Trigger Words and Simultexts:

THE EXPERIENCE OF READING THE BAVLI

Zvi Septimus

In his article, "The Further Adventures of Rav Kahana,"[1] Shamma Friedman attempts to explain why it is that certain stories in the Bavli share a large number of phrases and words with other stories in the Bavli. Friedman argues that these stories, linked by common language, also usually contain common topics: "The plethora of rhetoric and phraseology in [one] story which is similar to other passages in the Bavli is typical of late aggadic compositions which draw upon existing Babylonian aggadot for both language and content."[2] In other words, the final editors of the Talmud reshape a shorter "early" story into a longer, more complex "late" story. According to Friedman, the "late" story is characterized by "exceptional length" and is "exceptionally creative and innovative" in the reworking of its sources."[3]

Friedman points out that one of the "early" Bavli passages[4] among the sample group that he provides is unique in relation to the other "early" Bavli passages. This particular "early" passage

shares a larger number of words and phrases with the "late" passage.[5] Friedman therefore concludes that this "early" passage is the "main literary source" for the "late" passage.[6] The result of Friedman's source-critical examination of these texts is the creation of a linear, chronological narrative of Rabbinic and Stammaitic textual composition that extends backward from the Bavli to the Yerushalmi and beyond. Friedman traces the evolution of a particular Rabbinic formulation from its earliest fixed form through its various manifestations and manipulations into its final canonical materialization in the Bavli. He contrasts his approach with Jonah Fraenkel's notion of *segirut* (autonomy).[7] Fraenkel believes that each individual story found in Rabbinic literature must be analyzed without regard to any other piece of Rabbinic literature.[8]

Aryeh Cohen takes issue with Fraenkel's rigid analysis that ignores the literary function of its placement in a particular grouping of consecutive texts, the *sugya*.[9] Cohen argues that Fraenkel removes each story from its immediate context only to put "them into a new context – even if that context might be the collection of all 'Sage Stories.'"[10] Where Friedman attacks Fraenkel on the basis that Fraenkel ignores the obvious history of each individual text's transition from its earliest detectable state into its final form Cohen's critique of Fraenkel is somewhat stronger and goes to the heart of the intertextual relationship of all texts. Cohen posits that Fraenkel misunderstands his own re-contextualization as an a-contexualization. For Cohen, Fraenkel makes the mistake of ignoring the basic notion that all texts are necessarily read in some context and the removal of any text from its current context merely places it in another, perhaps artificial, context.

The analytical framework that I propose in response to Friedman and Fraenkel – what I call the "trigger word/simultext reading strategy" – attempts to explore the linguistic feature of the Bavli that Friedman has already pointed out in such a way that brackets the chronological narrative of the Bavli's evolution and focuses on the final product: "the Bavli." I also seek to expand Fraenkel's notion of *segirut* (autonomy) to the entire Bavli rather than any one story within it. In doing so, I demonstrate that if, as Friedman argues, there is creative "reworking" in the Bavli, then it is an activity that extends beyond the parameters of the story unit, or even the sugya. The Bavli

as a whole is shaped and defined by this activity. This type of creative "reworking" is bidirectional with products becoming sources of each other, over and over. By reading the Bavli in this manner, a new type of thematic relationship between different stories in the Bavli emerges.

Friedman's method relies on the assumption that the source critic can trace the individual moves of a text's evolution, by both paying careful attention to the rough edges left behind in the editorial process and examining the relevant parallel texts. I assert that the editorial history of the Bavli is far more complex than the shifts and alterations that can be discerned by culling clues left behind by the editors in the form of rough edges and parallel texts. Analogously, the reader of this article might notice certain rough edges in my text, either in the form of an abrupt shift in language and style or in the form of an argument that does not seem to follow from its premise. This might lead the reader to conclude that a particular passage or group of words must have been the product of someone other than me. Alternatively, the seams found in my text might stem from the fact that I cut and pasted an entire paragraph from an essay that I had written on a similar subject at an earlier point in time. Both of these possibilities certainly could be true. In addition, if one were to view this article alongside its earlier versions one would certainly be able to make assertions about particular edits to my text. However, if one were to hit the "undo" key on my word processor, and watch the backward flow of actual edits that have occurred in the production of this article, then a far more complex story of the evolution of this text into its final form would unfold – one that is far beyond the scope of the tools of source criticism.

The Bavli Sugya at Kiddushin 70 is remarkable for its language. One of the interesting features of this Sugya is its transparent use of certain linguistic markers to point to specific texts found elsewhere in the Bavli. Source-critical techniques help illustrate the cause of this phenomenon – how such a Sugya was composed: originally, a mere skeleton of Kiddushin 70 existed and then, "later," due to some rupture or shift, the story was embellished with borrowings from these "earlier" Bavli passages.[11] The source critic uses this data to develop a theory about the source or nature of the rupture that led to this shift.

A non-critical reader, however, does not typically encounter

the text through its historical layering. While the critic takes primary interest in the textual author and the process of authorship, a non-critical reader is interested in the book itself in its final state. The source critic sees the Bavli as linear in both pages and time. In contrast, the reader that I explore experiences the totality of the Bavli as a body of literature that is spherically shaped, self-referential, and self-contradictory, in no particular order. This Bavli reader encounters the linguistic markers of Kiddushin 70 as "trigger words" and is distracted – attracted momentarily toward other particular Bavli passages, "simultexts" – before returning to Kiddushin 70. An exploration of the reader's experience of the Bavli serves to highlight an aspect of the Bavli that has been underrepresented in modern Talmud scholarship: what the Bavli is rather than how it came to be.[12,13]

The Bavli's use of words and concepts in each individual passage assumes that its reader is fluent, on the level of orality, with the entire Bavli. The kind of reader that the Bavli assumes is akin to Wolfgang Iser's "implied reader."

> [The implied reader] embodies all those predispositions necessary for a literary work to exercise its effect – predispositions laid down, not by an empirical outside reality, but by the text itself. Consequently, the implied reader as a concept has his roots firmly planted in the structure of the text; he is a construct and in no way to be identified with any real reader.[14]

The reading strategy that I propose builds off of the work of Gerald Bruns and Daniel Boyarin. In *Intertexuality and the Reading of Midrash*, Boyarin suggests "that the intertextual reading practice of the midrash is a development…of the intratextual interpretive strategies which the Bible itself manifests."[15] Boyarin takes Bruns' claim that the Bible is a "self-glossing book"[16] and demonstrates how this self-glossing nature spawns the midrashic reading practices of the Rabbis. My claim is that the Bavli not only shares some of the self-glossing features of the Bible but that the Bavli presents itself to its reader in a manner that can only be understood when viewed as a whole. Where I go further than Boyarin is to look at the Bavli and its relationship to the Bible within the framework of the Bavli's own unique world.

For the reader of the Bavli the Bible is nothing other than the Bavli's Bible – an external book that only exists internal to the Bavli.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the experience and effects of reading the Bavli through its own internally marked linguistic system – the trigger word/simultext reading strategy. Although every reader of the Bavli brings a different set of external situations to the work, what unites each Bavli reader is the information, language, and methodologies internal to the Bavli. The Bavli reader therefore is not a reader situated at any particular point in history and therefore has little to say about history. The Bavli reader is only what all historical readers of the Bavli have in common. This reader excludes all other works and certainly does not approach the Bavli as a compilation of evolved components. In exploring the experience of this reader we can further define the nature of the book that is the Bavli. In this way the trigger word/simultext reading strategy resembles Jonah Fraenkel's notion of *segirut* (autonomy), only it applies not to one story but to the entire book.[17]

The Story:

Because of its length, I will present here a summary of the Sugya at Kiddushin 70:

SCENE I:

A man from Neharda'a walks into a butcher shop in Pumbedita and demands to be served. He must wait his turn, he is told; he will be served after the attendant (*sham'a*) of Pumbedita's leading Rabbinic authority, Rav Yehudah.

Defiantly, the visitor exclaims "Rav Yehudah is a glutton!"[18]

Rav Yehudah, upon hearing of this incident, promptly excommunicates the visitor. When further told of this man's tendency to call others (*inshi*) slaves, Rav Yehudah issues a public proclamation stating that the Nehardean is himself a member of the slave class. The Nehardean man storms home and petitions his own city's leading Rabbinic authority, Rav Naḥman, who issues a summons for Rav Yehudah to appear before his court. The Pumbeditan Rav Yehudah, unsure whether he should submit to the authority of the Nehardean Rav Naḥman, solicits Rav Huna's[19] political expertise on the matter. Rav Huna sees no reason, from a Rabbinic perspective, for Rav

Yehudah to appear before Rav Naḥman's court; nevertheless, Rav Huna advises Rav Yehudah to respect the office of the presidency (*bei nesiyah*)[20] and that he travel to Rav Naḥman in Neharda'a.

SCENE II:

Rav Yehudah arrives at the home of Rav Naḥman to find the latter working in his garden. Rav Yehudah pounces.

"A communal leader must never do manual labor in public… Thus said Shmuel (*hakhi amar*)!"

Rav Naḥman, unaware of the identity of his antagonist points out that it is only a *gundrita* (small fence) that he busies himself with.

Rav Yehudah jumps at the opportunity to correct Rav Naḥman's choice of words and demands to know why Rav Naḥman did not call the fence by its Biblical or Rabbinic designations (*ma'keh*, *meḥitzah*).

Ever the host, Rav Naḥman offers Rav Yehudah a seat (*safsal*), a fruit (*etrunga, etruga*), and an alcoholic beverage (*isparagos*, *anpak*, *anbaga*).

In each instance Rav Yehudah attacks Rav Naḥman on the basis of an elitist (*inshi*) non-Rabbinic word choice to describe each of these objects.

In one case Rav Naḥman's word choice is deemed arrogant (*ramat ruḥa*) by a statement quoted in the name of Shmuel.

When Rav Naḥman introduces his daughter and wife – Donag and *Yalta* – his ignorance of Shmuel's opinions about the usage of women is once again blasted by Rav Yehudah. Yalta intercedes between the Rabbis and demands that Rav Naḥman resolve the case (*shari lei tagrei*) before he is deemed an ignoramus (*k'sha'ar 'am ha'aretz*).

SCENE III:

Rav Naḥman asks Rav Yehudah to state the purpose of his visit.

"But you summoned (*shadar mar*) me here," says Rav Yehudah pulling the writ of summons from his pocket.

Rav Naḥman's initial reaction is to let him go but decides to formalize the court case in order to avoid reproof on the basis of Rabbinic nepotism (*miḥanfi*):

"So why did you excommunicate the man," Rav Naḥman asks Rav Yehudah?

"Because he annoyed my attendant!"

"So you should have whipped him – as Rav whipped people simply because they annoyed Rabbinic appointees!"

"I did better!"

"Okay, so then why did you proclaim him a slave?"

"Because he had called others slaves and Shmuel says that anyone who calls people slaves is himself a slave."

SCENE IV:

The man from Neharda'a now appears on the scene and addresses Rav Yehudah.

"You call me a slave! I am descended from the royal Hasmonean house!"

Rav Yehudah then quotes Shmuel and relates the fact that all claimants to Hasmonian pedigree are in fact slaves.

(*hahu yoma*) Rav Yehudah is supported by another Rabbi who remembers Shmuel's recounting that the last female Hasmonian girl shouted out, before jumping[21] from the roof to her death, that all future Hasmonian claim-bearers are slaves .

SCENE V:

The Nehardean man is proclaimed a slave.

That very day (*hahu yoma*) many marriage contracts are torn up in Neharda'a. Rav Yehudah returns to Pumbedita and makes proclamations altering the genealogical status of a number of people. One of these people, Bati the son of Tuvyah, on account of arrogance (*ramat ruḥa*) refused his manumission document upon being freed from slavery and therefore is still a slave.

THE TRIGGER WORD/SIMULTEXT READING STRATEGY:

It is appropriate to use a story in the Bavli that explicitly thematizes the importance of word selection, a story that contains an abundance of rare words and *hapax legomena*, to discuss the effect of the Bavli's own word selection on its reader. Kiddushin 70 contains certain rarely used trigger words that are also found, in combinations, in

other Bavli simultexts.[22] These simultexts (*hatam*) have the effect of alerting the reader of our passage (*hakha*) to some theme or emphasis, previously unpronounced, and consequently serve the function of highlighting, complementing, and complicating ideas and subject matter found in our passage. In this instance, the simultexts all serve to alter the story's focus. Without the simultexts, Kiddushin 70 appears to be a story about the confrontation between Rav Yehudah and the Nehardean man. The simultexts all serve to shift the reader's focus to an unspoken, yet deeper, conflict between Rav Naḥman and the Nehardean man. The nature of this conflict will unfold as the simultexts are introduced.

Simultext:	*Kiddushin* 70	*Shavuot* 30
Trigger Words:	*Shari* + *Tagrei* ḤNF [*'am ha'aretz*] [*sham'ei*,] [*d'bithu*]	*Shari* + *Tagrei* ḤNF [*'am ha'aretz*] [*sham'ei*,] [*d'bithu*]

An example of how the trigger word/simultext reading strategy is employed is found in the expression *shari lei tagrei*. The combination of the verb *ShRA* and the noun *tigra*, meaning to resolve a dispute, is found only five other times in the Bavli. In addition, the verb ḤNF, is only used a handful of times in the Bavli to denote favoritism. Shavuot 30 has the verb ḤNF in close proximity to the combination of *ShRA* and *tigra* making it a simultext. The reader of Kiddushin 70 encounters the trigger words and is drawn momentarily toward Shavuot 30 which has Rav Naḥman debating 'Ulla regarding Rabbis showing favor to one another. This debate follows immediately after a discussion about whether the testimony of a woman is valid, introducing the idea that a woman should not have a public role.[23] The Shavuot passage also has several characters familiar to readers of the Kiddushin passage: the *'am ha'aretz*, *sham'a*, and *d'bithu* which are all dealt with in situations regarding hierarchy and primacy in the dealings of a court.[24] The reader returns to Kiddushin 70 with added emphasis on these marginalized characters and their roles in court cases,

especially the validity of the testimony of women which is the overt theme of Shavuot 30. The reader of Kiddushin 70 now has a heightened awareness of the irony of Rav Yehudah's initial objection to the use of women, as well as Rav Naḥman's eventual use of the testimony of a woman to establish the slave status of the Nehardean man.

From a higher critical perspective, the reader of Scene 11 is struck with two oddities in the construction of this part of the narrative. The first question that occurs to the reader is why are all four of these name-challenged objects necessary? Would the narrator have lost anything if it did not mention any particular one of the four props? What do the fence, chair, fruit, and drink add? The second question is what does the introduction of Rav Naḥman's wife and daughter add to the story? By working our way backward through the name-challenged objects following the trigger words to the simultexts and back again the answers to these questions are revealed and a new logic to the story emerges.

THE DRINK:

Simultext:	*Kiddushin* 70	*Berakhot* 51
Trigger Words:	*Isparagos*	*Isparagos*
	ShDR + *mar* (×3)	ShDR + *mar* (×2)
	Yalta	*Yalta*
	Anbaga	*Nebaga*
	[*Hakhi amar*]	[*Hakhi amar*]

The fourth name-challenged object that appears in Kiddushin 70, the alcoholic beverage, acts together with several trigger words to direct the reader to the Berakhot 51 simultext. The word *Isparagos* appears a mere four times in the Bavli, once in Kiddushin and twice in Berakhot 51. It is not the two paragraphs in Berakhot 51 containing the words *Isparagos* that are important for our purposes but rather the passage immediately following those two paragraphs. This point is quite significant and will be addressed later. The passage immediately following the two mentions of *Isparagos* contains several trigger words in combination which attract the attention of the reader of Kiddushin 70. These trigger words are: the rare combination of the verb *ShDR*

together with the honorific *mar*; the character *Yalta*; the rare *Nebaga*[25]; and the formulaic interjection of *hakhi amar*[26] to rebut a practice in a similar manner to its use in Kiddushin 70.

> Berakhot 51[27]:
> ʿUlla visited the house of Rav Naḥman. He broke bread; said grace; and gave the cup of benediction to Rav Naḥman. Rav Naḥman said to him: "Please send the cup of benediction to Yalta." ʿUlla replied: "Thus stated Rabbi Yoḥanan (hakhi amar): The fruit of a woman's body is blessed only from the fruit of a man's body, as it says, "He will also bless the fruit of your body." It does not say the fruit of her body, but the fruit of your body"…Meanwhile, Yalta hears and gets up in a passion and goes to the wine house and breaks four hundred containers of wine. Rav Naḥman said to ʿUlla: "Please send her another cup." ʿUlla sends a message to Yalta: "All this [spilled wine] is the wine (nebaga) of benediction." Yalta sends a message back to ʿUlla: "From wanderers, words; From rags, lice (kalmi)."

In addition to trigger words this passage has many features that are similar to Kiddushin 70. Both stories contain the following elements: (a) Yalta overhears a conversation about a guest sending her something (a greeting and some wine); (b) A controversy is set off by Rav Naḥman's insistence of an interaction between a guest and a female family member; (c) The guest justifies his sexist position quoting legal dicta preceded by *hakhi amar*; (d) Yalta sends her message through a messenger yet appears to hear what she heard directly. In fact, a source-critical approach to Kiddushin 70 would argue that the Yalta section of the Kiddushin text is actually an adaptation of Berakhot 51. In doing so, it would fail to explain how the two texts operate simultaneously on the reader to create meaning in the context of the Bavli, the book that this reader is actually reading.

The reading strategy that I propose brackets the genealogical relationship between these passages and reads them synchronically, demonstrating what the reader of the Kiddushin 70 gains when alerted to the themes and ideas contained within the Berakhot 51 simultext. This reading strategy seeks to explain how certain features of the Bavli operate on the reader in creating stronger meaning. To

the reader, the aesthetic of the Bavli is more than the sum of its diachronically related parts.

Berakhot 51 highlights, for the reader of Kiddushin 70, that Yalta is the one to deliver the final word. The dialogue ends with Yalta's enigmatic and derogatory statement with no response from ʿUlla. As we will later see, this theme of the wife delivering the final word is at play in a number of Kiddushin 70's simultexts. What is obvious in the Berakhot simultext but not so in the Kiddushin passage is that Yalta also represents a threat of violence. By destroying the wine barrels, Yalta demonstrates that she has control over her own wealth and that it is actually her husband, Rav Naḥman, who is blessed through her. The final exchange in this story is a bit ambiguous and requires further explanation. There are several facts that lend insight to what she possibly could have meant by saying "From wanderers, words; From rags, lice." What is the significance of *smartutei*, rags, and *kalmi*, lice?

Simultext:	*Berakhot 51*	*Niddah 20*	*Shavuot 30*
Trigger Words:	*smartutei*		*smartut*
	kalmi	*kalmi*	
	Yalta	*Yalta*	
	ʿUlla ikl'a	*ʿUlla ikl'a*	

Both of these words, *kalmi* and *smartutei*, are trigger words. *Smartutei* points back to the Shevuot 30 simultext.[28] *Kalmi* works together with *ʿUlla ikl'a* and *Yalta*, all rare in the Bavli, to point to a new simultext, Niddah 20. The Niddah simultext thematizes the Rabbinic dominance over women and Yalta's exemption from this dominance. A number of women are reported to have brought their underwear to Rabbis who smell them to decide whether or not they are clean from menstrual blood. This is the prototypical image of Rabbinic dominance over women. Yalta, however, brings her blood to one Rabbi who, incidentally, does not smell it and deems it impure. Yalta then completely disregards this Rabbi's ruling and brings it to another Rabbi who declares it pure. Yalta, in a way, mocks the notion of her subservience to rabbinic authority.[29] This Niddah simultext works to highlight the position of Yalta in the rabbinic hierarchy, how she perceives herself in relation to those Rabbis, and consequently how they, as producers

of this story, perceive her dominance over them. Her short appearance in the Kiddushin passage has her in a similar role. In addition, the power Rav Naḥman receives through his marriage to her underlies the entire drama.

What drives Niddah 20 as a simultext of Berakhot 51, and through Berakhot 51 a simultext of Kiddushin 70, is the trigger word *kalmi. Kalmi* makes a seemingly arbitrary appearance in the Niddah simultext in a section immediately following the Yalta story[30]. The *Kalmi* story deals with the mother of King Shapur who himself is a prominent figure in a number of simultexts which we will examine presently. These are the only two appearances of the word *kalmi* in the entire Bavli.

The fact that many of these trigger words appear in close proximity to, rather than within, a passage makes little difference to the Bavli reader – the reader is drawn in the direction of a simultext and absorbs all of its contents, context, and meaning. For the source critic, however, it highlights the risk involved in assuming that the longer or more verbose story is the later one. Such a supposition implies a finite and unidirectional movement from the main literary source to a later creatively reworked product. This theory is grounded in analysis of smaller extracted pieces of the Bavli rather than the composition as a whole. Once the notion of trigger words found in close proximity to, rather than within, simultexts is introduced, a source-critical approach should see the compositional work of the Bavli as bidirectional. If one passage receives language from another passage and its surroundings it is then just as likely to send its own language back to the initial passage and its surroundings, creating a more unified whole, as well as complex web of meaning for the reader. Although Friedman's method also allows for bidirectional influence, the type of bidirectional movement that Friedman conceives is the sum of two unidirectional moments of influence. The type of bidirectionality that I propose assumes a more dynamic relationship between a number of texts that influence each other, over and over, to the point that discerning which text is the original and which one is a creatively edited version of that original is no longer possible nor pertinent.

THE FRUIT:

Simultext:	*Kiddushin 70*	*Avodah Zara 76*	*Ketubot 60–61*
Trigger Words:	*Ramat Ruha*		
	Etru(n)ga	*Etruga*	*Etruga*
	Yalta		*Yalta*
		King Shapur	King Shapur
	Bati bar Tuvia	*Bati bar Tuvia*	
	Ramat Ruha		

The third name-challenged object in our Kiddushin 70 drama, the citron, *etruga*, works together with various other trigger words throughout the passage to point the reader to two separate simultexts: 'Avodah Zara 76 and Ketubot 60–61. *Etrunga* is a *hapax legomenon* in the Bavli.[31] The Aramaic *etruga* (without the "n") rather than the Hebrew *etrog* is itself quite rare in the Bavli. The majority of *etruga*'s appearances in the Bavli are in contexts relating to kingship. The arrogance (*ramat ruha*) of Rav Naḥman's use of the word *etrunga* steers the reader to the arrogance (*ramat ruha*) of Bati the son of Tuviah's refusal to accept his manumission document. Bati the son of Tuviah is only mentioned one other time in the entire Bavli and in that instance he appears together with the rare word *etruga*.

In a very short story at the close of tractate Avodah Zara, Bati Bar Tuvi(ah) and Mar Yehudah are sitting with King Shapur. King Shapur gives Bati Bar Tuvi(ah) a piece of *etruga* and then stabs his knife in the ground ten times before cutting a piece for Mar Yehudah. This physically violent image of King Shapur stabbing his knife ten times contrasts nicely with the meek Rav Naḥman of our story whose power stems from his relationship to the physical dominance of King Shapur over the Jews of Babylonia – and that, only through his wine-container-smashing wife.

The relationship of King Shapur to the word *etruga* as well as the role of Rav Naḥman as husband of Yalta and son-in-law to the exilarch is reinforced by trigger words pointing to the Bavli's discussion of the Mishnah at Ketubot 59b. The Mishnah discusses the work (*melakhot*) a woman is required to do for her husband and how those requirements are altered in a scenario where the woman is wealthy and brings maidservants with her into the marriage. One of the tasks

(*melakhot*) a woman must do for her husband is to nurse her child. This leads the Bavli to a discussion of whether or not a woman may remarry while nursing a child. The Bavli cites a Beraita that allows a woman to remarry in a case where she turned the baby over to a wet nurse. The Bavli proceeds to recount how two Rabbis wanted to use this Beraita in deciding an actual case brought before them and a certain old woman curtailed their efforts by claiming that Rav Naḥman prohibited her to remarry in the same instance. (The use of a woman for testimony, especially when that testimony is brought in the form of a story from the past, is an important part of our Kiddushin passage and will be discussed later.) The Bavli objects to the possibility that Rav Naḥman prohibited this woman from remarrying by asking "But did not Rav Naḥman permit them (women who turned their babies over to wet nurses) to the house of the exilarch?" The Bavli then answers that the house of the exilarch is different because wet nurses do not back out of arrangements made with the house of the exilarch.[32]

According to one of the first readers of the Bavli, the Sheiltot of Rav Aḥai Gaon, the Bavli's question in response to the old woman's claim reads: "But did not Rav Naḥman permit Yalta?"[33] According to the Sheiltot, the Bavli answers similarly that the house of the exilarch is different because their children, once given to a wet nurse, are not returned. This text is important for our purposes because it clearly equates Yalta, in her own right, with the house of the exilarch. However, it somewhat confuses the reader as to the relationship between Rav Naḥman and Yalta. Some have suggested that Yalta was married three times:[34] She had a child with her first husband; then Rav Naḥman allowed her to marry again after turning her child over to a wet nurse owing to her affiliation with the house of the exilarch; she then subsequently married Rav Naḥman as her third husband. Although it is quite normal in the world of the Bavli for an important woman to marry an important Rabbi as a second or third marriage, as in the cases of Ḥoma and the daughter of Rav Ḥisda, it makes more sense to interpret this passage as referring to Rav Naḥman's marriage to Yalta. The Bavli asks: How can this old woman be correct? Did not Rav Naḥman marry Yalta even though she was still nursing a child from a previous marriage? Reading the Bavli's question in this way fits neatly into the Bavli's ambivalent representation of those Rabbis

who were close to the government, quintessential among them Rav Naḥman, and, as we will see in another simultext, Rabban Gamliel. This reading also complements the theme of the Mishnah in whose context it appears in the Bavli, namely, how marriage laws are altered when one marries a wealthy woman.

As mentioned earlier, simultexts are significant when multiple trigger words direct the reader in their direction. The Ketubot simultext exemplifies the notion of proximity, also previously mentioned, that when multiple words operate as trigger words they sometimes can be found in the immediate proximity of a simultext rather than within it. Both the word *Yalta* and the word *etruga* appear fewer than ten times each in the Talmud. To put matters in perspective, the Bavli contains close to two million words. Just as *Yalta* is not necessarily a historical figure but rather a Bavli character of whom we can build a profile so too *etruga*, as linguistic marker, represents a character about which we can build a profile. *Etruga*, as a character, is further developed when it appears twice on Ketubot 61a in the context of King Shapur, the source of the exilarch's power, making use of a woman who in all probability was a minor.[35] The appearance of both of these words in a passage that comments on the Mishnah about marrying a wealthy woman highlights various aspects of the Kiddushin text, which itself follows in close proximity to a text warning against marrying a woman for money.[36]

THE SEAT:

Simultext:	*Kiddushin 70*	*Berakhot 27–28*
Trigger Words:	*Safsal*	*Safsal*
	Bei nesiya	[*Nasi*]
	Hahu Yoma (×2)	*Hahu Yoma* (×2)

The second object in our Kiddushin 70 drama, the chair, directs the reader to a very specific story found on Berakhot 27b–28a. The trigger words *safsal*, *hahu yoma*,[37] and the choice of the words *bei nesiya* to describe the exilarchy, normally designated *reish galuta*, work as a group to direct the reader's attention to a simultext regarding Rabban Gamliel's removal from the office of the presidency. In that story Rabban Gamliel insults Rabbi Yehoshua' which leads to his being

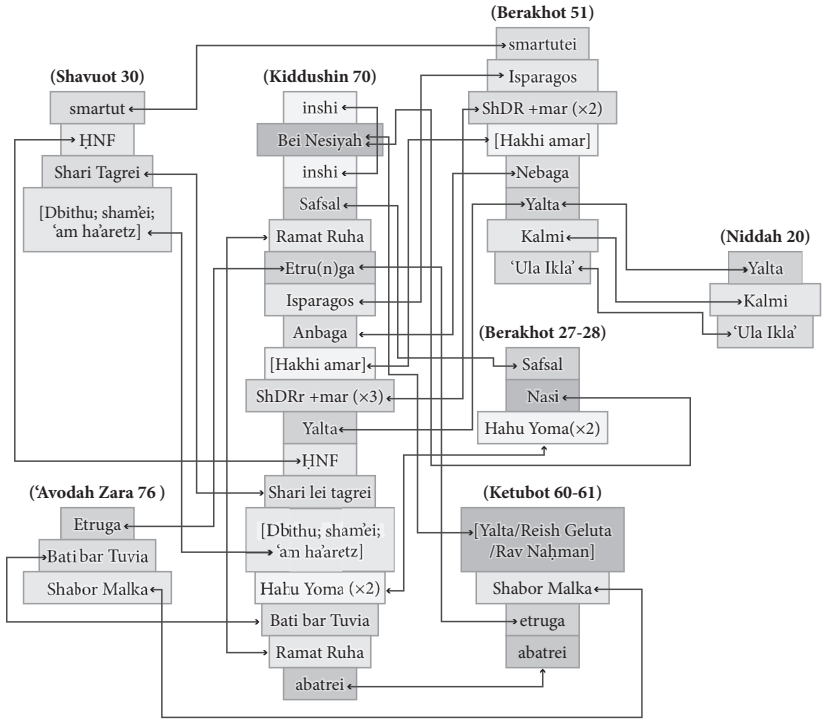
voted out of office. He is replaced by Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah as president. After Rabban Gamliel apologizes to Rabbi Yehoshua' he is reinstated as president, albeit only to three fourths of his previous appointment. Reading Berakhot 27b–28a alongside our Kiddushin passage serves the purpose of highlighting several important aspects of the Kiddushin story.

Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah is, in Berakhot 27b–28a, a tenth generation descendant of Ezra and thus of the priestly caste. Rabban Gamliel, a descendant of the Davidic dynasty, is replaced by a priest. After Rabbi Yehoshua' accepts Rabban Gamliel's apology, the Rabbis initially lock the door to the study hall to prevent Rabban Gamliel from returning to power. It is only when Rabbi Yehoshua' is allowed to enter and present his argument that Rabban Gamliel is reinstated. Rabbi Yehoshua''s argument reads: "Let the sprinkler son of a sprinkler sprinkle; shall he who is neither a sprinkler nor the son of a sprinkler say to a sprinkler son of a sprinkler "Your water is cave water and your ashes are oven ashes?"" Rabbi Yehoshua''s argument is that Rabban Gamliel as a practicing political leader from a family of political leaders would be most fit for the office of presidency while Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah as an eighteen year old from a non-political family should not rule. What is of note is the fact that whereas Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah is the priest in this story, Rabbi Yehoshua' uses the priestly terminology "sprinkle" to describe Rabban Gamliel, the Davidic descendant. The trigger words used to direct the reader to the Berakhot simultext highlight the power struggle between the priestly heir to the Hasmonian dynasty and the Davidic exilarch, Rav Naḥman, in Kiddushin 70. When read alone, Kiddushin 70 pits Rav Yehudah against Rav Naḥman and Rav Yehudah against the Nehardean man. Berakhot 28b–29a reminds the reader of the unspoken conflict between Rav Naḥman and the Nehardean man. It is important to note that whereas the Hasmonian dynasty represents autonomous rule, the Davidic offices of the presidency and exilarch respectively receive their authority only through the custodial power of the Roman and Persian empires.[38]

Another aspect of Berakhot 28b–29a that enlightens Kiddushin 70 is the rhetorical role of the Rabbis. In Berkahot 27b–28a when it is decided that Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah will be made president after Rabban Gamliel is removed from office Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah

seeks his wife's counsel before accepting the position. His wife tries to dissuade him. Although it is apparent from the story that Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah does indeed accept the position of president, the dialogue between his wife and him ends with her having the final word, "you have no white hair." It is only the miracle of his hair turning white, and not Rabbi El'azar ben 'Azariah's rhetorical expertise, that rebuts his wife's argument. This reminds the reader of the role of Yalta not only in our Kiddushin 70 story but more so in the Berakhot 51 simultext discussed earlier.

There are many fruitful ways to approach a rich literary text like Kiddushin 70. A formalist approach would focus on the internal integrity of the passage which might yield a heightened sense of the aesthetic makeup of the components of the text and the poetics of its narrative. A source critical approach to Kiddushin 70 would highlight how the various components of the text evolved and how those shifts in meaning reflect changes in the real-life conditions of its various authors. The approach I have advocated emphasizes what happens, from the reader's perspective, when the Bavli is seen as a highly fashioned and unified literary entity. My approach does not seek to harmonize various parts of the Bavli, merely to demonstrate how modes of interpretation shift emphases through the mechanism of the Bavli's internal linguistic markers. The trigger word/simultext reading strategy, I have proposed, expands Fraenkel's notion of *segirut* to the entire Bavli and builds on Friedman's notion of the creative reworking of the Stam, albeit in a bidirectional manner, in describing the spherical nature of the book as it is: the Bavli.



NOTES

1. Shamma Friedman, "The Further Adventures of Rav Kahana," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Culture*, ed. Peter Shafer (Mohr 2002), 3:247–71.
2. Ibid., p. 259.
3. Ibid., p. 259.
4. Bava Metzia 84.
5. Bava Kamma 117.
6. Friedman, p. 265.
7. In the words of Aryeh Cohen, "Fraenkel sees each story as "hermetic," having a strong "internal" and "external" closure. Aryeh Cohen, *Rereading Talmud: Gender, Law and the Poetics of Sugyot*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), p. 72.

8. Joanh Fraenkel, "She'elot hermeneutiyot beheker sippur ha-'aggadah", *Tarbiz,* 47 (1978), pp. 139–172.
9. Cohen, p. 99. Cohen later defines his "working definition" of a *sugya*: [In block text] "a sugya is the primary context of all its parts – attributed and unattributed statements, aggadot, maasim, prooftexts, *et al*. Its parameters are established both structurally or intratextually, and thematically." Ibid, p. 148.
10. Ibid, p. 121.
11. Shamma Friedman writes "a secondary aggadic text often makes extended use of existing expressions and turns of phrase. Verbose use of stereotypic Talmudic vocabulary can be a marker of late narrative." Friedman, p. 248.
12. In addition, this exercise complements source criticism in that it describes an aspect of the nature of the art in the Stam's creative "reworking" of the sources – of the Bavli and into the Bavli.
13. A good example of a reading of Kiddushin 70 that focuses on the role of the author in the composition of the narrative, rather than the experience of the reader, can be found in Barry Wimpfheimer's forthcoming book on Bavli legal narrative. Since Wimpfheimer presents what I would deem "simultexts" as sources for the Stam's creation of Kiddushin 70a comparison of our readings would further explain the differences between an author-oriented and reader-oriented approach to the Bavli.
14. Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 34.
15. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertexuality and the Reading of Midrash*, (Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 15.
16. Bruns' term, as quoted in Boyarin. ibid. p. 39. [Gerald Bruns, "Midrash and Allegory" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, ed. Frank Kermode and Robert Alter, (Cambridge, Mass. 1986), pp. 626–627.]
17. The reader-oriented approach that I suggest can certainly be used to complement the work of Daniel Boyarin and Jeffrey Rubenstein. Both Boyarin and Rubenstein use various Rabbinic texts and their relationships to one another to try to map a Rabbinic "cultural poetics" (Boyarin's term). Boyarin's technique is to view all texts from the Rabbinic corpus as containing a certain "cultural problematic" that he then uses to ascertain information about the culture of those texts using a "hermeneutics of suspicion". Rubenstein focuses on the particular relationship between parallel stories found both in the Yerushalmi and Bavli and uses the differences between those stories to outline a culture

of the Babylonian Talmud. My main point of departure from these two scholars is my emphasis on the poetics of the Bavli as a book. Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex In Talmudic Culture*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993). Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins UniversityPress, 1999).

18. The term for glutton, *Sheviskel*, is a play on Rav Yehudah's father's name, *Yeḥezkel* and introduces the notion of word play that dominates this passage.
19. Rav Huna was the leading rabbinic authority of a third city, Sura.
20. Rav Huna's advice only makes sense to the reader who is aware that Ran Naḥman's father in-law is the exilarch, a detail alluded to elsewhere in the Bavli. It is precisely this type of "gapping" that proves that the Bavli assumes that its reader knows the entire Bavli and that each individual passage in the Bavli must be read alongside all other passages in the Bavli. The trigger word/simultext reading strategy highlights certain passages that the reader is encouraged to read more prominently alongside other passages.
21. Literally: falling.
22. Trigger words may also be found in close proximity to the simultext rather than within it. The significance of this fact will be addressed later.
23. An interpretation of Psalms 45:14.
24. The idea that the wife of a *ḥaver* is just like a *ḥaver*, which comes up when Rav Huna's wife is called before the court of Rav Naḥman, contrasts nicely with the idea put forth in a simultext that I will discuss later. Berakhot 51b has 'Ulla telling Rav Naḥman that a woman is only blessed through her husband. In addition, the phrase "the wife of a *ḥaver* is just like a *ḥaver*" is introduced by "*hakhi amar* Shmuel" the only other time it is mentioned in the Bavli (Avodah Zarah 39a). The phrase "*hakhi amar* Shmuel" appears less than 30 times sprinkled throughout the Bavli yet 7 times in Kiddushin 70 alone.
25. *Anbaga* and *Nebaga* are the same word, the former represents the Babylonian pronunciation of the word while the latter represents the Palestinian pronunciation. Kiddushin 70 has the word being spoken by a Babylonian and therefore uses the Babylonian spelling of the word while Berakhot 51 has a Palestinian saying the word and therefore uses the Palestinian spelling. It is not uncommon for the Bavli to play with dialect in presenting dialogue and narrative. An example of this can be found in Kiddushin 70's use of the words *taska*, *daska*,

and *deyaska* in a part of the dialogue between Rav Nahman and Rav Yehudah which I did not include in my summary. The different meanings of these words, and the confusion they present to each participant in the dialogue highlights a lot of the themes found in Kiddushin 70 and its simultexts.

26. "*Hakhi amar* Shmuel" is a phrase that dominates Kiddushin 70, appearing 7 times, which is around 25% of its total appearances in the Bavli. 'Ulla, the Palestinian student of Rabbi Yohanan, employs the term *hakhi amar* for his own Rabbi in precisely the same way as Rav Yehudah in Kiddushin 70.
27. The following is my own translation of Berakhot 51.
28. A word that only appears four other times in the Bavli aside from these two simultexts.
29. Charlotte Fonrobert counters this type of reading of Niddah 20 with one that has the Bavli use Yalta as a way of expressing its own difficulties with having male rabbis control women's menstrual blood. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*, (Stanford University Press, 2000), pp. 118–127.
30. Once again, it is a trigger word found in close proximity to the simultext, rather than within it, that highlights the complex nature of the shaping of the Bavli into its final form, a form that elicits the reader to read simultextually, in the full and extended context of the simultexts.
31. The Ketubot simultext highlights a fascinating occurrence demonstrating how the Bavli's editorial process continues through the middle ages strengthening the relationship between simultexts through the use of new trigger words. On Ketubot 60a the word *eturnga* appears as a happax identical to the *etrunga* happax in Kiddushin save the inverted *v* and *r* and variant *t*. The word *eturnga* refers to the person who serves drinks to the Persian king. Kingship and serving drinks are both concepts that meaningfully refer back to our Kiddushin passage. Especially in relation to the use of a minor by King Shapur earlier on the page and the fact that it is the notion of Donag serving drinks that leads to a discussion of using women, even when a minor, in the first place. However, it is fairly clear that *eturnga* as it appears in the Vilna and Bomberg editions is merely a corruption of the word *akhvanger,* the *v* and *kh* being turned into a *t*. Is this merely a copyist error or part of a meaningful transitional phase in the aesthetics of the Bavli? If indeed merely a copyist error then is this evidence that

the copyist was unconsciously influenced by the other trigger word relationships between these simultexts in creating a new trigger word relationship? Whether intentional or not, this is certainly an example of the complexity of the bidirectional editorial process of the Bavli into its final form.

32. Rashi explains that they are in fear of the exilarchy.
33. *Sheiltot deRav Aḥai Gaon, Parshat Vayeira,* 13.
34. Reuven Margoliot. *leHeker Sheimot veKinuim beTalmud Meieit Reuven Margoliot*. Mosad Harav Kook, (Jerusalem,. 1960), pps 40–41.
35. This text reads: One who eats citron will have fragrant children. The daughter of King Shapur – her mother ate citron – and they would bring her out before her father as a primary fragrance [BT Ketubot 61a].
36. "Rabbah bar Rav Ada said that Rav said: Whoever marries a woman for the sake of money will have children who are not genetically fit." (Kiddushin 70a)
37. Although *hahu yoma* appears around eighty times in the Bavli an analysis of those appearances leads to understanding why it is a trigger word directing the reader particularly to Berakhot 28. Three factors lead the reader to the Berakhot simultext. First off, most of the time that *hahu yoma* appears in the Bavli it is in legal contexts regarding contract law (e.g. what if someone wrote a certain date in a contract and on that day [*hahu yoma*] etc.) Second, in the Berakhot 28 passage not only does *hahu yoma* appear twice it appears twice in the context of naming its Hebrew equivalent, *oto hayom*, as always referring to the story of Rabban Gamliel and the presidency. Third, Although 'on that very day' does not always refer to a political upheaval it is not a common enough expression to ignore its use when Rabban Gamliel is forced out of his Presidency (BT Berakhot 28a); Rabbi's death (BT Ketuboth 104a); Establishing laws for 'respect of the President' and Av Beit Din (BT Horayoth 13b); a story regarding the honor of the house of the Caesar (similar to honor of the house of the President) (BT Sotah 40a); Rabbi Ḥanin, the son-in-law of the House of the President (Moed Katan 25b).
38. I do not refer here to a historical reality but rather to the Bavli's own conception of the differences between these two dynasties. It is important to note that the Bavli differentiated between the periods of true Hasmonian autonomy and the period when the Hasmonians themselves became stewards of the Roman Empire. In this regard see BT 'Avoda Zarah 9a. When counting the days of the second temple the

Bavli divides the ruling parties into four groups: The Persians ruled for 34 years; the Greeks ruled for 180 years; the Hasmoneans ruled for 103 years; and the royal house of Herod ruled for 103 years. Rather than counting the rule of the Hasmonians as lasting for 206 years the Bavli divides the periods of autonomous Hasmonian rule and non-autonomous Herodian rule.