

## Yitzchak's Identity PtI - The Crisis

### Technique #1: The Type-Scene

שלשה נזדווגו להם זווגיהם מן הבאר, יצחק יעקב ומשה,

Three met their partners at the well, Yitzchak, Yaakov and Mosheh (Shemot Rabba)

The classic Biblical type-scene; meeting the girl at the well

1. A man leaves his home,
2. Arrives in a foreign land
3. Meets a girl (normally described as נערה)
4. From his family
5. At a well
6. She runs home to tell of his arrival
7. He's invited to a meal and they are betrothed

### What Differentiates Each Type Scene?

- Yaakov: Bereishit 29:1-11
- Mosheh: Shemot 2:15-21

### Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*

The type-scene is a means of attaching that moment to a larger pattern of historical and theological meaning. If Yitzchak and Rivka, as the first man and wife born into the covenant God has made with Avraham and his seed, provide certain paradigmatic traits for the future historical destiny of Israel, and association of later figures with the crucial junctures of that first story – will imply some connection of meaning, some further working-out of the original covenant.

## The Akeida's Impact on Yitzchak

### Technique #2: Repetition, Repetition, Non-Repetition

#### מדרש תנחומה, פרשה כג - Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Vayera #23

יצאה בת קול ואמרה לו מן השמים אל תשלח ירך אל הנער...באותה שעה הלך השטן אצל שרה ונזדמן לה כדמות יצחק כיון שראה אותו אמרה לו בני מה עשה לך אביך, אמר לה נטלני אבי והעלני הרים והורידני בקעות והעלני לראש הר אחד ובנה מזבח וסדר המערכה והעריך את העצים ועקד אותי על גבי המזבח ולקח את הסכין לשחטני ואולוי שאמר לו הקב"ה אל תשלח ירך אל הנער כבר הייתי נשחט, לא הספיק לגמור את הדבר עד שיצאה נשמתה

A heavenly voice emerged and declared 'do not send your hand out against the youth'... at that moment Satan appeared before Sarah in the form of Yitzchak. As she saw him she said, 'my child, what did your father do to you?'. He responded, 'my father took me through mountains and valleys, and at the peak of one of the mountains he built an altar which he bound me to. He took a knife to slaughter me with and were it not for God's intervention I would have been slaughtered!' – He had not finished speaking before her soul departed

Where does Yitzchak live? 24:62 and see 25:11

**Elie Wiesel, The First Survivor**

As the first survivor, Isaac had to teach us, the future survivors of Jewish history that it is possible to suffer and despair an entire lifetime and still not give up the art of laughter. What happened to Isaac after he left Mount Moriah? He became a poet – author of the Mincha service – and did not break with society. Nor did he rebel against life. Logically, he should have aspired to wandering, to the pursuit of oblivion. Instead he settled on his land, never to leave it again, retaining his name. He married, had children, refusing to let fate turn him into a bitter man. He felt neither hate nor anger towards his contemporaries who did not share his experience. On the contrary he liked to show concern for their wellbeing. After Moriah, he devoted his life and his right to immortality to the defense of his people. Isaac transforms his suffering into prayer and love rather than into rancor and malediction. It is possible to suffer and despair an entire lifetime and still not give up the art of laughter. Isaac never freed himself from the traumatizing scenes of his youth; the holocaust had marked him and continued to haunt him forever. Yet he remained capable of laughter. And in spite of everything he did laugh