

ISAAC'S FALL

There's a Jewish tradition of magic, interrelated with the kabbalah. In it Abraham was seen as possessing special knowledge. Here is what Abraham Yagel (1553-1623), a northern Italian physician and kabbalist

writes: "Abraham our father...observed the ways of judgment of the orders of creation and the categories and types. Then he united them by their essences according to the levels of the worlds...for their sound is the sound of falling water in a waterfall whose end is in its beginning and cleaves one to the other.

1

Abraham our father named
the falls for the boy, who
on their way up the mountain
first heard their hidden waters.
But there was no time to stop,
holy things to be done. Then
Isaac fled into the desert and
Abraham came on them alone.

2

Isaac's fall sets out with a stock-
still green sheet, a hint wavering
its low edge, where jutting rock
astonishingly dry on end, cleaves
the curtain, and then, which is now,
chaos and gravity brawl in hissing
plunge of water breaking up ledge
to obstacle ledge. Abraham's eyes
follow a stream down, then slip
free of that flux, up to where
choice made itself available,
in a notch of white foam, to be
pulled again, in spurts braiding
inexorably down, to the severed
waters' into dear water reunion.
Downstream, in quiet green pools,
over flat rocks, the water rests.

3

Abraham followed a goat track
to the top of the falls, watched
an olive branch float to the rim.

He found it, silver leaves unbroken,
in the pool below. Abraham dreamt
of waters rising in the desert,
turned by God's breath to clouds
and rain, he woke to Isaac's fall's
hiss, heard the song of first things,
of the waterfall whose end is in its
beginning. The orders of creation
denominated, in his power, Abraham
the Magician unhitched his donkey
to ride down the mountain, to tell
Sara their son would be back, soon.