

A Psychological Reading vs. Higher Criticism: Jacob's Leaving Home as a Test Case

Micha Roi

The story of Jacob's departure from his father's house creates the clear impression of being composite. While higher critics draw attention to this fact, those who adopt a diachronic approach argue that this circumstance is due to its compilation from various sources by an editorial hand—while literary-synchronic scholars reject the claim, maintaining its cohesiveness and contending that the misleading effect derives from literary and conceptual considerations. Herein, I offer an alternative, psychological reading that explains the inconsistencies as a psychological mechanism—universal (pan-human) or particular (Jacob's personal[ity] traits). While the former relates to the text as myth, the latter treats it as story. This method resembles psychoanalytic treatment. Just as the latter focuses on seeking the language behind the language, so a psychological reading searches for the story behind the story. The first section of this article thus explores the pursuance of the universal story behind the story, the second the particular story behind the story. The literary dissonance is thus attributed to the dialogue between the two poles within the human soul the universal reading posits or the conflicted nature of Jacob drawn out by the particular reading.

[Key words: Biblical criticism, Synchronic reading, Diachronic reading, Psychological reading, Journey story, Jacob and Esau]

Expiatory Offerings in the Priestly Source: Their Psychological Foundations

Yitzhak Feder

The article explores the use of key terms pertaining to the expiatory offerings in the Priestly Source (P) as a springboard for understanding the underlying Priestly conception of guilt and punishment. Despite the appearance of a stoic set of instructions designed to achieve a mechanical effect, closer investigation reveals psychological motives such as anxiety and guilt. However, the type of 'guilt' represented is not primarily an emotional response but rather a perceived debt to God that needs to be paid off, i.e., expiated. Although psychological research tends to focus on the emotional side of guilt, its recognition of the nature of guilt as an object-based emotion can shed light on the Priestly conception of sin. Moreover, the distinction made in modern research

between 'guilt' and 'shame' can shed light on why the former is predominant in P, whereas the latter is more evident in the Book of Ezekiel. The second part of the article deals with the sin offering (*ḥaṭṭ'at*), focusing on its name and purpose. Contrary to the current tendency in scholarship, following the work of Jacob Milgrom, to render it as a 'purification offering', comparison with ancient Near Eastern analogies reveals that the traditional translation 'sin-offering' is more accurate and indicative of its underlying rationale. In particular, several cases where there is no ostensible connection between the offering and sin (e.g., the parturient and the nazirite) are explained on the basis of an underlying anxiety pertaining to hidden sin. Taken together, these analyses of the expiatory offerings reveal some of the psychological motives that are hidden beneath the technical instructions provided by the Priestly Source.

[Key words: Sin offering, Expiation, Guilt, Shame, Anxiety, Priestly literature, Divine retribution, Birth impurity, Nazirite]

Solomon's "Royal Road to the Unconscious"?

Psychology and Philology in the Story of the Dream at Gibeon (1 Kings 3:4-15)

Ruth Fidler

This article is devoted to the relation between psychological and philological aspects in the interpretation of dream accounts in the Hebrew Bible, focusing on Solomon's dream at Gibeon (1 Kgs 3:4-15). The introduction (Part 1) reviews current trends in the interpretation of biblical dreams and their links to the etiology of dreams, with remarks on the gaps between philology, intent on revealing authors' purposes, and psychology, whose business is more in exposing inner psychical processes. Attention is given also to ambivalent etiology (Gen 37:10-11) and its potential bearing on interpretation. The subsequent parts deal with two components of the Gibeon narrative: the dreamer's dialogue with God (Part 2) and its content (Part 3). Here it turns out that in some issues the gaps between philology and psychology are less significant than expected. The interpretation finally suggested for the Gibeon dream text incorporates different possibilities simultaneously, as a discovery of geoglyphs from a high altitude that must coexist with geological or archaeological investigations of the same ground. The ambivalence towards dreams, evident in Jacob's response to

Joseph's dreams and elsewhere, encourages such a layered reading of Solomon's dream as well.

[**Key words:** King Solomon, Auditory message dream, Dream theophany, Dialogue, Ambivalence, Wisdom, 'Divine wisdom', Wisdom supremacy, Temple, Unconscious]

Grief and Revenge – Do Two Walk Together: A Literary-Historical and Psychological Study in Psalm 137

Gili Kugler

Revenge aims to correct a perceived imbalance of justice following harm, while satisfying a psychological need of the victims. Can revenge coexist alongside grief following a harm? Does grief intensify when the source of harm is deliberate, and is it weakened by the introduction of other emotions, such as resentment and revenge? This article delves into Psalm 137, exploring the emotional duality it presents consisting of grief and the desire for revenge. It inquires whether one emotion gives rise to the other or supplants it, and whether their interrelation is manifested differently in the transition from the private-family sphere to the public-national one and vice-versa, indicating the circumstances under which one can break free from the cycle of revenge.

[**Key words:** Grief, Revenge, Retribution, Memory, Psalms 137, Babylonian captivity, Edom-Israel]

“What Brightens the Eye Gladdens the Heart; Good News Puts Fat on the Bones” (Prov 15:30): The Interrelationship between Body and Soul in Aphoristic Rhetoric

Tova Forti

The biblical writers' metaphorical and idiomatic use of corporal organs to convey emotions indicates their awareness of the interrelationship between body and soul. As

reflected in the modern term “psychosomatic”, human experiences frequently involve both psychological and physical elements. Exploring ancient knowledge of the way in which physical health affects mood and mental states on the one hand and the mind affects the body on the other hand, this paper focuses on the psychological sensitivity and cognitive and emotional self-awareness exhibited in the aphoristic rhetoric of Proverbs. The findings corroborate the view that biblical proverbs recognize the power of cognitive behavioral intervention to change thought patterns and thereby improve an individual’s quality of life.

[Key words: The Book of Proverbs, Psychosomatic Sayings, Interrelationship between Body and Soul, Parts of the Body as Metonymy for Emotions, ‘Heart’, ‘Spirit’, ‘Soul’, Desire/Passion, Emotional Complexity, Psycho-Cognitive Thinking]

The Binding of Isaac and the Illusion of Parental Control

Merav Roth

The Binding of Isaac that begins with the divine command: “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Gen 22: 2), stands as one of the most paradigmatic narratives in world culture regarding unflinching faith. At the same time, it presents one of the most profound moral dilemmas and towering human enigmas, due to the willingness of the biblical hero, Abraham, the knight of faith, to sacrifice his son. This willingness has become a cornerstone for philosophers, biblical scholars, literary critics, and psychologists alike, as they seek to unravel the meaning of the text and its immense power. This article explores the story of the Binding of Isaac through an interdisciplinary lens that combines literary and psychoanalytic perspectives. Studying the story produces a new interpretive key that also sheds light on the story’s compelling power. The Akedah narrative addresses the illusion that every parent tends to adopt, that he has the choice to accept or reject the death of his offspring. Giving

Abraham this choice and his decision to obey the divine command, serve to reinforce readers' denial regarding the limits of their own control, even over what is dearest to them. They resist understanding that in any case, the matter was not within Abraham's control, just as the death of their own children is not solely within theirs. This perspective opens the gate to further psychological and existential dimensions related to the parental illusion of sovereignty regarding the death of their children: An acceptance of finality; Liberation from the chains of the past and the future; From trauma to faith and values; and an 'Abrahamic' resolution to the Oedipal complex. These dimensions are explored through the lens of four literary works that engage with the story of the Binding of Isaac. In the conclusion of the article, the story and its analysis serve as a mirror for the reality that readers in Israel face in 2024.

[Key words: Binding of Isaac, Oedipal complex, Survivors' guilt, Abraham, Psychoanalysis, Faith, Genesis, Uncanny (Unheimliche), Fear of death]