv 15, 18 as "an ancient gloss"; G von Rad, Genesis, p 218 (E.T. 271). G.H. Davies, Genesis, 1970, p 212, opposes this view. His reasons, however, are not very persuasive, and he claims that v 15 is in its present position in order to demonstrate that Isaac's prosperity is all his own.

⁵²C.A. Simpson, The Early Traditions of Israel, p 91.

⁵³Similarly, Gen 34 seems to provide a balance with Gen 26.1-33 within the Jacob narrative, cf. J.P. Fokkelman, op. cit., pp 240f.; J.G. Gammie, op. cit., pp 121ff.; M. Fishbane, Text and Texture, pp 46ff.

⁵⁴If Isaac is prior in the tradition, it follows that the references to Abraham in Gen 26 cannot be original to their present context. See Chapter Five on the question of priority.

⁵⁵See above n 51.

⁵⁶Just as the references to Abraham provide for a continuity with the past, the promise element provides continuity with the future by pointing forward to the Jacob narrative and beyond.

⁵⁷M. Noth, ÜP, p 118 (E.T. 107).

⁵⁸It may be that the attempt to determine the location from which Isaac set out already presupposes a particular classification of genre, whereas the narrative, which does not provide this information, indicates another.

⁵⁹But not in Ruth where Moab is the place of refuge (Ruth 1.2).

⁶⁰J. Simons, The Geographical and Topographical Texts of the Old Testament, "Gerar", pp 217f., identifies the city with tell esh sheri^cah (some 23 km. S.E. of Gaza), while Y. Aharoni, "The Land of Gerar", IEJ VI (1956) 24-32, identifies it with tell abu hureirah, about 7 km. further west. S. Cohen, art "Gerar", IDB Vol 2 (E-J), p 381f., supports Aharoni's view. A. van Selms, "The Canaanites in the Book of Genesis", OTS 12 (1958) 182-213, notes that an earlier identification of Tell Jemmeh (cf. F. Petrie, Gerar, 1928) "is far from certain" (p 194 n 45). For Beersheba (tell es-saba^c), Y. Aharoni, "Excavations at Tel Beer-sheba", BA 35 (1972) 111-127. The identification of this site with biblical Beer-sheba has recently been questioned by M.D. Fowler, "The Excavations of Tell Beer-sheba and the Biblical Record", PEQ 114 (1982) 7-11.

⁶¹Even if it proof existed that the place names associated with Isaac had existed at the beginning of the Second Millennium, nothing follows with respect to the historicity of the narratives. For literary appreciation, however, the assumption that the audience would have had some idea of the direction in which these places lay would suffice. As for the lesser place names of Gen 26, no plausible identification, except of the most general kind, has yet been made, although van Selms, op. cit., p 196, considers the identification of Rehoboth with Wady Ruhebe "fairly sure".

⁶²Recent discussion of this subject, and of the narrative technique of "retardation", whereby the climax of the narrative may be delayed, either to create suspense, or, as in the Isaac narrative, to create distance between important scenes, can be found in C. Conroy, Absalom Absalom!, passim; J. Licht, Storytelling in the Bible, pp 145ff.

⁶³Isa 2.2ff (Mic 4.1ff); Isa 19.23-25; Jer 3.17; 12.14-16; 16.19. J. Muilenburg, "Abraham and the Nations. Blessing and World History", Interp 19 (1965) 387-398, argues that "the nations will receive the divine blessing through their relation to Israel" (p 396). J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel, pp 400-403, in discussing the conversion of the Gentiles, argues that the idea originated with Second Isaiah. At some level, Abimelech might be considered as a paradigm for the converted Gentile, coming to confess Yahweh's action in blessing Isaac (Israel) in order to share in the blessing.

⁶⁴Isaac's speech suggests that a distance may exist between diplomatic speech and the reality to which it refers (cf. vv 16, 18-21).

⁶⁵It seems to me that any attempt to discover the narrator's intention prior to an analysis of the structure of a biblical narrative is methodologically incorrect.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

¹Although Abimelech may appear disadvantaged in having to travel to Beersheba to plead for Isaac's favour, Isaac's gracious acceptance of his plea permits him to depart in peace.

²H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 299, identifies five pericopes: vv 1-6; 7-11; 12-17a; 17b-22; and 23-33, whereas G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 270), identifies six: vv 1-6; 7-11; 12-14; 15-17a; 17b-22; and 23-33. Most scholars have tended to accept one or the other of these analyses, although there is some variety concerning which verses or parts of verses should be credited to glossators, redactors, or the like. Notable exceptions include F.V. Winnett, op. cit., 14; J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 191, 313; N.E. Wagner, Literary Analysis, p 225.

³Unlike the form-critical pericope, such narrative units need not evidence a clear beginning and ending. Neither do they require to be complete in themselves.

⁴Such matters as the narrator's use of theme and motif are touched on in Chapter Three below.

⁵C. Brémond, "The Morphology of the French Folktale", Semiotica 2 (1970) 247-276.

⁶By "elementary sequence", Brémond signifies the grouping of the three narrative movements, beginning (potential), middle (actualization), and ending (achievement), op. cit., 248.

⁷Brémond notes the universality of the folktale and, although claiming that it is too soon to propose a comprehensive theory (274), concludes that his analytical method "relates less to the structure of Russian or French tales than to the system of laws governing the development of narratives in general" (276). In using Brémond's method, I do not assume that the Isaac narrative materials are necessarily folklore.

⁸The presence of folkloristic motifs does not necessarily indicate a folklore genre. Such motifs may have once been common currency among literate narrators.

⁹This is a distinction which goes back at least as far as Aristotle, On the Art of Poetry (Poetics): I. Bywater, ch 7, p 22f., for this tripartite division of plot and definitions. As to its length, plot should be of "such length as will allow a sequence of events to result in a change from bad to good fortune in accordance with what is probable or inevitable", cf. W. Kaufmann, Tragedy and Philosophy, p 65; I. Bywater, op. cit., p 24f.

¹⁰Op. cit., 251.

¹¹Ibid., 248.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., 249.

¹⁴Ibid., 251, diagram 3.

¹⁵Ibid., diagram 4.

¹⁶See above, pp 20, 28f., 44-46.

¹⁷So, D.O. Via, Jr., Kerygma and Comedy in the New Testament, pp 45-50. My designation of those episodes which display improvement "comic" and those which display deterioration "tragic", is inspired by Via. J.D. Crossan, Raid on the Articulate, pp 9-23, discusses "comedy" and "tragedy" as representing divergent possibilities in literature. More recently an issue of the journal Semeia has been devoted to these issues under the title J.C. Exum (ed), Tragedy and Comedy in the Bible, Semeia 32 (1984). Following Frye, J.C. Exum and J.W. Whedbee, "Isaac, Samson, and Saul: reflections on the Comic and Tragic Visions", Semeia 32 (1984) 5-40, hold that comedy follows a U-shaped plot and tragedy an inverted U-shaped plot, and discuss all the Isaac material from Gen 17 to 35 under these terms (cf. 10-19). Among the respondents, D.M. Gunn, "The Anatomy of Divine Comedy: On Reading the Bible as Comedy and Tragedy", Semeia 32 (1984) 115-129, questions the appropriateness of terms such as "U-shaped plot", notes that where such plots are found the proportions of the letter U have at least to be ignored, and suggests that the materials studied in the various essays are really about the "happy ending" rather than "U-shaped plots". Gunn's criticisms are precisely to the point, and would tend to support the understanding of comedy and tragedy underlying this chapter against that of Exum and Whedbee.

¹⁸This is also a difficulty for form-critical analysis.

¹⁹Cf. J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 177.

²⁰Apart from disclosing the nature of the initial relationship between Isaac and Abimelech, and specifying the location, vv 1-6 are relatively unimportant for the discussion of the three narratives which are concerned with the Patriarch, his wife, and the foreign ruler.

²¹I hesitate to call Isaac the vassal of Abimelech, although I once suggested, "Am Anfang (Gen 26) zieht Isaak nach Gerar und hat dort die rechtliche Lage eines Lehnsmanes von Abimelech" ('Die Isaakerzählung als "Story"' lecture delivered at the Theologisches Seminar, Hamburg-Horn, June 1980). Even if the analogy is fairly good, such a description of Isaac's situation in Gerar should not be taken too literally. The application of categories foreign to the actual Old Testament material can lead to some of the imbalances evident in D.J. Wiseman, "Abraham reassessed", in EPN, pp 139-156, which represents Abraham as a prince and judge who maintained justice, law and order as a local governor figure.

²²It is fairly common in biblical Hebrew narrative for the narrator to provide his audience with information which is hidden from the protagonists.

²³There may even be an element of ambiguity in the fact that Isaac experiences blessing outside the land of promise, where he might have been tempted to remain but for his expulsion.

²⁴See above, pp 38-42.

²⁵Isaac did not worship at Gerar, following the first theophany (vv 2-5), but does at Beersheba (v 25).

²⁶Although Gen 22.1 does not specify the location of Abraham's audition, 22.19 implies that his party returned to Beersheba, as if his regular dwelling was there. Similarly, Gen 46.1f. relates that God appeared to Jacob in a night vision at Beersheba.

²⁷See above, pp 43-47.

²⁸See above, pp 17ff.

²⁹In my discussion of vv 1-6 above (pp 52f.), I have noted that there is just sufficient improvement between the beginning and end of the narrative to allow the tentative identification of the episode as "comedy". That "comic" structure is indeed only barely discernible and arises out of the fact that the theophany (vv 2-5) is set in a framework (vv 1, 6) which just allows sufficient movement between the beginning and end of the episode to permit this analysis. The second theophany (vv 24-25), however, resists analysis in these terms.

³⁰J.K. Kuntz, The Self-Revelation of God, p 61f. Cf., J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament", SVT VII (1960) 31-38.

³¹J.K. Kuntz, op. cit., pp 39ff., 61. I cannot agree, however, with his suggestion that the transition from the act of seeing to the act of hearing was subtle or "imperceptible" (p 40). Even if the visual element does vanish from the narratives "while the audible reality vividly remains" (p 41), this alleged circumstance implies little concerning the Hebrew orientation towards reality. Here Kuntz's dependence upon T. Boman, Hebrew Thought Compared with Greek, p 206, is open to criticism. Boman's theories have been subjected to trenchant criticisms by J. Barr, The Semantics of Biblical Language, and his sharp distinction between Hebrew and Greek thought cannot be sustained. It is not a particular orientation towards reality which structures the description of theophany in the Pentateuch. Visual details of the theophany may not have been essential, for they could always be visualized by the reader-hearer. The speech which accompanied the theophany, however, would almost always have to be specified.

³²I do not imply that the use of the niph^{al} of הא, accompanied by the deity as subject and the preposition ל, might be used as a criterion for the dating of its source. This construction is fairly common in the patriarchal narratives, occurring at Gen 12.7; 17.1; 18.1; 26.2, 24; 35.9; and 48.3. Even if some of these occurrences emanate from different sources, the frequency of the construction may indicate a conventional usage. R. Rendtorff, "Die Offenbarungsvorstellungen im Alten Israel", in W. Pannenberg (ed) Offenbarung als Geschichte, pp 21-41, discusses this usage, cf. esp pp 23-25.

³³Thus God is said simply to have spoken to Abraham at Gen 12.1; 13.14; 15.7; and 21.12. Elsewhere in the Genesis narrative he is said to have appeared to a number of persons in visions or during sleep, Gen 15.1; 15.12f.; 20.3; and 28.13.

³⁴Isa 6.1ff.; Ezek 1.4-28. This appears to be a matter of distinguishing between different functions of the theophanic Gattung as it is employed in different genres. In the prophetic call narrative, the theophany is employed to authenticate the prophet's calling, whereas in the patriarchal narratives it functions by making explicit the divine will and participation in the patriarchal experience.

³⁵Elsewhere Gerar is alluded to as the "land of the Philistines" (Gen 21.32), a term which specifies it as the possession of foreigners and so as foreign territory.

³⁶The absence of this promise in v 24 is underlined by its earlier repetition in v 3 and 4.

³⁷Cf. M. Noth, ÜP, p 114 (E.T. 104); G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 269).

³⁸H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 299ff.; M. Noth, Ibid.; D.A. Lutz, op. cit., p 200.

³⁹See above, p 59-61.

⁴⁰Similarly, the aetiology of Beersheba (v 32f.) is given without specific reference to the Philistines.

⁴¹Cf. J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 177.

⁴²See above, pp 43-45.

⁴³I have already observed that this satisfactory conclusion might be subjected to further disruption (see Chapter One), n 15 above). The P material of v 34f. appears to disrupt the successful relationship with foreign nations achieved by the narrator of vv 1-33, for it is precisely Esau's marriage with foreign wives which is said to have distressed Isaac and Rebekah. It may be, however, that the Isaac narrative is sufficiently self-contained as an entity in its own right to resist the negative connotations of its present narrative context.

⁴⁴I have attempted to draw out the theological consequences of this point in a general way in "The Threat and the Promise", ET 94 (1982-83) 136-139.

⁴⁵According to the narrative Isaac fails to attribute any aspect of his good fortune to divine intervention until after he gains the undisputed possession of the well of Rehoboth (26.22).

⁴⁶Nonetheless, with respect to the larger Patriarchal Narrative, this reference also draws attention to the Abraham stories of Gen 12.10-20 and 20.1-18.

Footnotes to Chapter Three

¹See above, pp 35-37.

²For the sake of convenience, I include the theophanies of vv 2-5, 24, and the associated promises, as doublets.

³The construction of a narrative background is a literary pursuit. It entails the examination of parallel narratives for themes, motifs, stock characters and the like. When these are compared with the text under investigation, a number of contrasts and similarities might be perceived which enrich one's reading of the text. A somewhat similar approach has been suggested by P.D. Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories as Analogies", JSOT 6 (1978) 28-40. Following the lead of R. Alter, "A literary Approach to the Bible", Commentary 60 (1975) 70-77 [cf. idem, The Art of Biblical Narrative, pp 3-12], who introduced "narrative analogy" as one means of facilitating a literary approach to Genesis 38, Miscall understands "narrative analogy" as a feature of Hebrew narrative "through which one part of the text provides oblique commentary on another". His programme, however, involves the reciprocal action of texts, and so can be opposed to the present attempt to construct a "narrative background" which is more concerned with the way the reading of one particular text is enriched by discriminating carefully between it and other narrative texts. For another, more fruitful, attempt to apply "narrative analogy" to biblical Hebrew narrative, see R.P. Gordon, "David's Rise and Saul's Demise: Narrative Analogy in 1 Samuel 24-26", Tyndale Bulletin 31 (1980) 37-64.

⁴I shall discuss what I mean by "narrative background" more fully in Chapter Four below. It is sufficient to say at this stage that, since I hold that the canonical ordering of the Patriarchal Narrative has some significance for interpretation, each version of the so-called wife-sister story implies a different narrative background. This factor alone is sufficient to distinguish the method I adopt here from that proposed by P.D. Miscall, "The Jacob and Joseph Stories".

⁵Although other matters might be considered, I shall confine my attention to the following trajectories through Gen 12-25:

- a) the divine promise to the patriarchs,
- b) the story of the Patriarch, his wife, and a foreign ruler,
- c) the "expulsion" motif,
- d) the conflict over the possession of certain wells,
- e) the making of a covenant between the Patriarch and Abimelech, and
- f) allusions to the name Isaac.

⁶These promises, like the promises to Isaac noted above (pp 19-20), stand at the beginning of the story about the Patriarch. In content, although there are marked similarities between the two promise sections, there are also differences.

⁷This is by no means true at every stage. The second divine speech of Gen 12.7 is quickly followed by Abraham pretending that Sarah is his sister and not his wife. "Faithless" acts are numerous in the patriarchal narratives.

⁸Cf. Gen 26.25. There is no description of Isaac's response to the theophany and promise of Gen 26.2-5, other than the notice that he lived in Gerar.

⁹The activity of altar-building appears almost as a characteristic punctuation of the itinerary contained in Gen 12.1-9, 13.1-4, 14-17.

¹⁰I am not concerned with the question whether this section originated as a unity. I.M. Kikawada, "The Unity of Genesis 12.1-9", Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Vol 1 (1977) 229-235, has attacked those critics who "have failed to note any coherent integral relationship between the nine verses". Kikawada then examines the rhetorical features which reveal a "beautifully constructed literary unity". But his arguments are hardly convincing. Rhetorical features, however well they may be distributed throughout a text, cannot be used to demonstrate that it originated as a literary unity.

¹¹Mention of Lot in Gen 14 is excluded from consideration here. In this late midrash (so M.C. Astour, "Political and Cosmic Symbolism in Genesis 14 and its Babylonian Sources", in A. Altmann (ed), Biblical Motifs, pp 65-112; J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 296-308) Lot is introduced in part to provide a motivation for Abraham's participation in this minor military campaign, and partly because of the attack made by the alliance of the hostile kings on Sodom and Gomorrah. For a different view of Gen 14, J.A. Emerton, "Some False Clues in the Study of Genesis xiv", VT XXI (1971) 24-47; idem, "The Riddle of Genesis xiv", VT XXI (1971) 403-439. N-E.A. Andreasen, "Genesis 14 in its Near Eastern Context", in C.D. Evans et al. (ed), Scripture in Context, pp 59-77, has reviewed three attempts to place the chapter within its ancient Near Eastern context.

¹²Another anticipation of that destruction is found at Gen 18.16-33. On the other hand, the rescue of Lot from the conflagration is anticipated at some level by Gen 14.15f.

¹³Cf. M.C. Astour, op. cit., p 65; cf. the remarks with which Andreasen, op. cit., p 59, introduces his study. The distinctive characterization of Abraham in Gen 14 has been well observed by R. Smend, Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments, "Der Abraham dieser Perikope ist ein anderer und agiert in anderen Dimensionen als der von JE, aber auch als der von P" (p 46).

¹⁴The land of exile is not specified and this may permit the reader to discover an allusion to Babylon as well as Egypt. The promise that the people will come out of exile "with great possessions" refers to "the despoiling of the Egyptians", an event anticipated to some extent by Abraham's own visit to Egypt (cf. 12.20).

¹⁵For a recent literary analysis of the Hagar stories, see P. Tribble, Texts of Terror, pp 9-35. This study is reprinted in an "adapted" form as "The Other Woman: A Literary and Theological Study of the Hagar Narratives", in J.T. Butler et al. (ed), Understanding the Word, pp 221-246.

¹⁶This threat emerges in Gen 21 where it is resolved by the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's company.

¹⁷In this somewhat discursive narrative of his encounter with three travellers, the narrator suggests that Abraham also apprehends the presence of Yahweh. The author of Gen 18 may have used this encounter to represent the appearance of Yahweh as something deeply mysterious. That is not to say, however, that the author created his story de novo, and did not use sources.

¹⁸Genesis 20 is important for locating Abraham and Sarah at the time of Isaac's birth. Gen 20.1 tells of Abraham settling as a resident alien at Gerar. And at 20.15 we find Abimelech telling Abraham that the country is at his disposal to settle wherever he pleases. There is no indication that that Abraham again changed location before the birth of Isaac, and Gen 21.1 does not specify a location. On the other hand, by Gen 21.22-34, when Abraham and Abimelech enter into a covenant at Beersheba, it appears that Abraham had been there for some time. While the notice of Isaac's birth (Gen 21.1-3) is not tied to a particular location, its apparent association with Gerar according to the present narrative sequence is not without interest, particularly in view of his association with that place in Genesis 26.

¹⁹The secondary literature of Gen 22 is vast, cf. R. Kilian, Isaaks Opferung, who cites much of it. Recently the story has become a target chapter for structural analysis, cf. F. Bovon and G. Rouiller (ed), Exegesis, Problème de méthode et exercices de lecture, where several essays are devoted to different "readings" of Gen 22; A. Galy, "Une lecture de Genèse 22", in A. Vanel (ed), L'ancien Testament: approches et lectures, pp 117-133; see also J.L. Crenshaw, "Journey into Oblivion: A Structural Analysis of Gen. 22.1-19", Soundings LVIII (1975) 243-256. Crenshaw has recently offered another analysis of the chapter in his A Whirlpool of Torment, pp 9-29.

²⁰This term, as used in these narratives, is very often a surrogate for the deity.

²¹It might be noted that the self-identification formula uttered by the deity at Gen 15.7 seems to have been modeled on the basis of similar formulas in the Exodus narrative, cf. Ex 20.1.

²²Two recent studies of this passage, both undertaken from a tradition-historical perspective, show evidence of some sensitivity to literary matters, M.W. Roth, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Tradition-Critical Study of Genesis 24", CBQ 34 (1972) 177-187; K.T. Aitken, "The Wooing of Rebekah: A Study in the Development of the Tradition", JSOT 30 (1984) 3-23.

²³Cf. J. Goldingay, op. cit., pp 11-23, for a discussion of the "theme" of the Patriarchal Narrative which gives due weight not only to the divine promises but to "the obstacles to the fulfilment" of the divine promises. I would judge, however, that in his emphasis on the deity's overcoming of these obstacles, Goldingay has perhaps overlooked the activities of the human characters which often create these obstacles.

²⁴J. Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period", VT XXII (1972) 448-459, has argued that "the association of the promises to the Patriarchs is a specific development of Israel's sacred traditions during the exilic period" (459). References to Isaac outside of Genesis are not only rare, but possibly derive entirely from the late pre-exilic/exilic period at the earliest. It may be, therefore, that Isaac first sprang to prominence precisely as such a "bridge" figure, occupying the space between Abraham and Jacob and fulfilling a role which Jacob was patently unfitted to occupy.

²⁵R.C. Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative, pp 33-41.

²⁶Ibid., I have abbreviated Culley's description of each of these elements. See J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 168 for a similar analysis of the structure underlying the story of Gen 12.10-20.

²⁷Ibid., p 37.

²⁸Ibid., p 38.

²⁹Ibid., p 39.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹R. Polzin, "The Ancestress of Israel", Semeia 3 (1975) 81-98.

³²R. Polzin, op. cit., 81.

³³P.D. Miscall, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative", Semeia 15 (1979) 27-44, extends this transformation to include the narratives of 1 Sam 25 and 2 Sam 11. Polzin, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative: A Response", Semeia 15 (1979) 45-50, has accepted much of Miscall's analysis, but Miscall's analysis can only be made at the expense of the distinctiveness of the two sets of narratives, and I have made this point in "David, Abigail and Bathsheba, Nabal and Uriah: Transformations within a Triangle", ST (forthcoming).

³⁴If the analysis presented above (Chapter One) is valid, the so-called "wife-sister" story of Gen 26.7-11 is better read within the context of Gen 26.1-33.

³⁵The wider background also relates that Isaac had been blessed by Yahweh (Gen 25.11). It seems to me that the narrator has deliberately avoided connecting the wife-sister incident with the expulsion, see below, pp 132-134.

³⁶Ibid., 93.

³⁷By relating the two sets of transformations, Polzin further argues that a man is blessed by God when he "in fact correctly possesses both progeny and wealth" (25). Moreover, the first set of transformations "is also concerned with how man learns the will or purpose of Yahweh", for the existence of blessing or curse in a man's experience will show whether or not he is conforming to that will: "Blessing and Curse as categories of God's will are revealed in three possible ways within the patriarchal narratives and the versions of Gen 12, 20, 26 neatly illustrate these possibilities" (26).

³⁸The literary analysis provided in Chapter One contains a number of observations concerning the context of Gen 26.7-11, and the same work cannot be repeated here.

³⁹T.L. Thompson, "A New Attempt to Date the Patriarchal Narratives", JAOS 98 (1978) 76-84, speaks of this "lack of harmonious transition" (82).

⁴⁰Although these narratives display an interest in the sort of sexual relationships which result in childbirth, that is not necessarily the most important or the central point which each makes. The common interest is sufficiently marked, however, to support my contention that they be taken together as a group.

⁴¹The men of Sodom are so intent on their perversion that they refuse the offer of heterosexual intercourse. This contrasts with Jdg 19 where the Benjaminites abuse the guest's concubine when access to him is denied.

⁴²Against G. von Rad, Genesis, p 177 (E.T. 224). C.M. Carmichael, Women, Law, and the Genesis Traditions, p 55, is another who argues that the Genesis tradition was critical of the behaviour of Lot and his daughters. C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 384, however, argues that the present text expresses no enmity against Moab and Ammon. In the incestuous nature of the origin of these peoples, there is perhaps an analogy with the incestuous nature of Israel's origin (Gen 20) and some kind of concern for the purity of the Moabite and Ammonite races may also be expressed in the narrative. J. Pitt-Rivers, The Fate of Shechem, pp 151-158, contends that "A series of incidents (in Genesis) present possible solutions to the questions: whom shall we marry? whom shall our sisters marry?"

⁴³If one takes the present narrative sequence seriously, one must assume that the marriage of Abraham and Sarah was incestuous, even if there was a time, prior to the incorporation of Gen 20 into the narrative, when Sarah was not thought to be Abraham's half-sister.

⁴⁴D.J. Wiseman, "Abraham reassessed", EPN, pp 139-156, holds that Pharaoh acknowledged "Abraham's rank and dignity" (p 145). A courtesy escort would be consonant with this view. J. Skinner, Genesis, p 251, supposes that the escort was intended to protect Abraham, rather than to expel him ignominiously. G. von Rad, Genesis, p 128 (E.T. 168) opts for expulsion, however, as does W. Zimmerli, 1. Mose 12-25: Abraham, p 28: 'Schweigend steht er vor dem Pharao, schweigend lässt er es über sich ergehen, das er „per Schub" mit einer Eskorte über die Grenze abgeschoben wird'.

⁴⁵Contra M. Noth, ÜP 115 (E.T. 104f.). Gen 26, although moving through a number of locations does not represent Isaac in vv 12-14 or anywhere else as a Wanderhirt, changing pasture according to the season.

⁴⁶The words צאן, בקר and a form of נבך appear in each story. The list of Gen 12.16 is by far the longest, although that of Gen 26.14 perhaps gives the impression of greatest prosperity, particularly when set alongside the agricultural yield of מאה שערים (v 12). The most significant difference, however, is that Isaac's riches arose out of his industry and Yahweh's blessing, and was not received in the form of gifts.

⁴⁷The invitation to Abraham to dwell wherever he wished may provide a transformation of the expulsion motif in Gen 12.20. It may be significant that the verbal root טו' is used here (Gen 20.15), rather than גר which signified Abraham's original status in Gerar (Gen 20.1).

⁴⁸Gen 26.18 would provide some support for this view.

⁴⁹Vv 15 and 18 are usually attributed to a later hand, as a corollary of the view that Isaac was prior to Abraham in the tradition, cf. G. von Rad, Genesis, p 218 (E.T. 271); J. Skinner, Genesis, p 336. This view is rejected below, Chapter Five.

⁵⁰It might also be noted how artfully vv 15 and 18 are positioned in their respective contexts. The conclusion of v 14, ויקנאו אתו פלשתים, already suggests something about the character of the Philistines, and so prepares the reader for their boorish behaviour noted in v 15. Set beside the last words of v 17, וישב שם, the וישב יצחק with which v 18 begins provides a nice play on the roots טו' and טו'.

⁵¹B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 294; N.E. Wagner, Literary Analysis, p 152, make this assumption.

⁵²According to the present arrangement of the Genesis narrative, Isaac must have been born in the vicinity of Gerar, the scene of so much of Gen 20-21.

⁵³See J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 183ff.; D.J. McCarthy, "Three Covenants in Genesis", CBQ 26 (1964) 179-189.

⁵⁴Ahuzzath is added at Gen 26.26.

⁵⁵Cf. Gen 26.28f., where the initial speech of Abimelech is worded differently, although ודא is retained.

⁵⁶I am not concerned with the attempted division of that account into two sources, cf. H. Gunkel, Genesis, pp 233-236; D.A. Lutz, op. cit., pp 180ff.

⁵⁷In Gen 26, there is a clearer connection between the episodes which stand at the beginning and end of the sequence than in Gen 20-21. The history of the relationship between Isaac and Abimelech is also more clearly defined.

⁵⁸This sentence connects the whole of Gen 21 with Abimelech's invitation to Abraham (Gen 20.15).

⁵⁹J. Wellhausen, Der Composition des Hexateuchs, p 15, attributes Gen 17.1-27 to his source Q (= P). This chapter is almost without exception attribute to P. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 279-295, has challenged the integrity of the priestly additions as a source, arguing that even major passages like Gen 17 and 23 are better explained as "additions dealing with special subjects of concern". Earlier attacks on the view that P was originally an independent and separate literary work include M. Löhr, Der Priesterkodex in der Genesis; and P. Volz who advanced the thesis, "P ist kein Erzähler", in P. Volz & W. Rudolph, Der Elohist als Erzähler, pp 135-142. A number of recent studies have tended to offer some support for this point of view, e.g., F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic, pp

301-321; B.W. Anderson, "From Analysis to Synthesis: The Interpretation of Genesis 1-11", JBL 97 (1978) 23-39; and E. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, pp 21-41.

⁶⁰The problems involved in the juxtapositioning in Gen 18 of singular and plural sections, referring to the three visitors, or one of them, or Yahweh, are well known, cf. J. Wellhausen, Composition, p 25f. Although there is a sense in which the story is both "disarmingly simple" and "profoundly mysterious" (R. Davidson, Genesis 12-50, p 63), the alternation between singular and plural in vv 1-15 "does not function as a very effective criterion for the division of the text into two self-contained stories" (J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 202).

⁶¹The playfulness of so much of the narration of the patriarchal stories is too rarely taken into account in the scholarly literature.

⁶²S.R. Driver, Genesis, p 210; J. Skinner, Genesis, p 321; E.A. Speiser, Genesis, p 155; R. Davidson, Genesis 12-50, p 84; C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 408.

⁶³H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 227; G. von Rad, Genesis, p 183 (E.T. 231f.); W. Zimmerli, 1 Mose 12-25, p 100; A. Clamer, La Genèse, p 304; T.L. Thompson, The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives, p 37; Y. Zakovitch, "A Study of Precise and Partial Derivations in Biblical Etymology", JSOT 15 (1980) 31-50, cf. 34.

⁶⁴E.g., Skinner, Gunkel, and Vawter (see n 10). Von Rad, op. cit., p 183, admits that the two reactions of Sarah might indicate two different sources, but notes that Gen 16.13; 22.14 similarly contain more than one etymological play. Y. Zakovitch, op. cit., argues that in such cases a later more precise derivation has been added to the less precise one of the original narrative.

⁶⁵H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 227, suggests that v 6b is "ganz profan", while v 6a is "fromm", but that judgement does not depend upon the alleged different senses of the verb קנצ. Westermann, op. cit., p 408, has correctly pointed out that the divine title אלהים is the only criterion for attributing v 6a to E. Van Seters, Abraham, p 206, who attributes 21.6-7 to the same source as 18.10-14, suggests that the use of קנצ in v 6a has its counterpart in Sarah's earlier question, "Can I have pleasure (עדנא)?" (18.12), while its use in v 6b "is the direct counterpart of Sarah's laughing at God and asking questions of doubt".

⁶⁶H. Gunkel, Genesis, pp 228-231; G. von Rad, Genesis, p 184 (E.T. 232); J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 202, has attributed the passage to his Yahwist.

⁶⁷Many commentators follow LXX, Vulg., by adding את קנצ בנה, cf. C.J. Ball, The Book of Genesis, pp 16, 73, who comments, "the omission obscures the play on the name, which is obviously implied by the use of the term קנצ." The MT as it stands, however, seems to provide sufficient allusion to the name Isaac to render the addition unnecessary.

⁶⁸E.g., H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 228; J. Skinner, Genesis, p 322; G. von Rad, Genesis, p 183f. (E.T. 232); E.A. Speiser, Genesis, p 155; B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 248; C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 414. This is by far the

most popular solution, although von Rad confesses that it is no longer possible to decide whether the verb means simply "spielen", or possibly "seinen Mutwillen treiben mir jemanden", Genesis, p 184 (E.T. 232).

⁶⁹This was the understanding of the older English versions, A.V. and R.V. But commentators on the R.V. text have expressed a preference for "playing" which is a marginal reading in that version, cf. W.H. Bennett, Genesis, p 232; H.E. Ryle, Genesis, p 228. Several commentators have noted that if "mock" were intended, the construction would require a following פ , cf. J. Skinner, Genesis, p 322.

⁷⁰The uncertainty expressed by G. von Rad concerning the original meaning of this verb has already been noted (cf. n 68 above). J. Heller, "Jmeno Jischak", TPKrR 4-5 (1955) 102-104 (Beilage zu Heft 10) has apparently discerned a sexual reference in this text, cf. the lengthy abstract of Heller's article by J. Scharbert in IZBG IV (1955/56) 27.

⁷¹On the other hand, at Gen 26.8, where the construction of Gen 21.9 is more exactly paralleled, the indirect object is supplied. But a comparison with Gen 39.14, 17, suggests that the infinitive construct like the participle of פָּנַח might be used with or without the indirect object. One might also observe the ambiguity of פָּנַח at Gen 39.14, 17, where, besides the meaning "to make a mockery", "to insult", there may be overtones of sexual abuse.

⁷²The stories discussed above seem to reflect every possible understanding of the name Isaac, cf. T.L. Thompson, Historicity, p 37.

⁷³The reader of the Bible often has a familiarity with the text which can work against his attaining the kind of reading I have sought to achieve by means of constructing a narrative background. The reader of Genesis may, for example, come to the first wife-sister story knowing that this is a stock motif which he will encounter again at Gen 20 and 26. It therefore takes a conscious effort for him to hold this knowledge in suspense and encounter each episode in turn according to the order of the text. The task of narrative background attempts to achieve this effect. The method may receive some support from the theories of P. Ricoeur who has long distinguished between reductive and restorative hermeneutics. Reductive hermeneutics, he holds, are the hermeneutics of suspicion, based largely upon the thought of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche, and are destructive of the first pre-critical naïvete. Ricoeur seeks rather to build up a restorative hermeneutics, centred on the power of symbolic discourse to generate thought. He founds his attempt to move to a second, post-critical, naïvete, in and through criticism, on restorative hermeneutics. Thus, "the time of restoration is not a different time to that of criticism; we are in every way children of criticism, and we seek to go beyond criticism by means of criticism, by a criticism which is no longer reductive but restorative", The Symbolism of Evil, p 250. See also, P. Ricoeur, "Le symbole donne a penser", Esprit 27 (1959) 60-76; idem, "From Existentialism to the Philosophy of Language", Philosophy Today 17 (1973) 88-96.

⁷⁴Although it may have been possible to explore a wider range of narrative materials, to do so would probably have been counter-productive, and may have resulted in a loss of clarity.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

¹Historical consciousness is an important integral part of the pre-understanding which the reader brings to the text, unless he is motivated merely by an "antiquarian interest in exploring the past" or "the reduction of literature to its formal dynamics". Cf. R.E. Palmer, Hermeneutics, pp 250-253. These analyses go beyond such limited horizons and are concerned with the total effect achieved by one specific text, in itself and in relation to other pieces of biblical literature.

²I assume that the story is not being read for the first time or by one who is totally ignorant of other biblical texts. Even without knowing the geography of Palestine, for example, one would be able to appreciate some sense of distance between different locations mentioned in the narrative. This is a part of the narrator's achievement.

³J.D. Crossan, "Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Biblical Criticism, BibRes XXII (1977) 39-49, see esp. 43-45 (large sections of this article are reproduced in idem, "Ruth amid Alien Corn: Perspectives and Methods in Contemporary Biblical Criticism", R.M. Polzin & E. Rothman (ed), The Biblical Mosaic, pp 199-210; R. Polzin, Moses and the Deuteronomist, p 5ff., while acknowledging the legitimacy of both historical and literary (structural) analysis, defend the priority of the latter.

⁴D. Ritschl & H.O. Jones, "Story" als Rohmaterial der Theologie; an abbreviated version of Jones' contribution (pp 42-68) appeared as "The Concept of Story and Theological Discourse", SJT 29 (1976) 415-433. Cf. J. Barr, "Story and History in Biblical Theology", JR 56 (1976) 1-17; R.J. Coggins, "History and Story in Old Testament Study", JSOT 11 (1979) 36-46.

⁵B.S. Childs, Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture. Childs has sought for some time to set exegesis within a "canonical" context. He first stated his programme in, Biblical Theology in Crisis, (see esp. pp 99-107); cf. idem, "The exegetical significance of canon for the study of the Old Testament", SVT XXIX (1977) 66-80. An example of the method in practice was provided by, idem, "The Canonical Shape of the Book of Jonah", in G.A. Tuttle (ed), Biblical and Near Eastern Studies, pp 122-128. Childs' Exodus commentary sought "to interpret the book of Exodus as canonical scripture within the theological discipline of the Christian church" (p xiii). JSOT 16 (1980) was devoted to an international scholarly response to Childs' Introduction. See further, R.P. Carroll, "Childs and Canon", IBS 2 (1980) 211-236; idem, "Canonical Criticism; A Recent Trend in Biblical Studies?" ET 92 (1980-81) 73-78. A number of important issues relating to "canon criticism" have been discussed by J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament, esp. pp 77-103, 208-211, and J. Barr, Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism.

⁶The literary approach I have adopted should not be understood as a specifically theological procedure. It is because God is also one of the characters represented in the narratives, that theological statements may arise out of literary interpretation.

⁷J. Barr, "Story and History", 5.

⁸Ibid., 6f.

⁹Ibid., 7f.

¹⁰T.L. Thompson, Historicity, p 330.

¹¹T.L. Thompson and D. Irvin, "The Narratives about the Origin of Israel", IJH, pp 210-212, see p 212. In T.L. Thompson, "History and Tradition: A Response to J.B. Geyer", JSOT 15 (1980) 57-61, however, Thompson appears to take full responsibility for this statement (58).

¹²J.B. Geyer, "The Joseph and Moses Narratives: Folk-Tale and History", JSOT 15 (1980) 51-56, suggests that much of IJH "could only appear in the theological climate of The Myth of God Incarnate", and that "Nowhere is this more true than in the third chapter, 'The Joseph and Moses Narratives', by T.L. Thompson... and D. Irvin" (51). Several of the contributions to EPN are most critical of Thompson's position, cf., on the point under discussion, J. Goldingay, "The patriarchs in Scripture and History", pp 35-40.

¹³Thompson generally endorses the programme of D. Irvin, Mytharion; idem, "The Joseph and Moses Stories as Narrative in the Light of Ancient Near Eastern Narrative", IJH, pp 180-209 (see p 182), cf. T.L. Thompson, JSOT 15 (1980) 57-61, "the present stage of research into the origin traditions of Israel has only begun to distinguish between the real and imagined. Even the little we can already do is - with few exceptions - negative" (59).

¹⁴JSOT 15 (1980) 59.

¹⁵Ibid. Thompson's work has displayed an increasing emphasis upon the methodological separation of questions concerned with "the origin and development of the Genesis narrative" on the one hand, and with "writing the early history of Palestine" on the other, cf. idem, "The Background of the Patriarchs: A Reply to William Dever and Malcolm Clark", JSOT 9 (1978) 2-43 (see 4). The former task demands "an analysis of the tales and motifs which have gone into the formation of the tradition", which must take place within the context of comparable ancient Near Eastern narratives", cf. idem, "The Joseph - Moses traditions and pentateuchal criticism", IJH, pp 167-180 (see p 180), and leads to a questioning of the historiographical intentionality of the narratives, cf. idem, "Conflict Themes in the Jacob Narratives", Semeia 15 (1979) 5-26. For a discussion of the method appropriate to the latter task, idem, JSOT 9 (1980) 6ff.

¹⁶Cf. D. Irvin, IJH, pp 180-209; cf. p 182.

¹⁷Many of the literary observations made above support this contention. E.g., the integrity of the narrative structure of Gen 26.1-33, the use of the widespread promise-threat-(partial) resolution technique throughout the patriarchal stories, and the use of transformation to discriminate between the versions of similar stories which have been incorporated into the ongoing narrative.

¹⁸F. Kermode, The Genesis of Secrecy, p 110.

¹⁹S. Sandmel, "The Haggada Within Scripture", JBL LXXX (1961) 105-122; J. Van Seters, Abraham, and E. Rivkin, op. cit., pp 21-41, all contain a number of observations in support of this position.

²⁰Obviously these characterizations are not exactly parallel. In ancient times, the reader would have lacked the sense of history generated by the absolute dating systems employed today, although the comparative and partial dating systems employed in the Bible must have evoked some sense of "pastness". The expectation brought to the text would also be quite different (the question of reader expectation may be thought of as a counterbalance to the author's intentionality). Even if he had been aware of such categories, it is not clear how such a reader could have been able to distinguish clearly between "history" and "fiction" once more than a few decades had elapsed from the writing of the narratives.

²¹Even scholars committed to the traditio-critical method have tended to assume that, upon probing, the patriarchal narratives will yield up an "historical kernel" such as the historical association of patriarchal names with cult places, or even the possibility of reconstructing in general terms the religion of the Patriarchs. The artificiality of the biblical representation of patriarchal religion, however, has been demonstrated by J. Van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis", Biblica 61 (1980) 220-233.

²²It is not disputed that Gerar and Beersheba, and even the lesser places mentioned in the story existed. But their existence does not necessarily imply any authenticity for the description of Gerar which might be derived from Gen 26.8, contra B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 293, who suggests that "it is the most logical assumption" that "Abimelech was watching goings-on in an adjoining house". Neither does the possibility that the narrative contains some "authentic" description of the events which may often have surrounded the making of treaties imply anything concerning the historicity of the event described at vv 26-31. D.J. McCarthy, "Three Covenants in Genesis", assumes that the narrative accounts of Genesis provide "pieces of evidence to the dossier of ancient covenant making" (180). McCarthy holds that passages in both J and E "present solid evidence" concerning the nature of ancient covenants, and stresses the antiquity of the traditions concerned. Yet the essence of fiction is to provide a representation of reality, and it should not be too surprising if the fictive narrative of the Old Testament represents story-events in a life-like manner.

²³In the commentaries, the Isaac version of the "doublet" incidents often receives less attention than the Abraham version(s). E.g., E.A. Speiser, Genesis, p 203, while several others do little more than draw out comparisons with the Abraham stories, cf. J. Skinner, Genesis, p 264f.; G. von Rad, Genesis, p 217f. (E.T. 271); B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 292f.; J. Chaine, Le Livre de la Genese, pp 301ff.

²⁴E.g., the tendency to soften the harsher aspects of the deception, and the variation in the degree of jeopardy to which the ancestress is subjected, are generally recognized.

²⁵J. Wellhausen, Composition, p 23; see above, pp 76-78.

²⁶Contra J. Wellhausen, ibid., p 23.

²⁷That is not to say that Gen 12.1-9 was created in order to provide a context for the wife-sister story, but only that one interest of the author who shaped this section was to provide a context for the story. His interest in providing an orientation for the entire patriarchal story by means of the divine call and Abraham's obedient response is more prominent.

²⁸See above, pp 79-80.

²⁹J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191.

³⁰Cf. the literature cited in n 3 above. Also R. Polzin, "Literary and Historical Criticism of the Bible: a Crisis in Scholarship", in R.A. Spencer (ed) Orientation by Disorientation, pp 99-114. A competent description of the literary dimension of a biblical text is the necessary first stage of any analysis, and failure to implement it may lead to a misapprehension of the meaning of the text. E.g., could D.J. McCarthy, "Three Covenants in Genesis", 183, have described Isaac as "robbed of his wife" if he had begun with a literary analysis of the narrative?

³¹Cf. E.D. Hirsch, Validity in Interpretation, p 222.

³²The attempt to build a tradition background has also involved the exclusion of material which was considered unlikely to enhance the exercise.

³³G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 270).

³⁴M.K. Wakeman, God's Battle with the Monster, p 5.

³⁵I have retained "literary criticism" to refer to this task, although this risks some ambiguity since in biblical studies the term traditionally has been applied to the division of sources, and for distinguishing the style of different authors. The introduction of a new term, e.g., "aesthetic criticism" (J.L. Crenshaw, Samson, p 21) however, would only distance the work of biblical scholarship from that of literary critics working with other forms of literature.

³⁶Form criticism is applied to the Isaac narrative in Chapter Five below. The essentially literary development of the narrative precludes speculation of the sort usually made by form critics concerning oral development.

³⁷Some literary critics have compared the biblical narratives with non-biblical texts with fruitful results, cf. D. Robertson, The Old Testament and the Literary Critic.

³⁸Although the method which I applied there was suggested by C. Bremond, "The Morphology of the Folktale", Semiotica 2 (1970) 247-276, I have not followed his extension of his method proposed in idem, "The Morphology of the French Fairy Tale: The Ethical Model", in Jason & Segal (ed), Patterns in Oral Literature, pp 49-76. In his later paper, Bremond is interested in 'the structure of the French fairy tale (and in every narrative which strongly "moralizes")' (p 73). But the Isaac narrative, like the majority of Old Testament narrative, does not as a rule "moralize" in the sense Bremond's analysis requires. Certainly Abimelech is not cast as a villain, and even less is he punished for his villainy.

³⁹See the literature cited in Chapter Three n 3, above.

⁴⁰Cf., P.D. Miscall, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative", Semeia 15 (1979) 27-44. Miscall extends Polzin's analysis of the three wife-sister episodes ("The Ancestress of Israel") to include the David stories recorded at 1 Sam 25 and 2 Sam 11. R. Polzin, "Literary Unity in Old Testament Narrative: A Response", Semeia 15 (1979) 45-50 endorses much of Miscall's article which, he feels, shows that his own "formal analysis can certainly be improved upon" (47).

⁴¹I would not deny that the comparison of parallel texts can lead to deeper insights into each of them. Nevertheless, I find the idea that each of a set of texts provides commentary, however "oblique" on the other text(s) within the set rather more problematic.

⁴²P.D. Miscall, The Workings of Old Testament Narrative, p 27. Throughout this book Miscall makes much of the "undecidability" of Old Testament narrative. It seems to me that this criterion is most useful in the interpretation of passages like this one where there is ultimately no positive criterion for deciding whether Abraham has told a second lie or not. Perhaps the fact that narrator makes no further observation on Abraham's claim suggests that he accepts its veracity, but the reader cannot be entirely certain that he does.

⁴³Individual prophetic oracles, for example, may have been susceptible to a wider variety of interpretations than narratives. Similarly, the parables of Jesus are clearly susceptible to multiple interpretations, cf. J.D. Crossan (ed), Polyvalent Narration, Semeia 9 (1977), which was devoted to a study of "multiple meanings" in texts.

⁴⁴J. Sawyer, 'The "original meaning of the text" and other legitimate subjects for semantic description', in C. Brekelmans (ed), Questions disputées d'Ancient Testament, pp 63-70, has argued that "The original meaning of the final form of the text is... no less original than the original meaning of its separate units" (p 68), and has also criticized the usual excessive preoccupation with the individual units. Cf. R.P. Carroll, "The Sisyphean Task of Biblical Transformation", SJT 30 (1977) 501-521 (esp. 505).

⁴⁵The archaeological artifact, which has not been preserved, and modified, in a continuous (religious) tradition, has an existence which is often quite fortuitous. When such a text is interpreted, no assumption is made that it retains any religious value or authority, and there is no "bridge" of tradition to span the time from then to now. Rather, the background against which the text is read is usually constructed out of other equally fortuitous archaeological discoveries. Thus one may find indisputable similarities in language and content among texts such as Isa 27.1 and the Ugaritic text, 5 i 1, line 38, cf. J.C.L. Gibson, Canaanite Myths and Legends, pp 50, 68, but it is only the former which retains some kind of religious significance for the Jewish and Christian traditions.

⁴⁶The current interest in canonical interpretation, cf. n 5 above, may help to clarify this issue once the results of this approach are sufficiently advanced to permit a comparison with the results of the historical-critical method. Meantime, the commentaries of B.S. Childs, Exodus, and M.H. Pope,

Song of Songs, have sought to acquaint their readers with examples from the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation of these texts.

⁴⁷By virtue of its integration into the tradition, and the relationship of tradition to community, the text must have exercised a profound influence upon its readers/hearers. For the point that various biblical writings were formulated precisely to exploit the coercive power of texts, cf. E. Rivkin, op. cit., pp 21-41; M. Smith, Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament, P.D. Hanson, The Dawn of Apocalyptic.

⁴⁸One reads ancient texts essentially as an outsider. Even where every effort is made to become informed about the society which gave rise to the text, one still observes from a distance. The important thing is to be aware of the distance and of the limitations, whether literary or historical, it imposes upon one's understanding of the text.

⁴⁹One's own background, as well as the loss of many of the ancient traditions, precludes the possibility of ever attaining a complete knowledge of how the text was understood in ancient times. Neither can it be clear how soon texts became understood in a sense different from that intended by their author.

⁵⁰Cf. L.B. Gilkey, "Cosmology, Ontology, and the Travail of Biblical Language", JR 41 (1961) 194-205, for a criticism of the attempt which was made by some biblical theologians to retell uncritically the biblical story as a mode of doing theology while maintaining a cosmology or world view which was liberal and modern. According to Gilkey, "the difficulties and ambiguities which exist in current biblical theology" were inherent in the method itself.

⁵¹Cf. J.F.A. Sawyer, op. cit. The recent trend in biblical studies has been away from this preoccupation, whether in the direction taken by Childs, or that represented by Semeia.

⁵²The isolation of "narrative background" in order to retrieve a clearly defined area of the fuller background of traditions known to the audience of a text in ancient times is a purely literary pursuit and should be distinguished carefully from the historical task of tradition criticism, whereby one attempts to determine the (pre-literary) history of the tradition, cf. W.E. Rast, Tradition History and the Old Testament, G. Fohrer, et al., Exegese des Alten Testaments, (esp. pp 116-146, Fohrer).

⁵³This may be more true of narrative than of other forms of biblical literature, such as prophetic oracles or proverbs. The fact that narratives are often much larger in extent than other biblical literary forms, tends to promote a greater degree of control over their interpretation.

⁵⁴My concern has been with the appropriation of the narrative as "story" rather than with its meaning for today (as a religious text).

Footnotes to Chapter Five

¹G.W. Coats, "Introduction", in idem (ed), Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable, pp 7-15, argues that a genre is constituted by typical structure, vocabulary, setting, and function. The rise of the form-critical method in its close association with Gunkel has been chronicled many times, e.g., W. Klatt, Hermann Gunkel; H.-J. Kraus, Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments, pp 341-367; M.J. Buss, "The Study of Forms", in OTFC, pp 1-56, and it is hardly accidental that R.E. Clements, A Century of Old Testament Studies, is largely the story of the rise and development of the form-critical method in Old Testament studies. Among the many helpful summaries of the method in practice, the following might be mentioned, K. Koch, Was ist Formgeschichte?; G.M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament; L. Markert, "Formen- und Gattungskritik", in G. Fohrer et al., Exegese des Alten Testaments, pp 81-99; A. Ohler, Gattungen im AT; H. Barth & O.H. Steck, Exegese des Alten Testaments, pp 115-145. A number of important observations concerning the future of form-criticisms have been made by R. Knierim, "Old Testament Form Criticism Reconsidered", Interp 27 (1973) 435-468.

²I wish to express the reservation, however, that the assumption may not be equally applicable in every situation. The complexity of the genre may have some bearing on how typical its expressions might be.

³M. Buss, "The Study of Forms", in J.H. Hayes (ed), OTFC, pp 1-56, begins by observing, "Form criticism may be characterized as the study of patterns of speech in relation to their roles in human life" (p 1). The belief that the point of form criticism is to illuminate the oral forms is vividly expressed by G.M. Tucker throughout his introduction to the method, cf. G.M. Tucker, Form Criticism of the Old Testament. More recently, Tucker has corrected this view, noting that "There is a growing awareness that the form-critical questions... can and should be applied to all stages of the literature, including material which did not have an oral prehistory" ["Form Criticism, OT", SIDB, pp 342-345, (p 342)].

⁴The results of folklore research have been introduced to Old Testament scholarship by R.C. Culley, "An Approach to the Problem of Oral Tradition", VT XIII (1963) 113-125; idem, "Oral Tradition and Historicity", in J.W. Wevers and D.B. Redford (ed), Studies on the Ancient Palestinian World, pp 102-116; idem, "Oral Tradition and the OT: Some Recent Discussion", Semeia 5 (1976) 1-33; idem, Hebrew Narrative, pp 1-32; B.O. Long, "Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and their Bearing on OT Criticism", VT XXVI (1976) 187-198; idem, "Recent Field Studies in Oral Literature and the Question of Sitz im Leben", Semeia 5 (1976) 35-49. The question of the trustworthiness of orally transmitted history is reviewed from the perspective of folklore studies in R.M. Dorson, "The Debate over the Trustworthiness of Oral Traditional History", in F. Harkort, K.C. Peters, and R. Wildhaber (ed), Volksüberlieferung, pp 19-35.

⁵The folklore research reviewed in the literature cited in n 4 above casts considerable doubt on the possibility of a stable oral transmission process spanning a prolonged period. Until relatively recently, English speaking scholarship, although eschewing the dogma of oral tradition as represented by Scandinavian scholars like I. Engnell and E. Nielsen, has tended to assume the relative stability of oral tradition, see, e.g., C.R. North, "Living Issues in Biblical Scholarship: The Place of Oral Tradition in the Growth of the Old Testament", ET LXI (1949-50) 292-296; idem, "Pentateuchal Criticism", in OTMS, pp 48-83, esp pp 78ff.; R. Davidson & A.R.C. Leaney, Biblical Criticism, p 84. Although holding to a form of the documentary hypothesis, Davidson can say, "Engnell and others have been justified in drawing attention to the important part that oral tradition must have played in the transmission of Israel's early historical record". An extensive review of Scandinavian traditio-historical research into Old Testament issues, in which there is a wide-ranging discussion of work by Nyberg and especially Engnell, is provided by D.A. Knight, Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel, pp 215-339. Some of the same material is reviewed from a Scandinavian perspective in K. Jeppesen & B. Otzen (ed), The Productions of Time, see esp, E. Nielsen, "The Traditio-historical Study of the Pentateuch since 1945, with special Emphasis on Scandinavia", pp 11-28.

⁶D.L. Petersen, "A Thrice-Told Tale: Genre, Theme, and Motif", BibRes XVIII (1973) 30-43, remarks, '... The genre label "saga" tells me less about a specific genre than does the label "treaty" for a specific treaty' (33).

⁷In his "Glossary" of form-critical terms, Coats distinguishes between 'genres' and 'formulas', see Genesis, pp 317-322. Although the distinction is useful, it might have benefited had he distinguished more clearly between narrative and non-narrative genres on the one hand, and major and minor narrative genres on the other (although it might be noted that his introductory section on "The Principal Narrative Genres in the Old Testament", pp 5-10, goes some way in this direction).

⁸H. Gunkel, Genesis, p VIII.

⁹The Introduction to his Genesis commentary begins, "Erzählt die Genesis... Geschichte oder Sage?", p VII (E.T. 1). This concern surfaces regularly in Gunkel's work on Genesis.

¹⁰Ibid., p VII (E.T. 1): "Die unkultivierten Völker schreiben nicht Geschichte". They are sharply contrasted with the history producing Kulturvölkern, p VII (E.T. 2).

¹¹Ibid., p LVI (E.T. 88).

¹²G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 319, cf. pp 5-7; R.W. Neff, "Saga" in G.W. Coats (ed), Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable, pp 17-32. Neff concludes, "Saga is indeed a fitting category for the narrative material in Genesis. However, it should refer to what we have generally called the 'Sagenkranz' or saga cycle" (p 32). But such "sagas" may be more extensive than Gunkel's Sagenkränzen [Genesis, p XXI (E.T. 42)], and in general observe no distinctions between J and E. It is not appropriate here to review the somewhat involved discussion of the German term Sage, its relationship to the Icelandic saga, and its most suitable English equivalent. But see J.

Van Seters, Abraham, pp 131-138, and Coats remarks concerning Van Seters position in G.W. Coats, "The Moses Narrative as Heroic Saga", in idem (ed), Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable, pp 33-44, cf. p 36, n 17. In A. Ohler, Studying the Old Testament, the recent translation of her Gattungen im AT 1/2, 'saga' is used to translate Sage, which is used in a sense similar to Gunkel's use of the term.

¹³C. Westermann, "Arten der Erzählung in der Genesis", reprinted in Die Verheissungen an die Väter, pp 9-91, cf. p 39, n 23; G.W. Coats, "Tale", in idem (ed), op. cit., pp 61-70. On the other hand, "legend" which was used to translate "Sage" in the E.T. of the Introduction to Gunkel's Genesis commentary, has come to bear a more specific meaning, cf. R.M. Hals, "Legend: A Case Study in OT Formcritical Terminology", CBQ 34 (1972) 166-176; G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 8f., 318.

¹⁴Some critics continue to use Sage in a sense similar to Gunkel's, cf. A. Ohler, Gattungen im AT; G. Fohrer, "Die Sage in der Bibel", in M. Lüthi, L. Röhrlich & G. Fohrer, Sagen und ihre Deutung, pp 59-80; R. Rendtorff, Das Alte Testament: Eine Einführung, pp 89-92 (E.T. 85-88); J.J. Scullion, Märchen, Sage, Legende: Towards a Clarification of Some Literary Terms used by Old Testament Scholars, VT XXXIV (1984) 321-336, recognizes this sense of Sage and suggests that it be translated into English as "folk-story", "popular story", or even as "story" with a qualifying adjective, e.g. "hero-story", "cult-story", etc. (330).

¹⁵Some scholars distinguish between material deriving from J¹ and J², cf. G. Fohrer, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, pp 160, 175 (E.T. 147, 161).

¹⁶J. Skinner, Genesis, p 363, speaks of "some easily recognized redactional patches". C.A. Simpson, The Early Traditions of Israel, p 91f., although attributing the majority of the passage to J¹, finds deuteronomic redaction (vv 3b-5), traces of Rje (vv 15, 18), and secondary material (v 24, 25aab), besides a considerable number of glosses.

¹⁷D.A. Lutz, The Isaac Tradition in the Book of Genesis, pp 86-94.

¹⁸Ibid., pp 80-111; Lutz considers literary analysis "the proper place to begin" (p 83).

¹⁹Ibid., p 86.

²⁰Ibid., p 86f. These form-critical criteria go back to Gunkel, Genesis, p XXXII (E.T. 43).

²¹Ibid., p 91f. The criterion of the spacing in the Kittel text is entirely spurious.

²²Ibid., p 92; although Noth might not provide such firm support as Lutz imagines. Many scholars take another view, e.g., J. Skinner, Genesis, p 366; G.H. Davies, Genesis, p 212. It is difficult to be certain whether von Rad makes such a break, Genesis, p 216 cf. 218 (E.T. 270 cf. 272).

²³Ibid., p 93.

²⁴Ibid., p 94.

²⁵Ibid., p 96; Lutz dates E to "750 B.C. or earlier".

²⁶Ibid., p 105.

²⁷See above, pp 63f., for a number of examples of the tacit assumption of information provided by earlier episodes.

²⁸G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 188-192; 192-195.

²⁹Coats does not explain how v 17 can perform this double duty as both the concluding element of the 'tale' of the 'threat to the ancestress' and the first element of the 'well itinerary'.

³⁰Idem, Genesis, pp 109-113, on 12.10-20, and pp 149-152 on 20.1-18. In his only slightly more recent study of the three wife-sister stories, Coats prefers the term "threat to the host", idem, "A Threat to the Host", in Saga, Legend, Tale, Novella, Fable, pp 71-81.

³¹Ibid., pp 317-322, cf p 320.

³²Coats in fact notices the reference back "to v. 15 as well as 21:22-34" [ibid., p 193], but, by integrating it into a series of well aetiologies, does not lay sufficient emphasis upon those features which distinguish it from the following verses. In describing his reopening of Abraham's wells, v 18 summarises Isaac's well digging activity, while the following verses refer to specific wells. Moreover, v 18 refers to past conflict (or perhaps just vandalism) while the following verses refer to strife which followed Isaac's digging of new wells.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid

³⁵The inclusion of a pericope within a pericope was a redactional technique employed by the Evangelists, cf. R.H. Stein, "The Proper Methodology for ascertaining a Markan Redaction History", NT XIII (1971) 181-198, see 193f. Something similar seems to have taken place in the combination of material to form Gen 26.23-33, and indeed at other points in Gen 26.

³⁶G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 194. He suspects that at an earlier stage of the tradition longer narrative 'tales', like the one preserved at vv. 25b-33, existed in relation to the other aetiological units (p 194f.).

³⁷Ibid., p 195.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid., p 189. Coats expands on this remark in his "A Threat to the Host", p 79f. where he observes that "Even here, the promise appears to be secondary, inserted at the beginning of the story without care for integration with the overall story".

⁴¹Coats' recognition of different 'traditio-historical layers... in vv. 2-6, the promise; vv. 7-11, the narrative of a threat to the ancestress; vv. 12-14, the expulsion of Isaac; and v. 15, an allusion to the coming narrative" (p 191), suggests that he holds that vv 1-17 grew by traditio-historical processes in contrast to vv 17-33 which grew by a redactional process, Genesis, p 189.

⁴²G.W. Coats, "A Threat to the Host", cf. p 79.

⁴³Among recent critics, J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191 has most clearly demonstrated this sense of unity. I should say that despite my criticisms of Coats, I have to confess a deep appreciation of his work on the Genesis narratives, and have noted the importance of Coats' programme in my review of his Genesis in The Heythrop Journal (forthcoming).

⁴⁴Among the many contributions to the discussion of the wife-sister incident in the Isaac narrative from a broadly form-critical perspective, the following should be noted (in addition to the relevant items cited above): M. Noth, ÜP, pp 112-127 (E.T. 102-115); K. Koch, op. cit., pp 135-162 (E.T. 111-132 = 1st German edn., pp 121-148); S. Nomoto, "Entstehung und Entwicklung der Erzählung von der Gefährdung der Ahnfrau", AJBI II (1976) 3-27; G. Schmitt, "Zu Gen 26,1-14" ZAW 85 (1973) 143-156; R. Kilian, Die vorpriesterlichen Abrahamsüberlieferung, pp 213-215; E.H. Maly, "Genesis 12,10-20: 20,1-18; 26,7-11 and the Pentateuchal Question", CBQ 18 (1956) 255-262.

⁴⁵E.g., H. Gunkel, Genesis, pp 299-305, cf. pp 225f.; G von Rad, Genesis, pp 216-219 (E.T. 269-273). A quite different approach is to be found in C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, pp 515-524.

⁴⁶Some support for the foregoing analysis can be found in J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191, and G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 188-195.

⁴⁷It cannot be assumed that the degree of unity discerned at one level of investigation can be automatically transferred to other levels.

⁴⁸The so-called "wife-sister" story has been considered by critics to extend variously from vv 1-11 [C.A. Simpson, The Early Traditions of Israel, pp 91f., 510f., in fact, Simpson excises vv 1a_b, 2a_b, 3b-5, from the passage, as do most scholars who identify the section from a source-critical perspective; C. Westermann; Genesis 12-36, pp 516-519; R. de Vaux, Histoire Ancienne d'Israël, p 140 (E.T. 144).]; vv 1-13 [K. Koch, op. cit., pp 136ff.]; vv 1-14 [G. Schmitt, "Zu Gen 26.1-14", ZAW 85 (1973) 143-156; R.C. Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative, pp 33-41 apparently cannot choose between vv 1-13 and 1-14.]; vv 1-16 [G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 188-191.]; vv 6-11 [W.H. Bennett, Genesis, p 266; A.S. Herbert, Genesis 12-50, p 74 (but cf. 73, may in fact favour vv 1, 7-11); E.A. Speiser, Genesis p 203; B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 292f.; W. Brueggemann, Genesis, p 221; S.R. Driver, Genesis, p 249; H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 299; G.H. Davies, Genesis, p 210; W. Zimmerli, 1. Mose 12-50, p 25.]; and vv 7-11 [G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216ff. (E.T. 270f.); J. Skinner, Genesis, p 364f.; H.E. Ryle, Genesis, p 273, 275; C.A. Keller, "Die Gefährdung der Anfrau", ZAW 66 (1954) 181-191.]. In view of this failure to identify the extent of the putative unit, it is not so surprising that some scholars have displayed a reticence to identify clearly the various units of

tradition which have been incorporated into Gen 26.1-33, e.g., M. Noth, ÜP, pp 30, 112-117 (E.T. 29, 102-115). Noth appears to consider vv 7-11 as the last Yahwistic unit to be incorporated into the Isaac narrative. On the other hand, his impression of the Isaac tradition is rather unclear, and he nowhere identifies clearly the units which were incorporated into the tradition.

⁴⁹I have referred the term 'Introduction' to v 1 in my analysis of the structure of Gen 26.1-33, rather than 'Exposition' which is used by Coats, Genesis, p 1, idem, "A Threat to the Host", p 78; cf. C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 517. It may be noted that Coats has defined 'exposition' as "an introduction to a narrative unit that exposes those data necessary for narrating the following material, such as the principal figures who play a role in the events of the narrative, perhaps the time, place, and circumstances relative to the events in the narrative or even a point of crisis which holds the narrative together", in his "An Exposition for the Conquest Theme", CBQ 47 (1985) 47-54, cf. 48, n 3. On the basis of this definition, if an exposition must be identified, it would have to comprise vv 1-5, since vv 2-5 introduce Yahweh who has a major part to play in the narrative, as well as the 'promise' theme climaxing in the promise of blessing for the nations. Since that promise in particular seems to find some sort of fulfilment in the treaty completed between Isaac and Abimelech in vv 26-31, it follows that it should belong to the 'exposition'. I remain reluctant to use the term 'exposition', however, since vv 1-5 includes material (e.g., the references to Abraham) which has the function of establishing the Isaac narrative within the wider context of the Patriarchal Narrative.

⁵⁰E.g., C.A. Simpson, op. cit., p 91; B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 291; M. Noth, ÜP, p 115, n 302 (E.T. 104, n 302). Noth's General theory of the priority of the Isaac tradition causes him to take all references to Abraham in Gen 26 as secondary.

⁵¹See below, pp 145-151.

⁵²J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 177; the reference to the previous famine and the awkward introduction of Abimelech recall the other two stories; moreover the author "has no interest whatever in the folktale but only in the use of previous narrative elements to construct a history of Isaac" (p 177f.); C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 516f., supports this position.

⁵³J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 178; idem, 'The Terms "Amorite" and "Hittite" in the Old Testament', VT XXII (1972) 64-81. See also A. van Selms, "The Canaanites in the Book of Genesis", OTS 12 (1958) 182-213, who points out that the Philistines are never mentioned in the Genesis lists of pre-Israelite groups in Palestine (191), contends that "'Philistines" is the name Genesis uses for people who dwelt in the region which was to be occupied by the Philistines a few centuries later' (193).

⁵⁴I feel that the representation of the king of the Philistines in Gen 26 is consistently sympathetic, rather than "consistently negative" as Van Seters would have it, Abraham, p 178.

⁵S. Terrien, The Elusive Presence, p 68f., suggests that "epiphanic visitation" is a more appropriate term than "theophany" in the patriarchal stories where there is relatively little interest in visual phenomena.

⁶P.V. Premsager, "Theology of Promise in the Patriarchal Narratives", JT 23 (1974) 112-123, differentiates between four different modes of divine revelation to the Patriarchs (p 114).

⁷Such an assumption is made by, e.g., J. Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion", HUCA 32 (1961) 91-106, cf. 99.

⁸Contra J. Lindblom, ibid., 99, who does this.

⁹The verb גור seems to imply a temporary sojourning, while שכן refers to a more permanent form of settling down, cf. BDB, pp 157f., 1014f. Because of its relatively greater importance, the long term command שכן בארץ אשר אמר אלך is issued first, and is followed by a command which refers to the immediate future גור בארץ הזאת. The verbs are similarly distinguished by H. Blum, Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte, p 299. The immigrant status of the גר is well brought out by A.F. Spina, "Israelites as gerim, Sojourners,' in Social and Historical Context", in Meyers & O'Conner (ed), The Word of the Lord shall go forth, pp 321-335, cf. pp 321-325.

¹⁰See above, p 19. I shall not examine the history of tradition of these promises. It may be impossible to posit different situations out of which these two phrases might have emerged as independent promises.

¹¹B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 291, argues that "all these lands" are those promised to Abraham in Gen 15.18-21.

¹²Gen 22.17, which refers to the stars of the heaven and the sand of the sea, seems to indicate that its author knew both phrases. And since Gen 26.4 seems dependent on Gen 22.17, it may be assumed that the author of the Isaac narrative chose to refer to the stars but not to the sand.

¹³M. Noth, ÜP, p 115 (E.T. 104), considers that the promise associated with the theophany consisted of vv 2a_α, 3ab_α.

¹⁴H.W. Wolff, "Das Kerygma des Yahwisten", ETH 24 (1964) 73-97, seems to do this, cf. 89 (E.T. 57).

¹⁵Gen 18.18 may be better termed an allusion to the promise which occurs in an aside which the deity addresses to himself.

¹⁶O. Procksch, Genesis, p 96-97; J. Schreiner, "Segen für die Völker in die Verheissung an die Väter", BZ NF 6 (1962) 1-31; G. Wehmeier, Der Segen im Alten Testament, 178f.; idem, "The Theme 'Blessing for the Nations'", BTF 6 (1974) 1-13; H.W. Wolff, "Yahwist", 79 n 31, thinks that the hithpa el must mean something similar.

¹⁷B. Albrektson, History and the Gods, pp 79ff; H.H Rowley, The Missionary Message of the Old Testament, pp 24-26; idem, The Biblical Doctrine of Election, p 65f.; H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 165; S.R. Driver, Genesis, p 145; J. Skinner, Genesis, p 244f; H. Junker, "Segen als heilsgeschichtliches Motivwort im Alten Testament", BETL XII-XIII (1959) 548-558, cf. 553.

⁶⁸The view that the blessing should always be considered passive is more rare still, although it has the support of LXX. See C. Sant, "The Promise Narratives in Genesis", MT XI (1959) 1-13, XII (1960) 14-27, esp 24.

⁶⁹The different verbal forms of ברך should be considered within the context of this generally varied vocabulary.

⁷⁰R. Rendtorff, "Yahwist", idem, ÜPP, believes that the promises have been subjected to a series of Bearbeitungen.

⁷¹C. Westermann, "The Way of Promise through the Old Testament", OTCF, pp 200-224, taken up by I. Blythin, "The Patriarchs and the Promise", SJT 21 (1968) 56-73, cf. 72.

⁷²T.C. Ridenhour, The Old Testament and the Patriarchal Traditions, p 13f.

⁷³J. Pedersen, Israel I-II, pp 182-212.

⁷⁴I. Blythin, op. cit., considers the blessing "irrevocable and uncontingent" (73), similarly J. Pedersen, op. cit., p 200. But see Thiselton's article (n 78 below).

⁷⁵J. Pedersen, op. cit., p 200f.

⁷⁶K.P. Bland, "The Rabbinic Method and Literary Criticism", in K.R.R. Gros Louis et al. (ed), Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives, pp 16-23, suggests that Isaac's declaration that the voice is Jacob's allows the inference "that Isaac is fully aware of the deception" (p 18).

⁷⁷Commentators who miss the humour in stories such as this may take the customs and "ideas" (e.g., concerning "blessing", or "primogeniture") they mention too seriously. Isaac's blessing on Jacob may be irrevocable precisely because the dying Patriarch has at last recognized God's will in the matter, or even because the story requires it to be irrevocable. That does not necessarily imply, however, that all blessings are irrevocable.

⁷⁸A.C. Thiselton, "The Supposed Power of Words in the Biblical Writings", JTS NS XXV (1974) 283-299, convincingly marshalls the evidence in favour of the point that it is not the word itself, but the power of the one who utters it which causes it to be efficacious.

⁷⁹I am not sure why Albrektson, op. cit., p 79f, contends that the NT usage ultimately lies behind the rendering, "in you all the families of earth shall be blessed", for the NT simply follows LXX.

⁸⁰B. Albrektson, op. cit., p 81.

⁸¹The hypothesis of a late Yahwist, for example, might count against this argument which depends on a Solomonic dating of the Yahwist's work. Many scholars still date the Patriarchal Narrative to the early monarchy, cf. W.H. Schmidt, "Ein Theologe in salomonischer Zeit? Plädoyer für des Yahwisten", BZ 25 (1981) 82-102; J.J. Scullion, "Some Reflections on the Present State of the Patriarchal Studies", Abr-Nahrain XXI (1982-83) 50-65, argues that "the traditions do reflect aspects of a society structure which do not belong to Palestine of the first millenium B.C." (62).

³²H.W. Wolff, "Das Kerygma des Jahwisten", *EvTh* 24 (1964) 73-98, cf. 79 n 31. The Pu^cal of ׀׀ occurs in the Pentateuch only at Num 22.6 and Deut 33.13

⁸³J. Schreiner, op. cit., 7; Wolff, "Kerygma", 79f. n 31.

⁸⁴E.A. Speiser, "The Wife-Sister Motif in the Patriarchal Narratives", in A. Altmann (ed), Biblical and Other Studies, pp 15-28; idem, Genesis, 91-94; idem, "Nuzi Marginalia", Orientalia xxv (1956) 1-23, cf. 13; idem, "The Biblical Idea of History in its Common Near Eastern Setting", IEJ vii (1956) 201-216, cf. 213; "Nuzi", IDB, Vol 3, p 573-574. The "wife-sister" theory is well summed up by C.J.M. Weir, "The Alleged Hurrian Wife-Sister Motif in Genesis", TGUOS XXII (1967-68) 14-25, cf. p 14, who subjects it to a number of well judged criticisms. Weir notes that (i) it is not clear that such wife-sister marriages were widespread even among the Hurrians, and (ii) the parallel is alleged to have existed between this reconstructed custom and a tradition about the Patriarchs which is no longer extant. Weir's criticisms find support in a number of recent studies, cf. the literature cited in n 86 below.

⁸⁵A.E. Speiser, "The Wife-Sister Motif", pp 17f., 24-28. J. Barr, Fundamentalism, argues that for Speiser "the reliable sources are not the biblical narratives but the contemporary social evidences", and that his account "explicitly replaces the biblical account" (p 137).

⁸⁶E.g., C.J.M. Weir, op. cit.; J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 71-85; and T.L. Thompson, Historicity, pp 234-248, provides a full discussion of the alleged connections between Nuzi and the patriarchal narratives, pp 196-297. The "wife-sister" question has been examined apparently independently by S. Greengus, 'Sisterhood Adoption at Nuzi and the "Wife-Sister" in Genesis', HUCA 46 (1975) 5-31, with similar results. Cf. B.L. Eichler, "Nuzi", SIDB p 635-636. The "wife-sister" parallel is also rejected by M.J. Selman, "Comparative customs and the Patriarchal Age", in EPN, pp 93-138 (see 110); idem, "The Social Environment of the Patriarchs", TB 27 (1976) 114-136, idem, "Comparative methods and the patriarchal narratives", Themelios 3 (1977) 9-16, cf. 11 and 14. Although enthusiasm for the alleged Nuzi parallels has waned almost completely, T. Frymer-Kensky, "Patriarchal Family Relationships and Near Eastern Law", BA 44 (1981) 209-214, has recently reaffirmed a number of the parallels first found at Nuzi, but now attested "elsewhere in cuneiform cultures".

⁸⁷See above, pp 76-78.

⁸⁸Although it may be more likely that Abimelech's accusations both refer to the injustice offered to the Philistines, it is just possible that the first accusation expresses a sense of outrage on behalf of Rebekah and the second focuses on Isaac's cavalier attitude towards the Philistines. If that were the case, Abimelech would be portrayed as a chivalrous ruler as well as one who was sensitive to the wellbeing of his people.

⁸⁹Westermann's term Erzählung is also an inappropriate form-critical designation for these verses, as it requires a specific structure somewhat similar to Coats' "tale", cf. Die Verheissungen an die Väter, pp 9-91, and Coats' remarks in "Tale", p 64.

⁹⁰The form of the so-called apodictic law was first identified by A. Alt, Die Ursprünge des israelitischen Rechts, pp 33-71 (E.T. 133-171). The important criticisms of Alt's thesis advanced by Gerstenberger, Wesen und Herkunft des "apodiktischen Rechts", should be considered. Gerstenberger maintains that on closer examination the laws which Alt termed "apodictic" are not uniform, and their types should be differentiated, just as they should not be defined over against casuistic law (p 20). Further, he is unhappy with the term "apodictic", and prefers to speak of "Prohibitiv". He criticizes the purely national association of this law form in Alt's work. After discussing the nature of the Prohibitiv and its development in the Old Testament law codes (pp 23-88), Gerstenberger turns to the question of its origins (pp 88-144). Here he reviews Alt's theories in detail before identifying the Sippenethos as the form's locus of origin (pp 110ff.). He also discusses the relationship between the Prohibitiv and the warnings and admonitions of the Old Testament wisdom literature, concluding that both have origins in a common ethos: "Da die Institution der "Weisen" jedoch in den alten Sprucheinheiten selbst nicht zu greifen ist, können wir annehmen, dass der Ursprung des Warn- und Mahnwortes vom Weisenstand unabhängig und mit dem Ursprung der gesetzlichen Prohibitive identisch ist" (p 130).

⁹¹By this I mean that the law has been created for the sake of the story.

⁹²The attempt to understand Abimelech's injunction in some sense as a real law has caused all sorts of problems for interpreters of the text. For example, Skinner has argued that "the exemplary self-restraint manifested by the men of Gerar affords no adequate basis for the stern injunction", Genesis, p 365. On the other hand, D.A. Lutz, op. cit., p 136, holds that "this strong injunction was justifiable: the men of the town would be restrained when trying to woo an unmarried woman for a wife; but once they learned that she was Isaac's wife... they would have to resort to murder to gain her", cf, M. Noth, ÜP, p 208f. (E.T. 191). I do not understand the logic of this argument.

⁹³A. Alt, Ursprünge, pp 43f. (E.T. 142f.).

⁹⁴Even if Gen 26.11b differs in the respects indicated above from the "apodictic" form defined by Alt, it is unfortunate that he has not discussed this formulation. Gerstenberger too fails to consider it. I cannot agree with Lutz, op. cit., p 136f., who argues that "The formal features of this apodictic law show the antiquity of the apodictic injunction".

⁹⁵This point is made against Brueggemann's view that "Probably the closing formula of v. 11 is an ancient and stylised one to which the narrative has been attached [cf. Judg. 21:5; Exod. 21:12-17; I Sam. 14:39]. The formula itself existed independently of the narrative but is used here to strengthen the narrative.", cf. W. Brueggemann, Genesis, p 224.

⁹⁶See the discussion of the "wealth" motif immediately below.

⁹⁷I have already criticized Coats' identification of vv 1-17 as a 'tale', cf. above, pp 114-117.

⁹⁸H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 225, in his comparison of the variants, clearly identifies the different function of the wealth motif in each of the three stories, and although in his discussion of Gen 26.1-33, he divides the narrative into five sections, which include vv 1-6, 7-11, and 12-17a, he contends that the second and third of these originally belonged together. ; cf. most recently, G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 188-192; idem, "A Threat to the Host". R. Polzin, "Ancestress", also uses vv 1-16 as the basis for his synchronic study of Gen 12, 20, and 26, but it is not easy to detect his view of the generic status of the various parts of the stories he examines. The wealth motif is included as part of the wife-sister story by G. Schmitt, "Zu Gen 26.1-14", ZAW 85 (1973) 143-156, while R.C. Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative, pp 33-41, in a synchronic analysis of the wife-sister stories, defines the unit as vv 1-13 or 14.

⁹⁹One need not go so far as J. Skinner, Genesis, p 365, who holds that "It is more natural to consider 12ff. the continuation of 6; indeed it might fairly be questioned whether 7-11 is not a later insertion, interrupting the continuity of the main narrative"; M. Noth, ÜP, p 118 (E.T. 107), seems to hold that vv 7-11 may be later than the rest of the Isaac tradition.

¹⁰⁰The different reasons are distinguished clearly by Gunkel, Genesis, p 225; cf. Polzin, "Ancestress", 88.

¹⁰¹In Gen 12.13, Abraham proposes the deception to Sarah לִמְעַן יֵשֵׁב לִי בְּעַבְדְּךָ וְלֹא אֶכְרֹתָהּ הֵיטֵיב. Verse 16 reports the successful outcome of the ruse בְּעַבְדְּךָ בְּעִבְרָה.

¹⁰²It is not made clear by the narrative how the general barrenness of Abimelech's women might have been noticed in the short time it is implied that Sarah was in Abimelech's harem.

¹⁰³Isaac's expulsion by Abimelech in fact takes place at v 16 and is connected with his acquisition of great wealth and apparent powerfulness rather than the deception. Although the narratives of Gen 12, 20 and 26, use a number of common motifs, e.g., journey to a foreign land, "wife-sister" deception, discovery, wealth, and in the case of Gen 12 and 26 only, expulsion, their use of these various motifs is so different that the resultant stories are by no means the same.

¹⁰⁴Vv 1-11 establish the location of vv 12-16 as Gerar (which is not named in these verses), and also Isaac's right to be there (v 11). They prepare the way for the introduction of the Philistines (vv 14, 15) and Abimelech (v 16), and they provide a rationale for Yahweh blessing Isaac.

¹⁰⁵I assume here that the Author of Gen 26 knew the Abraham narratives, see J. van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191.

¹⁰⁶The incorporation of v 15 into vv 12-16 goes some way towards maintaining a reasonable sense of continuity throughout Gen 26.1-33. G.H. Davies, Genesis, p 212, suggests that this verse shows that "Isaac's prosperity... owes nothing to his father", since his father's wells had been blocked.

¹⁰⁷E.g., H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 302; G. von Rad, Genesis, p 218 (E.T. 270); J. Skinner, p 366.

¹⁰⁸B. Vawter, On Genesis, p 294. A similar judgment seems to underlie Coats suggestion that the aetiologies, which he argues "could be described as brief statements of originally longer etiological narrative", may support a reconstruction of earlier tradition, cf. Genesis, p 194.

¹⁰⁹Noth himself appears to have held back from this grotesque reconstruction of the tradition history, ÜP p 209 n 529 (E.T. 192 n 529).

¹¹⁰W.H. Gispen, "A Blessed Son of Abraham", W.C. Delsman et al. (ed) Von Kanaan bis Kerala, pp 123-129. I have examined the function of the references to Abraham in Gen 26.1-33 (Chapter One above).

¹¹¹Such assumptions are sometimes made by critics. Thus, more or less everything which seems uneven can be excised as deriving from a different source, or from the hand of a redactor.

¹¹²G.W. Coats, Genesis, pp 192-195, characterizes Gen 26.17-33 as a "well itinerary". And, with the substantial exception of vv 26-31, such a description is at least partially appropriate, for the fragmentary nature of vv 17-25, 32-33 is clearly reminiscent of the way that Abraham's travels are outlined by a series of brief notices, cf. Gen 12.1-9; 13.1-4, 18.

¹¹³Without the preceding narrative, vv 22-25 would lack a specific initial location.

¹¹⁴See above, p 122.

¹¹⁵On the Selbstvorstellungsformel, W. Zimmerli, "Ich bin Jahwe", Gottes Offenbarung, pp 11-40.

¹¹⁶S. Plath, Furcht Gottes, pp 113-122, cf. p 115. Four of the 59 occurrences of the phrase with reference to the "fear of God" in the OT are in Genesis (15.1; 21.17; 26.24; and 46.3). Cf. H.M. Dion, 'The Pentateuchal Traditions and the Literary Form of the "Oracle of Salvation"', CBQ 29 (1967) 198-206. Dion judges the form artificial in various Genesis contexts and notes that it "seems to have been well established in the first millenium in Israel as well as among its neighbours".

¹¹⁷See above, p 174 n 60.

¹¹⁸Cf. v 1, where notice of famine provides a motivation for Isaac's migration to Gerar. The גרר of v 1 is also reversed in מגרר (v 26).

¹¹⁹See above, pp 43-47, for a discussion of the narrative transformation which takes place between the beginning and end of the Isaac narrative.

¹²⁰For Phicol, see Gen 21.22. For the epithet associated with Ahuzzath, cf. T.N.D. Mettinger, Solomonic State Officials, pp 63-69. Mettinger holds that the epithet, "even if it is an anachronism, reflects Egyptian influence in this area" (p 69). His position, however, may lay too great store on the association of the narrative with the region where Gerar was situated.

¹²¹D.J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, pp 16ff.; cf. idem, "b^erit in OT History and Theology", SVT XXIII (1972) 65-85. On the secular patriarchal covenants, idem, "Three Covenants in Genesis".

¹²²D.J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, p 20. He notices, however, that 'the parts can sometimes have a different position in the pattern'. E.g., in Gen 26.23ff., "the association with the shrine... comes first".

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴McCarthy cites the following texts: Gen 21.22-34; 26.23-33; 31.25-32.5; Jos 9.1-10.1; 1 Sam 11.1-3; 18.1-4 + 20.5-8 and 20.11-17 + 23.16-18; 2 Sam 3.17-21 + 5.1-3; 3.12-21; 1 Kgs 15.19; 20.31-34; and 2 Kgs 11 (= 2 Chron 23).

¹²⁵J. Barr, "Why? in Biblical Hebrew", JTS NS 36 (1985) 1-33, has recently provided an important survey of the usages of the two biblical Hebrew terms for "why?" (למה and מדוע).

¹²⁶It is unnecessary to mediate between the two perceptions, or to judge that Isaac told the truth while Abimelech and his companions lied (on the basis of their past dealings, cf. v 16). Perhaps their respective statements indicate the basic positions from which they enter negotiations. Cf. Gen 23 for the similarly extreme positions from which Abraham and Ephron begin negotiations in the story of Abraham's purchase of Machpelah. For an account of interpersonal relationships in the Old Testament, see G.F. Mobbs, "The Eastern Way", ET LXVIII (1956-57) 210-212.

¹²⁷To reduce v 30f. to a "Notice of covenant making" (McCarthy) does not do justice to the account of the successful conclusion of the negotiations.

¹²⁸ וַיָּשׁוּב here seems to be a technical term to indicate a state of peace between two groups, cf., D.J. Wiseman, "Is it Peace? -- Covenant and Diplomacy", VT XXXII (1982) 311-326. Isaac's dismissal of Abimelech (v 31) corresponds to Abimelech's claim concerning his former treatment of Isaac in justification of his request for a covenant (cf. Wiseman, 324).

¹²⁹It has been noted above [section (f)] that v 32f. along with vv 23-25 provide a context for vv 26-31.

¹³⁰In my study of the form of Gen 26.1-33, I have laid no strong emphasis on the presence of a number of aetiological motifs (vv 20, 21, 22, 32f.). J. Fichtner, "Die etymologische Ätiologie in den Namengebungen der geschichtlichen Bücher des Alten Testaments", VT VI (1956) 372-396; B.O. Long, The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, and B.S. Childs, 'A Study of the Formula, "Until this Day"', JBL 82 (1963) 279-292, have questioned the older position that aetiological Sagen evolved in order to explain origins, as a kind of answer to the Kinderfrage, "Why?", and "are primary and constitutive of the form as a whole", [cf. H. Gunkel, Genesis, p xx (E.T. 25)], preferring to understand the aetiological statements as "redactional commentary on existing traditions". J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 133, n 26, considers that such statements are "part of the style of the literary works themselves", and he has more recently pointed out that "redactional commentary" is a rather meaningless phrase, In Search of History, p 222.

³¹B.O. Long, op. cit., p 22.

¹³²Ibid.

³³See above, p 117.

³⁴I exclude Abraham from the discussion here for the obvious reason that although he is mentioned he is not an active participant in any of the events related in Gen 26.

³⁵In Chapter One above I argued that the several episodes of the Isaac narrative appear to offer a sustained discussion of the meaning of the divine promises, and that particular concern is paid throughout to the promise of blessing for the foreign nations, although this promise may not be the narrator's primary interest at every stage. If it is granted that this concern is integral to the narrative and not just a literary construct applied from the outside, whatever unity was revealed by that discussion may be considered to provide some additional support for classifying the Isaac narrative as a composite narrative.

¹³⁶See above, p 63f.

¹³⁷M.E. Andrew, "Gerhard von Rad", ET LXXXIII (1971-72) 296-300, in a revealing reminiscence recalls how the questions von Rad addressed to him at his oral examination "circled for a good part around the sanctuaries of Israel and the particular traditions attached to them, though he was also characteristically concerned about how they came together and their wider significance" (299). The twin concern with Ortsgebundenheit and the development of tradition is very evident in the Überlieferungsgeschichte practised by Alt, Noth and von Rad.

¹³⁸K. Koch, Was ist Formgeschichte?, seems to understand Formgeschichte as including the whole traditio-historical process, and uses the comparison of the wife-sister doublets to identify, not simply the oldest version of the story, but a hybrid story based on the most ancient features he feels he is able to isolate from each of the three stories. For a somewhat similar approach, see S. Nomoto, op. cit.

¹³⁹Concomitant with the search for the most ancient features of tradition, there seems often to be a belief that the identification of such features enables the critic to gain knowledge of earliest times, or at least to point to something concrete which might be supposed to go back to ancient times. For an example of this, cf. W. Harrelson, "Life, Faith, and the Emergence of Tradition", in D.A. Knight (ed), Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament, pp 11-30. Harrelson seeks to identify a "core tradition", which is not entirely unrelated to von Rad's credo, and holds that it "goes back to the early beginnings of Israel". I do not consider this sort of exercise to be methodologically sound as it seems to depend upon a whole series of hypotheses. Moreover, Harrelson's method does not fulfil the requirements he has set out himself on p 18 of his article.

¹⁴⁰M. Noth, ÜP, pp 112-127 (E.T. 102-115).

¹⁴¹Ibid., p 113 (E.T. 103). On the other hand, H. Gunkel, Genesis, p 225f., argues that Gen 12.10-20 is the most ancient. Other views may be summarised as follows: K. Koch, op. cit., pp 135-162 (E.T. 111-132) believes that Gen 12.10-20 is the most ancient, although certain features

preserved in the other two versions may be more original, cf. pp 153-155 (E.T. 125-127); C.A. Keller, "Die Gefährdung der Ahnfrau", ZAW 66 (1954) 181-191, suggests that there were three different stories in the history of traditions which were all variants of one basic theme, i.e., of the hero who has to lie in order to evade danger in a foreign land, a view from which Koch dissents (p 153 n 16 [more fully than E.T. 125 n 12]); G. Schmitt, "Zu Gen 26.1-14", ZAW 85 (1973) 143-156, although admitting that Gen 26.1-14 in its present form has been influenced by Gen 12.10-20, has argued that an even earlier form can be inferred from the Isaac version to provide what is probably the earliest form of the narrative; S. Nomoto, "Entstehung und Entwicklung der Erzählung der Gefährdung der Anfrau", AJBI 2 (1976) 1-27; and P. Weimar, Untersuchungen zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Pentateuch, posits a complicated redaction history, but identifies Gen 26.6, 7*, 8, 9, as the oldest form of the story.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Ibid., p 114 (E.T. 103).

¹⁴⁴Ibid., (E.T. 104).

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p 115 (E.T. 105).

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p 116 (E.T. 106).

¹⁴⁷G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 320 n 1).

¹⁴⁸Although Noth cites Wellhausen in support of his view that the story of Gen 26.7-11 is older than its doublets, the latter's opinion on the question is confined to the footnote to which Noth refers, cf. J. Wellhausen, Prolegomenon, p 332 n 1 (E.T. 320 n 1).

¹⁴⁹Anderson, "Introduction: Martin Noth's Traditio-Historical Approach", pp xi-xxxii.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p xxiii.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp xxiii-xxv. Only the essential characteristics of each "guideline" has been quoted.

¹⁵²Ibid., p xxv.

¹⁵³R. Polzin, "Martin Noth's A History of Pentateuchal Traditions", BASOR 221 (1976) 113-120.

¹⁵⁴B.W. Anderson, op. cit., p xxv.

¹⁵⁵R. Polzin, BASOR 221 (1976) 114.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 116.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., 117.

¹⁵⁹Ibid.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 114.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 117.

¹⁶²M. Noth, ÜP, p 99 (E.T. 91); cf. R. Polzin, op. cit., 117.

¹⁶³B.W. Anderson, op. cit., p xxiv; cf. M. Noth, ÜP, esp. pp 113, 120 (E.T. 103, 109); R. Polzin, op. cit., 117.

164 M. Noth, ÜP, p 155f. (E.T. 141); R. Polzin, op. cit., 118.

165 R. Polzin, ibid.

166 J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 129.

167 Ibid.

168 Ibid., p 144. Noth had already traced a quite different development of the "histories" of Deuteronomist and Chronicler in his Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien I.

169 Ibid., p 143, cf., B.S. Childs, "Deuteronomistic Formulae of the Exodus Traditions", SVT XVI (1967) 30-39.

170 Ibid., p 143.

171 Ibid., p 144. This is a most important conclusion since it denies the possibility of tracing the history of the pentateuchal traditions after the fashion attempted by Noth and those whose method is associated with his.

172 Ibid., p 146f.

173 Ibid., p 147.

174 Ibid., p 147f.

175 Ibid., p 148. Van Seters applies the conclusion across the board to all scholars who use a similar traditio-historical method.

176 Ibid., especially pp 125-131. The implications of this critique are worked out systematically in the discussion of the Abraham texts.

177 R. Rendtorff, "Pentateuchal Studies on the Move", JSOT 3 (1977) 43-45.

178 Rendtorff's observation may be a little unfair to Van Seters, who does not hold to the documentary hypothesis, although he uses a source-critical method. Ironically Rendtorff charges Van Seters with misunderstanding him, ibid., as he bases his opposition to Van Seters at least in part on the somewhat misleading title of Van Seters' "Appendix: The Literary Sources of the Abraham Tradition of Genesis" (Abraham, p 313). Moreover, van Seters' own misunderstanding of Rendtorff may be attributable in part to a mistake in the latter's quotation of von Rad in 'Der "Jahwist" als Theologe?', 160. The mistake, which quite alters von Rad's sense [cf. Das formgeschichtliche Problem des Hexateuchs, p 69 (E.T. 74)], is uncorrected in the E.T. (4), but has been corrected in ÜPP, 15.

179 F.V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations".

180 N.E. Wagner, Literary Analysis; idem, "Pentateuchal Criticism: No Clear Future", CJT 13 (1967) 225-232.

181 S. Sandmel, "The Hagaddah within Scripture".

182 M. Noth, ÜP, p 114 (E.T. 104).

183 Once the duplicated material (the promise tradition, the wife-sister story, and the covenant with Abimelech), the passages deemed later by Noth because of their more discursive style, the allegedly E material, and

possibly Gen 14 (if it is considered late), have all been subtracted from the Abraham tradition, very little remains, and this is a major problem with Noth's thesis that a later popular Abraham figure attracted to himself narrative elements which originally belonged to Isaac. Indeed, the Abraham figure is so empoverished that it becomes difficult to see how he might ever have become more popular than Isaac.

¹⁸⁴J. Van Seters, Abraham, pp 167-191; C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, pp 512-524. Many of Van Seters arguments depend on the analysis of N.E. Wagner, Literary Analysis; see also F.V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations", who states the position subsequently defended by Van Seters most succinctly.

¹⁸⁵J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 191.

¹⁸⁶Van Seters discussion of the form of the "wife-sister" story has been criticised by T.L. Thompson, "A New Attempt to Date the Patriarchal Narratives", JAOS 98 (1978) 76-84. On the whole, however, Van Seters' understanding of the form survives Thompson's critique.

¹⁸⁷J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 167f.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., p 168.

¹⁸⁹Van Seters' use of Olrik's laws (cf. Abraham, p 160f.) has been frequently criticized, e.g., by S.M. Warner, "Primitive Saga Men", VT XXIX (1979) 325-335; R.C. Culley, Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative, pp 28-30; E.W. Nicholson, in JTS NS 30 (1979) 220-234, a lengthy review of Van Seters' book, makes this same point (30f.)

¹⁹⁰J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 169.

¹⁹¹Ibid., p 170f.

¹⁹²Ibid., p 171.

¹⁹³Ibid., pp 176, 180.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., pp 171-175.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., pp 175-180.

¹⁹⁶Gen 12.10-20 is possibly too brief ever to have maintained a life of its own. If a longer version of the story were told orally, it cannot by definition be recovered from its abbreviated form in the biblical text. But any argument that the biblical stories were abbreviated structural outlines which were expanded in performance by the oral storytellers has to account for the fact that three so similar outlines have been preserved in Gen 12, 20, and 26.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p 169.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., pp 176-182.

¹⁹⁹Already proposed more briefly by S. Sandmel, "The Haggada Within Scripture".

²⁰⁰Ibid., p 177. In this he is followed by Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 517.

²⁰¹Ibid., pp 178-181.

²⁰²Ibid., p 179f. Van Seters finds a "blind motif" in the fact that that in Gen 26 it is not clear how Abimelech was informed about Rebekah, or to what purpose since he did not marry her.

²⁰³Ibid., p 180. Van Seters makes this point against Noth, von Rad, Kilian and Koch, among others, "who see in this verse an important clue to the oldest level of the legend".

²⁰⁴Ibid., p 181. E.g., in v 10, Abimelech begins to accuse Isaac all over again, after hearing Isaac's defence (v 9).

²⁰⁵Ibid.

²⁰⁶Ibid., p 182. Against Van Seters, I have shown that the theophany is indeed related to the whole of the Isaac narrative. The unity of the divine speech of vv 3-5 can only be proved if it can be shown that the whole of the Isaac narrative was composed as a unity.

²⁰⁷Ibid., p 184f.

²⁰⁸Ibid., p 186.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid., p 187.

²¹¹Van Seters contends that this circumstance reflects the author's negative attitude towards the Philistine. I consider it no more than a consequence of his desire to attribute Isaac's wealth to the blessing of Yahweh. C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 519, has pointed out that v 11 has the broader function of explaining how Isaac was able to remain in the land and prosper there in vv 12-17. This permits a more natural reading of the narrative than Van Seters' solution that the narrator is assuming for Isaac the privilege granted to Abraham at 20.15, "but does not want to say so explicitly" (p 188f.).

²¹²Ibid., p 189f.

²¹³I do not agree with Van Seters that the aetiologies claim "legitimate possession by Israel of territory in Philistia" which were no longer being pressed. The names Isaac gives to the wells he secedes in vv 20, 21 indicate rather that he has abandoned all claim to them.

²¹⁴Ibid., p 190f.

²¹⁵A number of disagreements have been mentioned in reviews.

²¹⁶J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 191. The arguments for the unity of the Isaac narrative provide powerful support for the priority of Abraham over Isaac in the tradition. By "Yahwist" Van Seters means the "late Yahwist", following Wagner, Literary Analysis, who speaks of a Compiler (= C), and Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations".

²¹⁷C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, p 515; cf. p 516, "Kap. 26 ist als eine in sich geschlossene literarische Komposition nachträglich in einen bestehenden Zusammenhang eingeschoben worden".

²¹⁸Ibid., p 520.

²¹⁹Ibid., p 519, cf. p 524.

²²⁰Ibid., p 520f.; G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 194, also discovers pointers towards an earlier form of the tradition in these aetiologies which, he contends, may be described as "brief statements of originally longer etiological narrative".

²²¹Ibid., p 524.

²²²v 20 provides an explanation for the name "Esek" by a play on the verb פּוּשׁ introduced by a כִּי clause. V 21 omits the כִּי clause, but cleverly suggests, by virtue of the fact that the account follows directly on the aetiology of Esek, a similar aetiology for Sitnah. V 22, although of similar construction to the preceding verses, and providing an explanation for the name "Rehoboth" by means of a play on the verb which is introduced by a כִּי clause, uses the device of aetiology to express a situation which is precisely the reverse of the situation depicted in the previous two verses - this time Isaac names a well over which he retains water rights. Finally, the climactic aetiology for Beersheba (v 33), is the most elaborate and includes an על כן clause, as well as the aetiological formula עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

²²³This is especially true of the arguments that an apparent heightening of moral sensitivity on the part of the narrator points unequivocally towards a later version of the story. Thus Gunkel [Genesis, p 225] claims with some conviction: "Der Hauptunterschied der drei Erzählungen besteht darin, dass 12 unbefangene Dinge erzählt, die dem späteren Empfinden höchst anstößig erscheinen mussten, während 20 und noch mehr 26 sich bemühen, dies Bedenkliche fortzuschaffen." So important is this circumstance for Gunkel that he claims that all the major differences in content of the three stories may be explained by it. Later he contends that the story of Gen 26 has become "ein profanes Abenteuer" (p 226). But, according to Noth [ÜP, p 115 (E.T. 105)] the story of Gen 26 displays "drastischen Derbheit" in describing Isaac's true marital state, and this, along with its 'völlig „Profaner" Form', points to the originality of that story. R. Polzin, op. cit., pp 190-194 has criticized the ambiguous nature of Noth's terminology. D.A. Lutz, op. cit., p 145, argues that Gen 26 contains the most sensual or earthly form of the story, and holds that this strengthens the case for its antiquity. Finally, it is interesting to notice that Noth enlists the support of Wellhausen and his literary-critical argument for the priority of the Isaac version of the wife-sister story. If precisely the same argument can be used in source-critical and traditio-critical studies, it is by no means clear what the argument proves, or what should be its status in Old Testament studies.

²²⁴See above, p 150.

²²⁵If borrowing had operated in the direction indicated by Noth, it is difficult to understand why the Abraham traditions did not make more use of the well tradition (vv 15, 17-22, 32-33) or borrow from the material concerning Isaac's farming activities (vv 12-16).

²²⁶Besides numerous texts in Deutero-Isaiah which show an interest in the welfare of the foreign nations (cf. J. Schreiner, "Berufung und Erwählung Israels zum Heil der Völker", Bibel und Leben 9 (1968) 94-114), e.g. Zech 9.6b-7, and 10 (v 10 seems to provide a transformation on Ps 72.8f); Ps 47.10. The command not to go down to Egypt (v 2) may reflect Jer 42.13-22.

227 On the purpose of Late J, cf. F.V. Winnett, "Re-examining the Foundations"; J. Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period", VT XXII (1972) 448-459; idem, Abraham.

228 D.L. Petersen, op. cit., complains that scholars like Gunkel are more concerned to illuminate the social situation out of which a form may be deduced to have arisen rather than the form itself.

229 G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 191.

230 Ibid., p 112.

231 Ibid., p 151-2.

232 Ibid., p 195.

233 See above, p 121.

234 J. Van Seters, Abraham, p 190; cf. G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 195.

Footnotes to Chapter Six

¹S. Mandelkern, Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae, p 1443; G. Lisowsky, Konkordanz zum Hebräischen Alten Testament, p 1642. A. van Selms, "Isaac in Amos", in Studies on the Books of Hosea and Amos, OTWSA (1964-65) 157-166, claims that the name occurs 111 times (157). There are a few additional occurrences in LXX, cf. E. Hatch & H.A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint, Supplement of Proper Names, p 87.

²There are a number of cases where יַעֲקֹב is used with a national reference. The present investigation would not be greatly advanced, however, by a strict separation of those references to יַעֲקֹב and יִשְׂרָאֵל which signify the Patriarch from those which refer to the nation. It is sufficient to notice that references to the Patriarch Jacob are more numerous than references to either Isaac or Abraham.

³In Numbers-Deuteronomy the name אַבְרָהָם appears in precisely the same eighteen contexts as יִצְחָק and nowhere else. Outside of the Pentateuch, however, Abraham occurs more often, particularly in the late prophetic literature and other late writings such as Chronicles and Nehemiah. Nevertheless, in no less than twelve of the fourteen occurrences of יִצְחָק/יִשְׂחָק outside of the Pentateuch, the two names remain closely associated. Am 7.9, 16 provide the only exceptions.

⁴The name is found:

(a) in the Pentateuch: Ex 2.24; 3.6, 15, 16; 4.5; 6.3, 8; 32.13; 33.1; Lev 26.42; Num 32.11; Deut 1.8; 6.10; 9.5, 27; 29.12; 30.20; 34.4.
 (b) elsewhere: Jos 24.3, 4; 1 Kgs 18.36; 2 Kgs 13.23; Jer 33.26; Am 7.9, 16; Ps 105.9; 1 Chr 1.28, 34(x2); 16.16; 29.18; 2 Chr 30.6.

⁵(a) with אַבְרָהָם and יַעֲקֹב: Ex 2.24; 3.6, 15, 16; 4.5; 6.3, 8; 33.1; Lev 26.42; Num 32.11; Deut 1.8; 6.10; 9.5, 27; 29.12; 30.20; 34.4; 2 Kgs 13.23; Jer 33.26; Ps 105.9; 1 Chr 16.16; Jos 24.3, 4.
 (b) with אַבְרָהָם and יִשְׂרָאֵל: Ex 32.13; 1 Kgs 18.36; 1 Chr 1.34(x2); 29.18; 2 Chr 30.6.

⁶See Table 2 below. I have included Ps 105.9 (par. 1 Chr 16.16) in this group, although this reference is not strictly formulaic. Nevertheless, it seems to be closely connected to the formulaic usage.

⁷1 Chr 1.28 occurs in a late context. Perhaps the only references which might have arisen at an early stage are to be found at Am 7.9, 16. But these may not be so early as they appear at first sight.

⁸A.A. Anderson, The Book of Psalms, Vol 2, p 726, states that Ps 105's "composition may well be placed between the early part of the post-Exilic period and the date of the Chronicler (c 300 B.C.)"; cf. R.J. Clifford, "Style and Purpose in Psalm 105", Biblica 60 (1979) 420-427.

⁹M. Noth, Numeri, p 205f (E.T. 237f.), notes that the whole of Num 32.5-15 is late, coming from the period when the pentateuchal narrative was being integrated with the deuteronomistic work.

¹⁰M. Noth, ÜP, p 33, n 113f (E.T. 31, n 113f); idem, Exodus, pp 200, 208 (E.T. 244, 253).

¹¹It is generally accepted that the laws of Deuteronomy (ch 12-26) constitute, with minor exceptions, the core of the book. But there is considerable disagreement which other passages may originally have belonged to proto-Deuteronomy. Usually two introductions are identified in Deut 1-11, and different layers are likewise found in the concluding chapters. Thus, for example, G. Fohrer, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, pp 186f. (E.T. 171f.), identifies Deut 4.44-9.6; 10.12-11.32 as the earlier introduction, and 1.1-4.43; 9.7-10.11 as the later. A discussion of a number of the issues involved may be found in E.W. Nicholson, Deuteronomy and Tradition, pp 18-36. More recently O. Kaiser, Einleitung in das Alte Testament, pp 109-111 (E.T. 128-131) has supported the argument for the late dating of Deuteronomy. For a fuller discussion of introductory issues, see A.D.H. Mayes, Deuteronomy, pp 27-110.

¹²In Genesis, the patriarchal formula is combined with the promise of land only at Gen 50.24, in the last speech of the dying Joseph. Here the promise takes the form of a prophecy which fulfils the narrative function of marking the transition from the patriarchal stories to the Exodus narratives. This occurrence can hardly be older than any outside of Genesis, even if there has been a tendency to attribute it to E, cf. G. von Rad, Genesis, p 354 (E.T. 430); E.A. Speiser, Genesis, p 378; M. Noth, ÜP, p 231 (E.T. 213). C. Westermann, who denies the existence of E, relates the promise to several other late texts including Gen 15.7-21 (Genesis 12-36, p 236).

¹³R.J. Clifford, op. cit., 427.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵J.A. Montgomery & H.S. Gehman, Kings I and II, p 433.

¹⁶Ibid., p 436.

¹⁷B.S. Childs, 'A Study of the Formula, "Until This Day"', JBL 82 (1963) 179-192, concludes "that the biblical formula, עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, seldom has an etiological function of justifying an existing phenomenon, but in the great majority of cases is a formula of personal testimony added to, and confirming, a received tradition" (192); cf. B.O. Long, The Problem of Etiological Narrative in the Old Testament, p 85.

¹⁸M. Noth, ÜP, p 18 (E.T. 18) identifies Exod 2.23a b-25; 6.2-12 as P.

¹⁹The order is Jacob, Isaac, Abraham. M. Noth, Leviticus, p 175 (E.T. 200) believes that בְּרִיתִי, which is repeated three times in v 42, does not fit in with the syntax and is probably secondary. This anomalous order may indicate that originally only Jacob was mentioned here.

²⁰If Lev 26.42 originally referred only to Jacob, that original form was probably earlier than P, but has now been incorporated into P as an addition, and P was responsible for glossing the reference to the Abrahamic covenant.

²¹R. Rendtorff, "Yahwist", 158-166 (E.T. 2-10), has argued that it is only in the later priestly stratum that God's oath to the Patriarchs concerning the gift of land is first mentioned.

²²M. Noth, Exodus, p 22 (E.T. 34). The usual source critical divisions of Exodus and Numbers are challenged by F.V. Winnett, The Mosaic Tradition. Winnett argues for the view that in the main the books of Exodus and Numbers "constitute one primary source, the Mosaic Tradition, which has been supplemented and touched up and rearranged here and there by P" (p viii), and which is the product of the northern kingdom. With respect to the Moses Call Narrative, Winnett denies emphatically the validity of using the divine names as a criterion for differentiating between J and E in Exodus. The extension of this criterion beyond Genesis has led to a mistaken view of the composition of the Hexateuch (p 20). Winnett argues for the unity of Exod 3.1-4.18 (p 26f.) and suggests that "These incidents constitute an indispensable introduction to the Plague Narrative and show that the Call Story... is an integral part of the main body of the Book of Exodus" (p 27).

²³B.S. Childs, Exodus, pp 51-53.

²⁴Ibid., p 51f.

²⁵Ibid., p 53; cf. N. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives", ZAW 77 (1965) 297-323, see 302.

²⁶M. Noth, Exodus, pp 16-34 (E.T. 27-47).

²⁷M. Noth, ÜP, p 31f n 103 (E.T. 30 n 103); cf. p 221 n 549 (E.T. 203 n 549).

²⁸M. Noth, Exodus, p 19 (E.T. 30).

²⁹Ibid., p 28 (E.T. 41), argues that the stereotyped description of the Promised Land (v 17a β b) is a later addition, as is also the detailed description of the later events of the Exodus (3.18-22). On p 33f. (E.T. 47), Noth argues that 4.21-23, which already hints at the last of the plagues, is also an addition.

³⁰R. Rendtorff, ÜPP, p 5ff., has criticized Noth's application of überlieferungsgeschichtliche method for being too much influenced by the results of the documentary hypothesis. In his book, Rendtorff has sought to dissociate Überlieferungsgeschichte from the documentary hypothesis, arguing that the several "grösseren Einheiten" (more or less Noth's "themes") developed independently of each other until a relatively late stage in their transmission.

³¹The main difference seems to be methodological. Both recognize the presence of sources, but Childs, who nevertheless is impressed by the unity of the story, minimises the differences between the sources because he

finds essentially the same story told in J and E, whereas Noth emphasizes the differences more strongly.

³²M. Noth, ÜP, p 31 n 103 (E.T. 30 n 103), talks of Exod 3.1-4.17 being secondary and an addition in J from a literary as well as a tradition-historical standpoint. On pp 220-222 (E.T. 201-204), Noth discusses the Moses call Narrative and concludes that it is "ein überlieferungsgeschichtlich sehr junges Stück" (p 222; E.T. 204), and at 221 n 549 (E.T. 203 n 549) he states: "Die Erzählung von Moses Gottesbegegnung (Exod *3.1ff.) scheint aber erst nachträglich in sein Werk (J) eingeschaltet worden zu sein". Nevertheless, Exod 3.1-4.17 still appears to belong somehow to the J material for Noth, and must have been inserted into the tradition either at the same time as, or soon after, the literary fixation of J, and certainly long before the time of RJE who inserted into it from E, Exod 3.4b, 6, 9-14(15).

³³In Noth's view the pentateuchal traditions had the essential elements of their structure already at the oral stage, cf. Exodus, p 2 (E.T. 10). Thus the Moses Call Narrative, although belonging to a relatively late stage in the history of the tradition, is still considered to belong to the older material of the pentateuchal narratives and its fixed literary form is represented in both J and E, cf, ibid., p 21 (E.T. 33).

³⁴M. Noth, ÜP, p 222 (E.T. 204).

³⁵I do not intend to argue for the literary unity of this section, although there may indeed be a greater degree of unity here than has usually been recognized, cf. N. Habel, op. cit., 302. In support of a late dating, J. Van Seters, "Confessional Reformulation in the Exilic Period", VT XXII (1972) 448-459, esp. 456f.; N. Wyatt, "The Development of the Tradition in Exodus 3", ZAW 91 (1979) 437-442.

³⁶M. Noth, Exodus, p 26 (E.T. 38f.).

³⁷The divine name אל שׁרׁי occurs in P at Gen 17.1; 28.3; 35.11; 48.3; Exod 6.3. It occurs elsewhere in the Pentateuch only at Gen 43.14 where according to Noth the source is doubtful (see below, n 39). With the support of versional evidence, F.M. Cross, Canaanite Myth, p 47 n 15, considers that the full title אל שׁרׁי also appears in an 'archaic context' at Gen 49.25. Only שׁרׁי appears in MT, however, and the suggestion is best resisted. The Priestly writer has apparently formed a neat historical scheme in which God is referred to as Elohim in pre-patriarchal times, El Shaddai in patriarchal times, and Yahweh in the Israelite period. For an attempt to show that אל שׁרׁי was a lunar deity and the Patriarchs followers of a moon cult, cf. E.L. Abel, "'The Nature of the Patriarchal God 'El Sadday'", Numen 20 (1973) 48-59. The name 'el is discussed by M. Pope, El in the Ugaritic Texts, see esp pp 1-16; for El with reference to 'the God of the Fathers', cf. F.M. Cross, op. cit., pp 14-43; for the relationship between Yahweh and El, O. Eissfeldt, "El and Yahweh", JSS 1 (1956) 25-37; F.M. Cross, op. cit., pp 44-75. Against the view that Gen 49.25 indicates the derivation of the epithet שׁרׁי from an early tradition, J. Van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs in Genesis", Biblica 61 (1980) 220-233, esp 226f.

³⁸M. Noth, Exodus, p 43 (E.T. 60).

³⁹Ibid; Van Seters holds that Gen 49.25-26 has been inserted by a priestly hand, op. cit., 226.

⁴⁰M. Noth, Exodus, p 43f. (E.T. 60). It may be possible to suggest, as Noth does, that in later contexts the shorter epithet is used "offenbar als eine geheimnisvolle archaische Gottesbezeichnung", but one must resist talk about "archaising", cf. J. Van Seters, "The Religion of the Patriarchs", 221.

⁴¹The context in which this passage occurs is usually attributed to E, cf. A. Bentzen, Introduction to the Old Testament, Vol II, p 28.

⁴²This difference is important. More important, perhaps, than the use in these contexts of the name "Israel" rather than "Jacob", since it appears to reflect a formula which could be placed on the lips of human characters, at least on the most solemn occasions, while there is no evidence that the God of the Fathers formula was used by human characters. The narrator does not even have Moses use it. Apart from this particular formula, "Israel" occurs in place of "Jacob" in the patriarchal formula only at Exod 32.11.

⁴³The petition is that Yahweh will show that he is God (v 37), and refers back to the purpose of the contest, "the God who answers by fire, he is God" (v 24).

⁴⁴This connection has a long history, lasting down to NT times (cf. Mk 9.4f.).

⁴⁵The author of the Elijah narratives might still have known the Moses tradition and its use of the patriarchal formula in connection with the identification of the God of the Fathers.

⁴⁶R.H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, p 403; G. Fohrer, op. cit., p 253 (E.T. 233); W.F. Albright, From Stone Age to Christianity, p 307, however, states that these narratives can hardly be later than the eighth century. It might be noted that J. Gray, I & II Kings, p 372 n c, misrepresents Albright as favouring the ninth century. Gray himself states that "The tradition was fixed in the compilation, which may also be dated early, possibly in the lifetime of Elijah in the early eighth century" (p 372).

⁴⁷The Elijah-Elisha cycle is generally supposed to have been one of the sources incorporated by the Deuteronomistic author of Kings into his narrative. Whether it was included in the first recension (Fohrer) or in the second (Pfeiffer) remains a matter of debate.

⁴⁸R.H. Pfeiffer, op. cit., p 403.

⁴⁹F.M. Cross, op. cit., p 191.

⁵⁰At any rate, the association of twelve stones, sons, and tribes in the one passage is unique to 1 Kgs 18.31 in the Old Testament. At Gen 49.28, the Priestly writer appears to have transformed the blessing of the sons of Jacob (Gen 49.1-27: J) into a blessing on the tribes.

⁵¹Some scholars have suggested that ישראל יהיה שמך is a late gloss, cf. R.H. Pfeiffer, op. cit., p 405. I cannot agree with this view. This phrase is part of a much larger revision of the Elijah story which is concerned both with the identity of Israel and with the God who is worshipped by Israel. The phrase cannot be separated from v 31f.

⁵²J. Robinson, The First Book of Kings, p 212.

⁵³So, N.J. Tromp, "Water and Fire on Mount Carmel: A Conciliatory Suggestion", Biblica 56 (1975) 480-502, cf. 492.

⁵⁴Different concerns are expressed in vv 36 and 37. Besides introducing the patriarchal formula, v 36 is concerned that Yahweh should show himself to be God in Israel and also that Elijah should be vindicated, whereas v 37 is concerned that Yahweh should be shown to be God. The concern of v 36, as well as the style, seems to indicate the same author as v 31f.

⁵⁵H.W. Wolff, Joel und Amos, pp 348, 351 (E.T 295, 302).

⁵⁶Cf. E. Hammershaimb, The Book of Amos; J.L. Mays, Amos; W.R. Harper, Amos and Hosea. None of these commentaries appear to be much concerned with the authorship of this verse.

⁵⁷H.W. Wolff, op. cit., p 340f. (E.T. 295), argues that v 9 is distinguished from the third vision report (Am 7.7-8) both by prosodic form and by content. P.R. Ackroyd, "A Judgement Narrative between Kings and Chronicles? An Approach to Amos 7:9-17", in Coats & Long (ed) Canon and Authority, pp 71-87, suggests that vv 10-17 may be 'a narrative "exegesis" on v 9 (p 73).

⁵⁸Wolff, op. cit. p 341: "Andererseits korrigiert er die Todesdrohung gegen Jerobeam in 11a".

⁵⁹Ibid., p 131 (E.T. 108).

⁶⁰Ibid., pp 131-135 (E.T. 108-111).

⁶¹One should note that במות, in the sense of "high places" occurs only here in collocation with a proper name. Even if it is suggested that קִשְׁקֵץ in this verse designates a location, it would be pertinent to observe that in the two other instances where במות is found in collocation with a place name, the name involved may indicate a censorship process. Thus Hos 10.8 במות און may mean "the high places of idolatry/sinfulness", and Jer 7.31 במות התפת "the high places of spitting". Although Topeth apparently was located in a valley just south of Jerusalem (cf. J. Bright, Jeremiah, p 57), it may be that the pl. cs. במות התפת is used as a derisory designation for a number of such shrines in the area associated with the valley of Hinnom. On the other hand, LXX assumes a singular sense, and this is perhaps supported by 2 Kgs 23.10. For further discussion of the terms במה and במות, see P.H. Vaughan, The meaning of 'bama' in the Old Testament; M.D. Fowler, "The Israelite bama: A question of Interpretation", ZAW 94 (1982) 203-213.

⁶²Isaac appears elsewhere in the prophetic literature only at Jer 33.26, in an oracle (Jer 33.23-26) which does not appear to have belonged to the Vorlage of LXX Jeremiah.

⁶³But see the admirable caution expressed by B. Albrektson, "Difficilior Lectio Probabilior: A Rule of Textual Criticism and its Use in Old Testament Studies", OTS XXI (1981) 5-18.

⁶⁴Am 3.13; 9.8; cf. Gen 46.27; Exod 19.3; Isa 2.5, 6; 8.17; 10.20; 14.1; 29.22; 46.3; 48.1; 58.1; Jer 2.4; 5.20; Ezek 20.5; Obad 17, 18; Mic 2.7; 3.9; Ps 114.1.

⁶⁵Am 5.1, 3, 4, 25; 6.1, 14; 7.10; 9.9; cf. Exod 16.31; 40.38; Lev 10.6; 17.3, 8, 10; 22.18, and often elsewhere.

⁶⁶For a sexual connotation, cf. Gen 26.8; 39.14; Exod 32.6.

⁶⁷J.C.L. Gibson, Canaanite Myths and Legends, texts 4 iv 18; 4 v 87; 4 vii 21; 6 iii 16. Also in text 3 B 25, šḥq appears as a substantive with the prefix b.

⁶⁸At Ugarit the verbal root šḥq occurs in connection with El, Anat, Lapitan, and Kothar-and-Khasis, and the substantive in connection with Anat.

⁶⁹LXX, here and at Gen 26.8, glosses with παίζω which represents the rather neutral sense of ῥῆς = play, cf. Gen 19.14. At Gen 39.14, cf. Jdg 19.25, ἐμπαίζω is used. J.P. Hyatt, Exodus, p 305, speaks of "a fertility ceremony, probably with obscene rites", but J.M. Sasson, "The Worship of the Golden Calf", in H.A. Hoffner (ed), Orient and Occident, AOAT 22, pp 151-159, denies a sexual connotation in Exod 32.

⁷⁰P.R. Ackroyd, op. cit., p 74, notes that "the spelling variant may be late", while, A. van Selms "Isaac in Amos" argues that the development ḥ > ḥ results from "laziness" of speech (157) and the spelling in Amos "is dependent... on an oral tradition" (159).

⁷¹Jos 24.3f.; 1 Chr 1.28, 34(x2).

⁷²G. von Rad, Problem, pp 37 (E.T. 38).

⁷³Ibid., p 6 (E.T. 7).

⁷⁴L. Rost, "Das kleine geschichtlich Credo", in Das kleine Credo und andere Studien zum Alten Testament, pp 11-25, has demonstrated how pervasive the deuteronomistic language is in Deut 26.5b-11 and concluded that the passage is "eine Ergänzung aus der Zeit Josias" (p 22). And C.H.W. Brekelmans, "Het 'historische Credo' van Israël", TvT III (1963) 1-11 has shown that von Rad's three principal passages (Deut 25.5b-9; 6.20-25; and Jos 24.2b-13) are form-critically distinct.

⁷⁵J.P. Hyatt, "Were There an Ancient Historical Credo in Israel and an Independent Sinai Tradition", in Frank & Reed (ed), Translating and Understanding the Old Testament, pp 152-170, cf. the works reviewed extensively there.

⁷⁶D.J. McCarthy, Treaty and Covenant, pp 221-232.

⁷⁷Ibid., p 231f.

⁷⁸Ibid., p 232.

⁷⁹J.A. Soggin, Le Livre de Josué, p 167 (E.T. 224).

⁸⁰D.J. McCarthy, op. cit., p 225 n 24.

Footnotes to Concluding Remarks

¹G. von Rad, Genesis, p 216 (E.T. 269). Noth himself observed [p 116 (E.T. 106)] that from a traditio-historical point of view the Isaac stories seemed more original than those associated with the West Jordan Jacob.

²A brief survey of the literary analyses of biblical materials which are available is sufficient to show that a wide variety of approaches have been employed by scholars working in the field. E.g., the "secular" literary approach of D. Robertson, The Old Testament and the Literary Critic, may be contrasted with the "religious" literary criticism of M. Fishbane, Text and Texture, cf. my review of the latter work, JSOT 21 (1981) 118-122. Similarly, while some have pursued an eclectic approach (J. Licht, Storytelling in the Bible; R. Alter, The Art of Biblical Narrative), others have examined particular biblical narratives as literary entities (C. Conroy, Absalom Absalom!; D.M. Gunn, The Story of King David; idem, The Fate of King Saul; J.L. Crenshaw, Samson). Moreover, the techniques employed range from a sort of aesthetic or rhetorical criticism (P. Tribble, Texts of Terror) to a form of structural analysis related to the researches of Levi-Strauss (E. Leach, Genesis as Myth and other Essays), and take in a wide variety of method in between (cf. the journal Semeia which represents a number of experimental and literary approaches to biblical texts, and collections of essays such as, K.R.R. Gros Louis et al. (ed), Literary Interpretation of Biblical Narratives; D.J.A. Clines et al. (ed), Art and Meaning; B.O. Long (ed), Images of Man and God).

³H. Gunkel, Genesis, p XXXII (E.T. 43).

⁴In his influential essay, Das formgeschichtlich Problem des Hexateuchs, von Rad attempted to apply form criticism to the larger complex unit of the hexateuch as a whole. Nevertheless, his discussion of the form of the hexateuch depended almost entirely on developing the analogy with the short creed which he identified in Deut 26.5b-9; 6.20-25; and Jos 24.2b-13. It is instructive too that in his Genesis, in spite of his avowed interest in "der Auslegung der Texte in ihrer Jetztgestalt" [p 24 (E.T. 429)], von Rad tended to concentrate upon the individual units, a trait which is evident in his discussion of Gen 26 [pp 215-219 (E.T. 268-273)].

⁵E.g., J. Muilenburg, "The Gains of Form Criticism in Old Testament Studies", ET LXXI (1959-60) 29-233, has complained that "Literary units have been reduced to mere snippets" (232). Cf. D. Greenwood, "Rhetorical Criticism and Formgeschichte: Some Methodological Considerations", JBL 89 (1970) 418-426; cf. 418.

⁶Interest in the "final form of the text" has been expressed in a variety of ways in recent biblical studies. One may distinguish, for example, between the "final form" as an historical, a literary, and a canonical phenomenon. As an historical phenomenon, the text attained its final form as an end result of a compositional/redactional process at a particular time and against an historical background. As a literary phenomenon, it may be interpreted independently of that historical background, as a piece of literature. And as a canonical phenomenon, it may be interpreted in relation to its canonical context, as holy scripture.

⁷M. Savage, "Literary Criticism and Biblical Studies: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Joseph Narrative", in C.D. Evans et al. (ed), Scripture in Context, pp 79-100, cf. 79. Savage clearly distinguishes her "rhetorical analysis" from the approach associated in biblical studies with Muilenburg and his followers, see especially pp 86-88.

⁸J. Barton, op. cit., p 5, has noted that "much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method which, if only we could find it, would unlock the mysteries of the text".

⁹See, for example, the remarks made by Savage, op. cit., pp 81f.; cf., J. Barton, op. cit., pp 200-204; idem, "Classifying Biblical Criticism", JSOT 29 (1984) 19-35.

¹⁰In his concluding discussion of the comparative value of different styles of biblical study, J. Barton, Reading the Old Testament, pp 198-207, has indicated how far different types of Old Testament criticism are related to each other and how far they are related to different theories about literature; theories which are orientated towards the author on the one hand and towards the text itself on the other. These distinctions relate roughly to historical methods and literary and/or structuralist methods respectively. Reader oriented 'post-structuralist' methods have so far made little impression on biblical studies. Barton's point that "it is possible to analyse the internal structure of Old Testament books by a selective use of structuralist techniques, without in any way abandoning historical-critical principles" (ibid., p 133f.) must not be overlooked. In Part One, however, although I have incorporated modified structuralist techniques into my literary method, I understand my reading of Gen 26 to be text oriented rather than author oriented, even if an application of some of its results may be made to the questions raised in Part Two and some historical observations occasionally intrude.

¹¹For example, in my discussion (Chapter One) of those literary features which provide a high degree of narrative coherence and integration between the beginning and end of the narrative, more attention could have been paid to the rhetorical value of a number of words which occur at different points in the narrative and where some relationship may be inferred among their several occurrences, e.g., leaving aside certain words which recur regularly, but which are common in biblical Hebrew anyway, the occurrences of בָּרַךְ (vv 3, 4, 12, 24, 29), גָּלַעַ (vv 11, 29), אָצַד (vv 12, 19, 32), and רָגַל (vv 1, 6, 17, 20, 25) might be worth taking into account.

¹²A more formally structuralist reading might have been attempted, cf., the functional and actantial analyses of Gen 26.1-33 and the related discussion provided by P.J. Naylor, The Language of Covenant, pp 244-270.

¹³Against the point that Isaac and Rebekah are already represented as parents at Gen 25:19-26, I consider that Gen 26.1-33 is a retrospective narration of Isaac's story. The presentation of narrative out of temporal sequence is a fairly common feature of biblical Hebrew narrative, cf. W.J. Martin, "'Dischronologized" Narrative in the Old Testament', SVT 17 (1968) 179-186. Aspects of the related feature of the narration of simultaneous events are discussed by S. Talmon, "The Presentation of Synchronicity and Simultaneity in Biblical Narrative", Scripta Hierosolymitana 28 (1978) 9-26; A. Berlin, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, 126-128.

¹⁴T.L. Thompson & D. Irvin, "The Narratives about the Origin of Israel", in IJH, pp 210-212, (cf. 212); see above, p 92, n 11.

¹⁵The reference to Isaac's successful husbandry (v 12), and a series of brief notices relating to the digging of a series of wells (vv 19-22) are apparent minor exceptions. Although it has been suggested that these notices allude to the original character of the Isaac tradition (G.W. Coats, Genesis, p 193; cf. C. Westermann, Genesis 12-36, who identifies vv 15, 18, 19-25, 32-33 as the nucleus of the Isaac tradition), I find that suggestion untenable. It is more in keeping with the composition history I have traced that the author of Gen 26.1-33 invented these divergences from Abrahamic tradition than that he had Isaac traditions already to hand.

¹⁶E.g., W.F. Albright, Archaeology, Historical Analogy, and Early Biblical Tradition; "Abram the Hebrew, a New Archaeological Interpretation", BASOR 163 (1961) 36-54; C.H. Gordon, "'New Horizons in Old Testament Literature'", Encounter 21 (1960) 131-160; idem, "Hebrew Origins in the Light of Recent Discovery", in A. Altmann (ed), Biblical and Other Essays, pp 3-14; I. Blythin, "The Patriarchs and the Promise", SJT 21 (1968) 56-73; S. Yeivin, "The Patriarchs in the Land of Canaan", in B. Mazar (ed), The World History of the Jewish People, Volume II, Patriarchs, pp 201-218; E.A. Speiser, "The Patriarchs and their Social Background", in B. Mazar (ed), ibid, pp 160-168; G.E. Wright, "History and the Patriarchs", ET LXXI (1959-60) 292-296. These examples have been chosen almost at random, and could be multiplied many times over.

¹⁷J. Van Seters, Abraham, and T.L. Thompson, The Patriarchs in History and Tradition, have been widely influential in this movement away from relating the biblical traditions to a "patriarchal age" illuminated by the results of archaeological research. Of their work, S.M. Warner, "The Patriarchs and Extra-Biblical Sources", JSOT 2 (1977) 50-61, has noted, "So compelling are their arguments that it is doubtful whether the theory for an early dating of the patriarchal period can ever again be decently resurrected" (50). This remark is endorsed by J.M. Miller, "The Patriarchs and Extra-Biblical Sources: A Response", JSOT 2 (1977) 62-66.

¹⁸E.g., J.T. Luke, "Abraham and the Iron Age: Reflections on the New Patriarchal Studies", JSOT 4 (1977) 35-47; J.B. Geyer, "The Joseph and Moses Narrative: Folk-Tale and History", JSOT 15 (1980) 51-56; D.N. Freedman, "The Real Story of the Ebla Tablets, Ebla and the Cities of the Plain", BA 41 (1978) 143-164; the various contributions to Millard & Wiseman, Essays on the Patriarchal Narratives, are critical, some severely so, of the general position occupied by Thompson and Van Seters.

¹⁹R. de Vaux, "On Right and Wrong Uses of Archaeology", in J.A. Sanders (ed), Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century, pp 64-80.

²⁰The provisional nature of results is of course a common feature of research in almost every field. In some areas this hazard is perhaps not so obvious, but in disciplines like archaeology, where so many of the most important and spectacular finds to date have been discovered in some measure by chance, it is always possible that future discoveries will lead to radical reassessment of evidence and results.

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