**Group Dynamics in the Beit Midrash Organizations: Another Study of the legend of the Conflict between Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish**

(**Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzi'a 84:a)**

The *beit midrash* in the period of the Mishna and Talmud,[[1]](#footnote-1) as a ‘defined social construct’ which aims at realizing a common goal defining its functioning and constituting its *raison d’etre,* and which has formations such as roles, hierarchies of authority, and generally accepted rules,[[2]](#footnote-2) fulfills the accepted definition of ‘organization’ or ‘work group.’[[3]](#footnote-3) In this organization, knowledge which was produced and acquired via a variety of methods of learning (*midrash*, explanation, Talmudic debate, etc.)[[4]](#footnote-4) constituted the ‘product’ and as such served as almost the only criterion for evaluating Colleagues.[[5]](#footnote-5)

A tensions dealing with the life of the *beit midrash* are described in a variety of legends which are dispersed throughout the Babylonian Talmud. These stories reveal the complex, and at times even violent, nature of the experience of studying in the *beit midrash*.[[6]](#footnote-6) Using concepts taken from the discipline of ‘organizational discourse,’[[7]](#footnote-7) these legends may be examined as one which functions as ‘storytelling’ for the Sages in the *beit midrash* of the Talmudic period. ‘Storytelling’ is a story from the life of the organization, which imparts information and provides a unique opportunity of analyzing issues of relational power and the degree of identity of the members with the organization. Via ‘storytelling’ messages are transmitted to the organization as to its organizational culture and values. Its aim is to unite members in the organization, to attach them to the organization, and to testify to power struggles among members of the organization for authority to control and administer the organizational discourse. In this role, ‘storytelling’ is a narrative which bears emotional and symbolic tension. It does not provide information or facts as to a ‘case,’ but rather enriches the case with number of interpretations.[[8]](#footnote-8)

One of them is the well-known legend of the relationship between Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish (b. Talmud, Bava Metz′ia 84:a). [[9]](#footnote-9) This archetypal text has been discussed by scholars from a broad range of viewpoints. Daniel Boyarin, Admiel Kosman, and Yehuda Liebes discussed a variety of aspects that surround Eros and gender themes in this story. [[10]](#footnote-10) Jonha Fraenkel dealt with the tension that emerged between the two heroes as a reflection of the hierarchy in which the Sages' *beit midrash* was conducted. Although Fraenkel referred to a few of literary components and poetical constructions, his discussion is brief, and he focusing in particular on R. Yohanan's conceptions of how the *beit midrash* is supposed to operate and how these expectations are confronted with the evolving reality of the "growing" of Resh Lakish.[[11]](#footnote-11) Ruth Calderon discusses the relationship between the two men as a private figures, and as a representation of opposing and complementary cultural worlds.[[12]](#footnote-12) Yariv Ben Aharon analyzed the story as a representation of the struggle for the hegemony of learning and knowledge between Babylon and Israel. Shama Friedman indicates the feasibility of a motif roaming from the legends of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yohai and Rabbi Elazar his son to the legends of Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish,[[13]](#footnote-13) While Yafa Zilcha compared the version of the story from the Palestinian Talmud to that of the Babylonian Talmud.[[14]](#footnote-14) Shlomo Kasirer and Yakir Englander deals with psychological aspects of the conflict.[[15]](#footnote-15) Michal Bar Asher Segal compares several motifs in the story with those of the Syrian monks corpus,[[16]](#footnote-16) and Elie Holzer focus on the arguments that can be gleaned from the story in relation to the essence and quality of the unique pedagogy of study (i.e. a couple – *'Haveruta'*) practiced in the *beit midrash*.[[17]](#footnote-17)

As can be seen from this brief review, the great deal of this legend revealed and analyzed various literary and rhetorical figures, as well as insights on various areas of discourses in the story. However, the studies done so far have focused almost exclusively on the characters of the main protagonists in the legend - R. Yohanan and Resh Lakhish, and sometimes also on R. Yohanan's sister. In contrast, the manner in which the group of scholars, the disciples of the Sages, was conducted in R. Yohanan's *beit mideash*, remained in shadow and received little consideration. Some of the researchers have often cited the group's passivity (and defined it as a flattery to their rabbi)[[18]](#footnote-18), but they have focused primarily on describing their difficult experience while their rabbi's loses his sanity, that is at the final stage of the story, and usually do so by looking at the image of Elazar Ben-Pedat, the member of the group who was sent by them to restore R. Yohanan's sanity.[[19]](#footnote-19) These limited descriptions lack a systematic analysis of the dynamic processes that took place within the group over the years they stay in R. Yohanan's *beit midrash*.

Since central component in the life of the *beit midrash* organizations was their reliance on a group of scholars,[[20]](#footnote-20) I believe that paying attention to the place of group's dynamic processes that have prevailed over the years in R. Yohanan's *beit midrash*, as well as examining their behavior when the crisis broke out and while it get worsening, can refine further some of the insights that raised by my predecessors. Furthermore, an analysis that takes these processes into account may bring additional discourses levels to the surface of those discussed in previous studies, revealing other meanings and arguments that arise from this story. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to expose the same processes and discourses levels that were less at the center of matter in the previous studies.

In my paper, I will be based on the insights and analyzes that have already been done by previous researchers, but I will try to move beyond their scope. I will focus on those dimensions and scenes in which the group takes a role. In some of them this role is implied, but at the same time may explain the choices and behavior of the main protagonists in the story. Elsewhere, the group's dynamics plays a main role in the development of the story's plot. To elaborate these aspects of the story, I will use concepts and theories from two areas. One is the field of organizational discourse, especially considering the contribution and impact of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan[[21]](#footnote-21) and his followers.[[22]](#footnote-22) Lacan's concepts are of particular help in revealing the motivation of R. Yohanan in designing the patterns of his *beit midrash*, and for analyzing his various responses throughout the crisis with Resh Lakish, on a psychological and organizational background. I shall moreover make use of concepts regarding processes of group dynamics, as the psychoanalyst Wilfred R. Bion presents them.[[23]](#footnote-23) Bion's concepts will help us to understand the processes below the surface that took part within the group members at R. Yohanan's *beit midrash*.

1. **Concise explanation about the ‘Master Discourse’ by Jacques Lacan**

Jacques Lacan defined a discourse as a 'Social bond constituted in language' and used the term to stress the 'trans-individual nature of language'. He introduced four types of social connections, i.e. four different patterns of discourse: [[24]](#footnote-24) the 'Discourse of the Master', the 'Discourse of the University', the 'Discourse of the Hysteric', and the 'Discourse of the Analyst'. Lacan draws the following schema to describe the discourse in general (I present these concisely, referring to points which are relevant to the story under discussion):



In the Diagram the ‘addresser’ (the speaker) appears on the left and the ‘addressee’ (the listener) on the right. It contains four positions connected with language. The positions Above the line are conscious, while those below the line are unconscious. The ‘agent’ is the position of the conscious aspect of the ‘speaker.’ He faces the ‘Other,’ the ‘listener,’ on the conscious level. The ‘Agent’ is motivated in his speech by his unconscious ‘truth.’ The ‘production’ is the unconscious outcome or result, of the ‘Other’s’ response to the ‘speaker’s’ petition. In each type of discourse different terms are placed in the positions that take place in the scheme that represent the discourse. Therefore, there are different places for impossibility and inability, different aspects of discourse are repressed or fail to be communicated within the four different discourses.[[25]](#footnote-25) Although the Lacanian model of discourse is a communication model, this communication includes not only messages from the speaker to the other, the addressee (listener) on the conscious, rational level, but also bears an unconscious dimension. The message aimed at the listener is also intended for the speaker and returns to the latter with enhanced meaning.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The ‘discourse of master’ describes a social connection in which the ‘speaker’ demands of the ‘listener’ knowledge, which is passed on via the language, the network of signifiers. The knowledge which returns from the ‘listener’ confirms and validates for the speaker his status as ‘Master signifier’, which identifies him as the leader (and in the case of our story as the head of the *beit midrash*). The ‘Master signifier’ is any signifier with which the subject identifies, or whom he opposes, via the establishment of a powerful positive or negative value.[[27]](#footnote-27) It is only established as such *a* *posteriori*, from the information or knowledge provided by the second signifier. At this point the unconscious subject breaks out. The subject identified with the ‘Master signifier’ ignores the unconscious truth which motivates him (he, too, is an absent subject, who desires something). The ‘Master signifier,’ with whom he identifies, provides the illusion – to him as well as to those surrounding him – that he is a complete, perfect subject. His unconscious revelation (his desires and the fact that he is imperfect) does not necessarily lower his social status; it merely reveals his vapidity.

According to Lacan, one should note that in organizational discourse the ‘Master signifier’ is not necessarily realized in the image of the manager heading the organization, but rather in he who controls and actually manages the organization’s discourse. In other words, people from other echelons, who are attempting to define the topic and content of the organization’s discussion, may take the place of the ‘Master signifier.’ In retrospect, their role as Master will be received, as is usual, via the information-knowledge (recognition and validation) granted by the other participants in the organization, of which the organization’s ‘formal’ manager’ may be one.[[28]](#footnote-28)

1. **Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzi'a 84:a** - **the story divided into scenes**[[29]](#footnote-29)
2. One day R. Yohanan was swimming in the Jordan.

Resh Lakish saw him [and believed him to be a woman. He plunged his spear into the ground][[30]](#footnote-30) and jumped into the Jordan after him.

[R. Yohanan] said to him: "Your strength is for the Torah."

He said to him: "Your beauty is for women."

He [R. Yohanan] said to him: 'If you repent, I will give you my sister, who is more beautiful than I."

He [Resh Lakish] accepted [took] upon himself [to repent]. He wished to return [with a jump] to get his clothing, but he was unable to do so.

1. He taught him Bible and Mishna and made him into a great man.
2. One day there was a difference of opinion in the study hall: "A sword, and a knife, and a dagger, and a spear, and a handsaw, and a sickle - from when are they susceptible to ritual impurity?

From the time that their manufacture is completed.

And from when is their manufacture completed?

R. Yohanan says: From when he tempers them in the furnace.

Resh Lakish said: From when he immerses them in water.

[R. Yohanan] said to him: "A robber understands about robbery."

He said to him: "And what good have you done to me? There they called me

master [and] here they call me Master.”

He [R. Yohanan] said to him: "I have done you good by bringing you under

the wings of the Divine presence."

R. Yohanan was deeply offended [and] Resh Lakish became ill.

1. His [R. Yohanan’s] sister came and wept, and said to him: "Act for the sake of my children."

He said to her: "‘Leave your orphans, I will preserve them alive’"(Jeremiah, 49:11)

"Act for the sake of my widowhood."

He said to her:" 'And let your widows trust in me'".

1. Rabbi Shimon son of Lakish died, and Rabbi Yohanan was greatly distressed about him.

The Rabbis said: "Who will go [and] relieve his mind?

Let Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat go, for his statements are sharp."

He went and sat before him. [After] everything that Rabbi Yohanan said, he said to him: "There is a Baraita that supports you."

He [R. Yohanan] said: "Are you like the son of Lakish? When I would say something, the son of Lakish would raise twenty four objections against me, and I would give him twenty-four answers, and the statement would thereby be clarified. All that you say is ‘There is a Baraita that supports you.’ Do I not know that what I have said is right?"

1. He [R. Yohanan] went on rending his clothes and weeping and said: “Where are you son of Lakish, where are you son of Lakish?” And he cried out until his mind slipped from him.

The rabbis pleaded for mercy on his behalf and he died.

1. **The organizational culture at Rabbi Yohanan's *beit Midrash***: **analysis of the legend**

The first two scenes of the legend put the ‘knowledge-power’ relationship as the starting point of the story. They undermine the ability of those who possess the discursive knowledge to control the entire reality, and to mark their place as a ‘Master signifier’ for their environment. Indeed, in these scenes only the two main protagonists in the story appear. However, the structure of the power relations between the two heroes, and it foundation on the knowledge products that used and created in the *beit midrash*, reflect both the patterns of Rabbi Yohanan's conduct as the organization's head, as well as the patterns of the entire organization, with all its partners. Therefore, these scenes should also be analyzed in order to understand the dominate dynamics in R. Yohanan's *beit midrash*.

The two personae - Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish - represent a specific essentialist sphere. Each sphere creates a type of characteristic knowledge which results in a different type of power; they come in contact and in conflict in the liminal space of the river. [[31]](#footnote-31) Resh Lakish represents ‘nature,’ the ‘outside’ vis-à-vis the world of the *beit midrash*. The latter is identified both with Rabbi Yohanan and with ‘culture.’[[32]](#footnote-32) Resh Lakish possesses the knowledge necessary for survival in the real world; he who possesses it becomes the hunter, rather than the hunted. His knowledge creates physical strength, in this scene represented by the metonymic tool which he holds - ‘his spear’ - and by his athletic ability to leap from one side of the river to the other.

The ‘outside-natural’ sphere stands in opposition to the ‘inside-cultural’ sphere of the *beit midrash*. Rabbi Yohanan, the product of this sphere and its current leader, has at his disposal a different kind of knowledge: rhetorical knowledge based upon the word and on discourse, acquired and polished by means of repeated experience in dialectic debate in the *beit midrash*. Rabbi Yohanan, the hunted one, understands reality and responds to it by using the knowledge which he possesses. Through his rhetorical abilities he succeeds in convincing Resh Lakish to agree to an exchange: “I will give you my sister” etc. Thus, at the outset of the story we see that the knowledge created in the *beit midrash* is superior to that acquired in the external sphere. One who possesses this knowledge is able to overturn the ultimate balance of power extant in the outside world and to force his will on the ‘strong one’ of the outside world.[[33]](#footnote-33) Rabbi Yohanan's position as “master,” as one who controls the discourse and through him in all reality, is immediately determined at the beginning of the legend. In contrast, as Kosman points out: “On a second level, this metaphoric tableau shows the extent to which Resh Lakish is dependent upon R. Johanan from this moment on; his symbolic transition from one 'riverbank' to the other in his life was totally contingent upon R. Johanan 's aid, so that he could swim in the 'water of the Tora'.”[[34]](#footnote-34)

The second scene fixes the relations of power between the two protagonists as outlined at the end of the previous scene. On entering into the *beit midrash* Resh Lakish loses not only his physical strength, but also his original status in the balance of power then existing between himself and Rabbi Yohanan. If in their first encounter each represented a significantly different knowledge-power *locus*, and therefore they were equals in the extent of their authority, on leaving his previous world Resh Lakish renounces the possibility of being an equal of Rabbi Yohanan’s (as well as apparently relinquishing the possibility of achieving superiority, if the two had remained in the ‘real world’). As a pupil he is inferior to Rabbi Yohanan (in organizational terminology he is an ‘employee’ of the rabbi). In this scene the new level of authority/power is represented by ascribing the verbs describing the ‘teaching/learning’ process - ‘taught him’ and ‘made him’ - to Rabbi Yohanan alone. The process of teaching is not depicted as a partnership between teacher and pupil, that is, as a dialogue between the two, but seemingly from the standpoint of one side: the teacher. Moreover, Resh Lakish the pupil seems completely passive, one who is ‘present but absent,’ clay in the hands of his creator, his spiritual father.[[35]](#footnote-35) Indeed the achievement described at the end of the process - ‘a great scholar/man’ - is not ascribed to the pupil, but to the rabbi who ‘made him.’[[36]](#footnote-36) This stage, and the way in which the pupil challenges it, are at the center of the controversy which takes place in the next scene.

1. **The crack of R. Yohan's hegemony: It's implications on R. Yohanan, and on the exposure of the Group's Behavioral Patterns**

The third scene provides the picture of the complication of the legend, as posited in its opening by the expression ‘one day;’ in the Babylonian Talmud this expression hints at the breaking down of a convention. The scene is many-layered and has multiple meanings. It is opens with a conventional description of daily life in the *beit midrash*. On the obvious level the Sages are discussing a trivial issue from the halakhot of weapons and tools (its source is m. Kelim 14:5): there is a process of turning a raw material, iron, in this case, into a finished utensil (which can, however, be defiled). At what point may this process be said to be completed? The debate is conducted, as we learn from the next scenes, according to a convention constructed in Rabbi Yohanan’s *beit midrash*: Rabbi Yohanan opens the debate and is followed by Resh Lakish (and hypothetically by others), who raises questions and offers suggestions. Under the surface, however, both the content being taught and the didactic structure bear symbolic meanings, which are connected and interwoven. The weapons and utensils under discussion in the *beit midrash* that day were not randomly chosen, and many of them represent Resh Lakish’s previous world. They were chosen not only to create the logical underpinnings needed by Resh Lakish in order to challenge Rabbi Yohanan’s superiority, but also in order to raise a question of principle found in the subtext of the discussion: ‘At what point is the “manufacturing” of a person complete?’ The repeated use of the metonymy which represented Resh Lakish in the first scene - the ‘spear’ - and which is now broadened by the addition of other tools, emphasizes that the subtext does not only involve a question of principle. This metonymy is realized in the personality of Resh Lakish.[[37]](#footnote-37) Rabbi Yohanan’s ruling: ‘From when he tempers them in the furnace’ - establishes, on the obvious level of the debate, the hour of tempering in the furnace as the moment at which the tool receives its form, and therefore constitutes ‘the time that his manufacture is complete.’ On the implied level Rabbi Yohanan herein refers Resh Lakish to his past, by claiming that Resh Lakish received his form/essence when he was living in the outside world, previous to entering the *beit midrash*. Rabbi Yohanan thus annuls the significance of the personal process which Resh Lakish underwent during his years of study in the beit midrash, as a process which established his new mission as a pupil of the sages, and changed his identity of ‘weapon’ to that of ‘handsaw’ and ‘sickle;’ the latter are productive tools in the service of a normative community.[[38]](#footnote-38) Resh Lakish’s response: ‘From when he immerses them in water,’ should also be understood as bearing a double meaning. On the obvious level Resh Lakish calls upon the sources of knowledge available to him in order to answer the concrete, practical question. When Resh Lakish offers ‘reality-based knowledge’ he suggests an alternative, and more exact answer (and therefore preferable) to Rabbi Yohanan’s answer: the process is complete at the moment of immersing the tool in water, at which point its form cannot be changed, unless it is again melted down and re-formed. On the implied level of the discourse between the two, Resh Lakish rejects the identity posited for him by Rabbi Yohanan. Rabbi Yohanan does not accept his pupil’s assertion. He therefore challenges Resh Lakish with the malicious statement: ‘A robber understands about robbery.’ At once Rabbi Yohanan has turned the implied level of the debate into the debate’s obvious level.

By changing the topic of the discourse Rabbi Yohanan is trying to maintain his status as the persona who takes on the role of ‘Master signifier’ in his *beit midrash*. Until now, it was he who determines the curriculum in the *beit midrash*, who opens the debates (both in this scene and in Scene 5, in which the pedagogical methods in use in the *beit midrash* are depicted), and presents his arguments.[[39]](#footnote-39) Up until this point, approval and validation of his status as ‘Master signifier’ from his peers in the *beit midrash* were granted in two ways:

(1) Resh Lakish’s questions. Until this point these problematical issues were not raised as alternate truth to that presented by Rabbi Yohanan.[[40]](#footnote-40) In other words, these awkward questions were not presented by Resh Lakish in order to demand for himself the role of ‘Master signifier;’ such a step could have annulled Rabbi Yohanan’s control of the organization. The questions were rather raised in order to ‘broaden the discussion’ - that is, to enrich and inspire the studies (the discourse) taking place in the *beit midrash* under the leadership and control of Rabbi Yohanan.[[41]](#footnote-41)

(2) From the viewpoint of the other peers in the organization, the second means of approval and validation is through the presentation of ‘supporting evidence’ ('tana demesaye'a'). This is done by Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat in Scene 5; and by silent agreement, as appears from the silence of the group of Sages at this scene, in the face of events in Scene 5, and in their subsequent decision to send Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat to assuage Rabbi Yohanan’s pain and anger.[[42]](#footnote-42)

As head of the *beit midrash*, it is only natural that Rabbi Yohanan choose the topic of discussion. I have suggested that the topic was chosen because of its subtext, which I have analyzed, and not because of its explicit content. Rabbi Yohanan, however, was not necessarily aware of the motive for his choice. The rabbi apparently sensed potential undermining of his position as ‘Master signifier,’ not specifically on the part of Resh Lakish, but possibly on the part of the other ‘employees,’ his peers in the *beit midrash*, who identify Resh Lakish’s greatness. He therefore chooses content by means of which he can pass on an indirect message to Resh Lakish, and to the organization as a whole, as to Resh Lakish’s place as an ‘employee’[[43]](#footnote-43). However, Resh Lakish’s answer, which for the first time presents an alternate truth to that of the ‘Master’ - Rabbi Yohanan - and thus constitutes a demand for hegemony over the organization’s discourse, challenges the rabbi as ‘Master signifier’ of the organization. This challenge leads Rabbi Yohanan to utilize his abilities: through the use of rhetoric he transfers the discussion from the text (utensils, tools) to the subtext (*'lista*'/Resh Lakish). The discursive use of the rhetorical figure ‘A robber understands about robbery’ frames Resh Lakish’s ‘knowledge’ as belonging to, and significant in, the outside world. Pushing the area of knowledge associated with Resh Lakish outside the walls of the organization is conducted according to the principle of ‘division and rejection,’ one of the exclusion mechanisms defined by Michel Foucault.[[44]](#footnote-44) By ‘surrounding and cutting off’ Resh Lakish's speech, Rabbi Yohanan excludes the former’s words from the halakhic debate and shoves aside any claim for the truth of these words. Thus, Rabbi Yohanan renews his supervision of the discourse, and assures his organization.

In terms of Lacan’s ‘Master Discourse,’ achieving renewed authority enables Rabbi Yohanan, as well as the other members of the organization, to retain the illusion that he is a perfect subject, ‘lacking any shortcomings.’ This is seen in Rabbi Yohanan's answer to Resh Lakish’s painful question: ‘And what good have you done to me? There they called me Master and here they call me Master.’ Rabbi Yohanan’s response puts an end to the discussion and completes the previous scene: ‘I have done you good by bringing you under the wings of the Shekhinah (the Divine presence) and made [you] into a great man/scholar.’ Rabbi Yohanan’s statement skips over the scene which has just taken place, and in which the ‘Master signifier’s’ mask has been removed, thus revealing its vapidity and erasing it. In so doing the text is connected directly to Scene 2, in which Resh Lakish’s process of learning and his success is reflects Rabbi Yohanan’s illusionary grasp - and that of other members of the organization - of reality, rather than reality itself, or the narrator’s viewpoint. Now we see, in the words of Slavoj Zizek, the exposure of the ‘Master signifier’ as an ‘impostor’ (in other words, one who is not perfect, but rather bears his own imperfections). These imperfections do not preclude the rabbi’s position as head of the organization’s social structure. [[45]](#footnote-45)

Yet the discourse hegemony of Rabbi Yohanan was breached, however, and the illusory reality eventually collapses: 'R. Yohanan was deeply offended'.

**E. The Student group behavior patterns**

From the scenes we have seen so far, as well as from the following scene, in which Rabbi Yohanan's sister pleaded for her brother's reconciliation with Reish Lakish, the group of the students is absent. Seemingly, the storyline seems to be exclusively about what happens between these three main characters.[[46]](#footnote-46) However, the group will appear as a major actor down the road (in the scenes 5 and 6), as they will try to calm down R. Yohanan and return him to the *beit midrash*. This begs the question as to why the group does not enlisted to act in the earlier stages of the story? What was the dynamic that motivated them (or prevented them) from intervening in the outbreak of the crisis and appeasing the two opponents? Or another possibility: supposing that the students where witnessed for the insult inflicted by Riesh Lakish from R. Yohanan, they could, at the very least, express their empathy for him, and by this way to facilitating his humiliation, and possibly preventing his death. That bring me to Wilfred Bion’s theoretical concepts, developed as a result of his work with groups, and applying psychoanalytical processes to group processes.[[47]](#footnote-47) Bion’s concepts will combined with Lacan’s ‘Master discourse.’

According to Bion the group’s mission is consciously determined. Bion terms the communal mental activity which the group enlists in order to achieve its goal ‘the Work Group.’[[48]](#footnote-48) In our story the mission for which the group has assembled in the *beit midrash* is the study of Torah. However, Bion discerns a different level of mental activity, in which the group does not appear to take upon itself any responsibility for events which take place. This is an unconscious level of the group, which Bion terms the ‘Basic Assumptions Group.’[[49]](#footnote-49) At any point in time one of the ‘basic assumptions’ exists within the group. It is this ‘basic assumption’ which often activates events occuring within the group, instead of the conscious goal (work) which is supposed to activate the group. Bion conceptualized three ‘Basic assumptions’: the ‘Dependence group,’ the ‘Fight-flight group,’ and the ‘Pairing group.’ [[50]](#footnote-50) As with the ‘work group,’ each of these concepts depicts the group’s way of mental functioning, but not the people composing the group. [[51]](#footnote-51) In a situation in which the ‘Basic assumption of the Dependence group’[[52]](#footnote-52) motivates the group - this assumption is apparently the foundation-stone which is relevant to the situation in which the group of pupils of Rabbi Yohanan’s pupils find themselves - the group chooses one person, whom they expect to provide the needs of the group’s other members. In Bion’s words: [[53]](#footnote-53)

The basic assumption in this group culture seems to be that an external object exists whose function it is to provide security for the immature organism. This means that one person is always felt to be in a position to supply the needs of the group, and the rest in a position in which their needs are supplied.

When combining the above with Lacan’s ‘Master discourse’ terminology, the group is seen to identify with Rabbi Yohanan, its ‘Master signifier.’ The members sense that they are totally dependent on he who ‘holds the group together,’ who is responsible for providing them both with the formal, reality-based framework - the *beit midrash* - of which they are members, as well as their intellectual needs as Sages’ pupils. However, the aggravating confrontation between Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish breaks the covenant built over the years in the *beit midrash*, which was based not only on the manner of Rabbi Yohanan, but also on the patterns of the student group. Therefore, Rabbi Yohanan’s process of going insane deprives the peer-group of the *beit midrash* of the feeling of security that their group will continue to exist. The growing horror that the students feel indeed requires them to step out of their ‘comfort zone’ and change their patterns. However, as will be seen from the following scene, the dominance of ‘Basic assumption’ of the ‘Dependence group’ does not allow them to conceive of other options besides the return of R. Yohanan to the *beit midrash* and fill his position as the ‘Master signifier’ of the organization.

In order to return Rabbi Yohanan to his position as leader of the group, and in accordance with the pattern of the ‘Dependence group’ of which they are part, the group of Sages quickly appoints an ‘ad hoc’ leader, who will fulfill the group’s immediate need for the return of Rabbi Yohanan. Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat, who is chosen for this role, is most suited to the task, since his identity appears to coincide with the ‘Master signifier:’ Rabbi Yohanan. Elazar is depicted as the latter’s successor, suited to the role in every possible way. [[54]](#footnote-54) However, Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat personifies the total dependence of the group on its leader from another aspect: by appointing him as a ‘partner’ (‘an opponent in an argument’) of Rabbi Yohanan, the group appears to move from coping in the basic framework of the ‘Dependence Group’ to coping in the basic framework of the ‘Pairing Group.’ The ‘Pairing Group,’ exists on the assumption that the group has met for the purpose of reproduction - the basic assumption that two people can be met together for only one purpose, and that a sexual one. Two people, regardless the sex of either, carry out the work of the group through their continued interaction. The remaining group members listen eagerly and attentively with a sense of relief and hopeful anticipation. Therefore, in my opinion, it would be right to see this ‘basic assumption’ as to the mental process that the Sages group used whenever Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish quarreled between them as part of the learning routine that prevailed in the *beit midrash*.[[55]](#footnote-55) In the group fantasy there is herein created a new partnership (which is not necessarily symmetrical) – between R. Yohanan and R. Elazar Ben Pedat - which replaces the previous partnership. As Bion describes it: [[56]](#footnote-56)

This feeling [hope] is characteristic of the pairing group and must be taken by itself as evidence that the pairing group exists, even when other evidence appears to be lacking […] The optimistic ideas that are verbally expressed are rationalizations intended to effect a displacement in time and compromise with feelings of guilt – the enjoyment of the feeling is justified by appeal to an outcome supposed to be morally unexceptionable. The feelings thus associated in the pairing group are the opposite pole to feelings of hatred, destructiveness, and despair […] there is a tendency for the work group to be influenced in the direction of producing a Messiah, be it person, idea, or Utopia. In so far as it succeeds, hope is weakened; for obviously nothing is then to hope for, and, since destructiveness, hatred, and despair have in no way been radically influenced, their existence again makes itself felt. This in turn accelerates a further weakening of hope.

In the group fantasy, therefore, the new partnership - between R. Yohanan and Elazr Ben Pedat - will return the equilibrium of the *beit midrash* to its original state.

The appointment of Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat is thus not an expression of the independence and responsibility of the group, but rather its opposite: it reflects the lack of cognitive independence, or the conformism, of the members of the organization.

Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat’s mission is, however, doomed to failure.[[57]](#footnote-57) Resh Lakish’s death broke down the conscious aspect of Rabbi Yohanan, and raised up the reason for its unconscious desire, thus revealing at long last that he - Rabbi Yohanan - is a lustful subject.[[58]](#footnote-58) The illusion of Rabbi Yohanan, as well as that of the members of the organization, shatters before their faces. He discovers his need for reform and for the unique confirmation which had been received from the challenging questions posed by Resh Lakish, the ‘Other’; [[59]](#footnote-59) and the members of the group discover that they are worthless to him once he has discovered his desire. The recognition of Rabbi Yohanan as an absent subject, incapable of fulfilling his own and the group’s needs, marks the end of his hegemony in the organization.

The last scene completes Rabbi Yohanan’s expulsion from his role as ‘Master signifier.’ As we have seen, the breaking down of Rabbi Yohanan’s conscious level has revealed his unconscious subject: the fact that he is an absent subject, who needs Resh Lakish in order to fulfill his desires. The descent from his place as the ‘Master signifier’ is thus accompanied by an awakening which does not enable him to return to the illusion which accompanied him in his position as ‘Master signifier.’ Rabbi Yohanan searches for Resh Lakish to the point of madness. At the same time the group, as we have seen, for the most part functions according to the patterns of the ‘Dependence group,’ thus leading to the actual death of the leader, when the latter can no longer fulfill the expectations and meet the needs of the group members.

**Conclusion**

The legend of the conflict between Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish reflects the Sages’ awareness, both as to the various spheres in which knowledge bearing disciplinary characteristics is structured, as well as the ways of discourse and types of power created in the framework of each. The legend, as ‘storytelling’ which was taught, disseminated and recreated again and again among the pupils of the Babylonian *yeshivot*, makes a claim as to the balances which should exist within the *beit midrash*, and between the *beit midrash* and its surroundings, in order for the organization to continue to exist and develop. The *beit midrash* can only continue to thrive when it retains a framework which is diffuse enough to enable the products of knowledge from a variety of sources to penetrate and fertilize it. Situations in which a different type of knowledge (such as that provided by Resh Lakish, or by Rabbi Yohanan’s sister[[60]](#footnote-60)) is pushed aside by the masters of the discourse via exclusion mechanisms, are situations which will lead to the atrophy and death of the organization, as well as to the degeneration and death, whether intellectual or physical, of the organization’s members.

But the legend is not just about the role that the theme of ‘knowledge’, or even ‘knowledge-power’ relationship, playing in the *beit midrash*,although undoubtedly the ‘power-knowledge’ theme stands here for stern discussion and criticism. For the story is also points to the deep gap between the professed image of the *beit midrash* - as a "pure" place, where fraternity should prevail between the teacher and the peer group of students, who are looking together for God's proximity through the study of his Tora - but is, in fact, an organization whose members are engaged in a power struggle for place and influence.[[61]](#footnote-61)

As we have seen, this legend discusses the interpersonal processes that take place between the head of *the beit midrash* and his students, both when it comes to the relationship between him and one individual in the group, and between him and the entire group of learners. At that point the legend is building an argument not only about the devastation of power struggles in the *beit midrash*, but also about the appropriate dynamics that need to exist in the *beit midrash*, so it can evolve as a healthy and productive organization. The responsibility for the proper functioning of the *beit midrash*, according to that layer of discourse in the story, rests first and foremost on its leader. As the ‘Master signifier’ he controls the process of structuring the discourse within the *beit midrash*, and it is his ability to raise and empower its students, or alternatively, to reduce them and maintain them in a position of dependency. The peer group, however, also participates in shaping the organization’s patterns of behavior, and thus bears responsibility for what occurs in their organization. By reflecting on the ‘basic assumptions’ which activate the organization, the group of sages will be able to develop as individuals and as a group; they will thus eventually be enabled to achieve their goal as a ‘work group:’ fruitful studies, based upon varied sources of knowledge. According to this reading of the legend, its moral is directed at all the participants in the organization. They are all called upon to examine their motivation and their patterns of behavior - each in his position and role - in order to help them develop that sensitivity to motives which forms the basis of the discourse taking place among them. This sensitivity will contribute to the vitality and productivity of the organization and ultimately guarantee its existence over time, instead of bringing to its atrophy and disintegration.

1. In this article *beit midrash* serves as a generic term for the academic institution of the Sages. Historically speaking, we must differentiate between the *beit midrash* in the land of Israel and the *yeshiva* in Babylon. See: I. Gafni, 'Yeshiva and Metivta', *Zion* 43 (1978), pp. 12–37; Z. Safray, 'The Nature of the *beit midrash*', *Cathedra* 24 (1982), pp. 183–185; M.D. Goodblatt, 'New Development in the Study of the Babylonian Yeshivot', *Zion* 46 (1981), pp. 14–38; H. Shapira, ‘The *beit midrash* in the land of Israel in the period of the Mishna and Talmud: the concept and the institution,’ *12th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, 2, 1997, pp. 45-60; J. L. Rubinstein, 'The Rise of the Babylonian Rabbinic Academy: A Reexamination of the Talmudic Evidence', *JSIJ* 1(2002), pp. 55–68; M.D. Goodblatt, 'History of the Babylonian Academies', S. T. Katz (ed.)*, The Cambridge History* *of Judaism Volume 4: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 821–839; P. Mandel, 'Concerning the Public Role of the Early *beit midrash*', *Zion* 79 (2014), pp. 327–344. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Each of these components is addressed in the study. A selection from among extant research: I. M. Gafni, *The Jews of Babylonia in the Talmudic Era* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 1990), pp. 177–236;R. L. Kalmin, 'Collegial Interactions in the Babylonian Talmud', *JQR* 82 (1992), pp. 383–415; J. Rubenstein, *The Culture of the Babylonian Talmud* (Baltimore & London: JHU Press, 2003); I. Rosen-Zvi, 'A Protocol of Yavne Academy: Rereading "Tosefta Sanhedrin" Chapter 7' (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 78 (2009), pp. 447–477; S. Fogel, 'The Order of Discourse in the House of Study (*beit midrash*) in *Palestinian Rabbinic Literature: Organizing Space, Ritual and Discipline* (Hebrew), PhD diss., Ben Gurion University of the Negev, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. B. Berelson and G. A. Steiner, *Human Behavior: An Inventory of Scientific Findings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964); E. H. Schein, *Organization Psychology* (Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1965). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For dialectic study see Rubinstein (Above, note 2), pp. 39-54. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The use of ‘knowledge’ served as a criterion for evaluating the Sages’ pupils and as a reflection of their academic standing vis-a-vis a variety of practices and privileges in the *beit midrash*, such as the order of seating within the *beit midrash*, the right to study exclusive areas of knowledge (such as *ma’aseh merkava*), the right to serve the rabbi, to receive ordination, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See for example the debate between Rabbi Idi and a group of Sages in Rabbi Yohanan’s *beit midrash* (b. Talmud, Hagigah 5:b); the silenced debate between Rabbi Shimi and Rabbi Hi'ya Bar Ashi (b. Talmud, Ta'anit 9:b) and its possible implications as to the general functioning of the *beit midrash*; the difficulties faced by Rabbi Pappa in replacing the deceased head of his yeshiva (b.Talmud, Ta’anit 9:a); see also the Sages’ decision to dismiss Rabban Gamliel (b. Talmud, Berakhot 27:b). Compare E. Holzer, 'Either A Hevruta Partner or Death": A Critical View on the Interpersonal Dimensions of Hevruta Learning', Journal of Jewish Education 75 (2009), p. 134: “In fact, these literary creations serve as a subtle vehicle to heighten self-criticism and self-awareness of the potential flaws and inherent dangers of this culture without undermining the primary value of Torah study.” [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See: D. K. Muby and R. P. Clair, Organizational Discourse,' in: T. A. Van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse as Social Interaction,* Vol. 2 (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE publication, 1997), pp. 181–205. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See: F. L Smith and J. Keyton, 'Organizational Storytelling: Metaphors for Relational Power and Identity Struggles,' *Management Communication Quarterly* 15 (2001), p.150; M. Humphreys and A. D. Brown, 'Narratives of Organizational Identity and Identification: A Case Study of Hegemony and Resistance,' *Organizational Studies* 23 (2002), pp. 421–447. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. The version of the legend used in this paper is Babylonian. It must therefore be viewed as reflecting the culture of the Babylonian *yeshiva*, rather than the land of Israel *beit midrash.* For another example of the way in which the Babylonian Talmud utilized a disagreement which took place in the land of Israel *beit midrash*, see H. Shapira, 'The Deposition of Rabban Gamliel – Between History and Legend' (Hebrew), *Zion* 64 (1999), pp. 5–38. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. D. Boyarin, Carnal Israel (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 197–226; A. Kosman, "R. Johanan And Resh Lakish: The Image Of God In The Study Hall: 'Masculinity' Versus 'Femininity,'" *European Judaism* 43,1 (2010), pp. 128-45; Y. Liebes, 'Eros and Anti-Eros in the Jordan River' (Hebrew), (S. Arzy, M. Fachler, B. Kahana, eds.) Life as a Midrash – Perspectives in Jewish Psychology (Tel Aviv: Yediot Acharonot, 2004), pp. 152–167. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. J. Fraenkel, Studies in the Spiritual World of the Aggadic Story [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1981), pp. 75–77. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. R. Calderon, *The Market. The Home. The Heart* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 2001), pp. 27-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. S. Friedman, 'For the Historic Legend in the Babylonian Talmud' (Hebrew), (S. Friedman ed.) Saul Lieberman Memorial Volume (New York and Jerusalem: JTS, 1993), p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Y. Zilcha, ‘A reincarnation of a story - between reality and ideology: A comparative study of the story of Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Lakish in Jerusalem and Babylon’ (Hebrew), Assif 4 (2013), pp.87-104. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. S. Kasirer, ‘"Souls as Mirrors": Psychological Aspects of the Final Dispute Between R. Yohanan and Resh Lakish according to R. Zaddok ha-Cohen of Lublin' (Hebrew), *Michlol* 29 (2013), pp. 141–159; Yakir Englander, The Persona and the Shadow - a Jungian interpretation of the story of the lives and deaths of R. Yohanan and Resh Lakish’ (Hebrew), Deot 18 (2004), pp. 32-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. ; M. Bar Asher Segal, ‘Ethic and Identity Formation: Resh Lakish and the Monastic Repentant Robber', K. Berthelot et al (eds.) *L'identité à Travers L'étique: Nouvelles perspectives sur la formation des identités Collectives dans le monde Greco-romain* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 53–72. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. E. Holzer (Above, note 6), pp. 130-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See A. Kosman, Men's Tractate: Rav and the Butcher and other Stories: On Manhood, Love and Authentic Life in Aggadaic and Hassidic Stories, Jerusalem 2002, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Y. Zilcha (Above, note 14), pp. 90-92, 96-97. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. I separate here the stated purpose of the *beit midrash* - the study of Torah and Halachic creation – from other secondary profits which the participation gave to its students (such as accumulating social capital, fulfilling intellectual and spiritual needs, and even using as shelter, legitimated by the society, from the abrasive routine of fulfilling livelihood needs and having a family life). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. I refer to Lacan’s four types of discourse as presented in Seminar 17, and to a variety of works in which scholars have analysed Lacan’s concepts and applied them in a broad range of disciplines. See for example: J. Clemens and R. Grigg (eds.), *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII*, sic. 6 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006); M. Bracher et al. (eds.), *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See: A. Contu, M. Driver, C. Jones, 'Jacques Lacan with Organization Studies', *Organization* 17 (2010), pp. 307–315; C. Cederström and Casper Hoedemaekers (eds.), Lacan and Organizations (London: MayFly, 2010); M. Fotaki, S. Long, H. S. Schwartz, 'What can Psychoanalysis Offer Organization Studies Today? Taking Stock of Current Developments and Thinking about Future Directions,' *Organization Studies* 33 (2012), pp. 1105–1120; M. Driver, 'The Lack of Power or the Power of Lack in Leadership as Discursively Constructed Identity', *Organization Studies* 34 (2013), pp. 407–422. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Wilfred R. Bion was an influential British psychoanalyst, who became president of the British Psychoanalytical Society from 1962 to 1965. Bion performed a lot of group experiments when he was put in charge of the training wing of a military hospital. On Bion’s clinical work, and for greater detail as to those of Bion’s concepts of which I make use in this paper, see: J. and N. Symington, *The Clinical Thinking of Wilfred Bion* (London: Routledge, 1996), and in particular the chapter 'The Study of Groups', pp. 125–142; J. Aguayo and B. D. Malin (eds. and Introduction), *Wilfred Bion: Los Angeles Seminars And Supervision* (London: Karnac Books Ltd, 2013); N. Rosenwasser and L. Nathan, *Anthology for Group Training: A Reader* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Center for Community Education Named for Haym Zipory, 1998), pp. 75–100. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Lacan introduced the concept of the Four Discourses in *Le s****é****minaire,* ***l****ivre XVII****:*** *L’****e****nvers de la* ***p****sychanalyse (1969–1970) The Other Side of Psychoanalysis****.*** *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan****:*** *Book XVII*, J.-**A**. Miller etc. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan****:*** *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limit****s*** *of Love and Knowledge (Encore), 1972–1973* (Book XX), J.-**A**. Miller [ed.] and B. Fink [trans.] (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1998); For a concise survey of the sources of Lacanian discourse see: L. Lev, 'The Master's Discourse as a Model for Understanding the Manger-Employee Relationships: The Case of a Tender Committee' (Hebrew), *Organizational Analysis* 20 (2014), pp. 66–90. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Mark Bracher, *Lacan, Discourse, and Social Change*, Ithaca: Cornel University Press, 1993, p.53, explains it by four psychological factors: knowledge, ideals, self-division and *jouissance*. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See, C. Houtman, 'Lacan's Theory of the Fore Discourses and the Sixth Sense', Journal for Cultural Research 7 (2003), p. 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. According to Bracher, note 27 Above; See also Lev (Above, note 26), p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. J. Clifton, A Discursive Approach to Leadership: Doing Assessments and Managing Organizational Meanings', *Journal of Business Communication* 49 (2012), pp. 148–168. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The English translation of the text is taken from: *Koren Talmud Bavly,* Translation by Adin Steinsaltz*,* volume 26 (Jerusalem: Koren, 2012), pp. 122–125. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. See A. Kosman (Above, note 10), p. 142 n. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The passage through water as a metaphor for the rebirth or the religious conversion of Resh Lakish see Kosman (above note 10), p. 131; Calderon (above note 12), p. 37; Holzer (above note 6), p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The difference herein between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ is that posited by Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (London: Harper & Row, 1969). ‘Inside’ and ‘outside’ as related to the *beit midrash* and what is outside of it are sharply defined in other legends, for example: the clash between Rabbi Jehuda Ha'Nasi and Rabbi Haiah (b. Talmud, Mo′ed Qatan 16:a-b); In the legend of the controversy between Rabbi Elazar and ‘the Ugly one’ (b. Talmud, Ta’anit, 20:a-b) we discern the question of the linkage of knowledge created in the *beit midrash* (‘Torah’) and that created in the ‘real world’. See: I. Hevroni, 'The Reed, the Cedar and The Wind: On Relation Between "Torah" and "Olam" in a Talmudic Story (b. Talmud Ta'anit 20 a-b)' (Hebrew), A. Lipsker and R. Kushelevsky (eds.) *Studies in Jewish Narrative – Ma'aseh Sipur*, Vol. 2 (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2009), pp. 103–116. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. See also Kosman (Above, note 10), p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Ibid., p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The question ‘Who makes the man?’ - his biological father or the rabbi who teaches him and introduces him to culture - has been discussed by the Sages (for example: m. B. Metzi′a 2:11). For the pupil as the ‘son of the Torah’ and of his spiritual father, his rabbi, see: Y. Hazani, 'From Myth to Ethos: "Ben Tora", "Ben Navi" and the Study of Torah (Reflections on the "Father", the "Mother" and the "Son")' (Hebrew), *Pathways Through Aggadah* 10 (2007), p. 114 and thereafter; For an interpretative proposal to view the struggle between Resh Lakish and R. Johanan as a son's battle against his father, in the oedipal process of the liberation of the son (Resh Lakish) from the castrating burden of the father, who took the mother (the Torah) to himself, see Kosman (Above note 10), p. 143 n.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The expression ‘made him into a great scholar/man’ is not coincidental. It is a linguistic figure based on *midrashim* which attribute to Abraham and Sarah activities of religious conversion. See: L. Finkelstein, *Sifre on Deutronomy*, verse 32 (New York and Jerusalem: JTS, 1993), p. 54. For a broader view see: Genesis Rabba 84, J. Theodore and H. Albeck (eds.), Midrash Bereshit Rabba (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965), p. 1004 (for further parallels see Finkelstein, Ibid.). [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Compare: Calderon (Above, note 12), p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. The possibility of a change of mission on the personal-psychological level is achieved when the concrete didactic content - ‘A sword and a knife and a dagger and a spear and a handsaw and a sickle' - echoes the order of the tools presented in Isaiah’s vision of the Eschaton (Isaiah 2:4): “and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” Here, too, the utensil changes its purpose from a weapon of war to an agricultural tool, symbolizing a normative society in times of peace. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. It is worth noting that the fact of Rabbi Yohanan’s being identified with the ‘Master signifier’ is presented in the opening scene. See also: Fraenkel (Above, note 11), pp. 75–76. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Holzer (Above, note 6), p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. See also: Fraenkel (Above, note 11), pp. 75–76; Holzer, Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See also kosman (Above, note 10), p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Or ‘slave’ in Lacan’s model. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of Language* (A. M. Sheridan Smith [trans.] (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 217. According to Foucault, “division and rejection’ turns the ‘speaker’ (the ‘Folly,’ in Foucault's analysis, or in our case Resh Lakish) into one whose ‘speech could not be said to form part of the common discourse of men. His words were considered null and void, without truth or significance.” [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. S. Zizeq, *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. As stated Above, Admiel kosman has devoted extensive discussion to the role of the woman in the story, and to the gender claims that the (see Kosman [Above, note 10], pp. 135-138; [Above, note18], pp. 45-51). I will therefore settle for a comment, that from the aspects that interest me in this article, the role of the dialogue between R. Yohanan and his sister is to illuminate the ways in which R. Yohanan tries to continue to hold the position of the ‘Master signifier’ in his surroundings eyes, but mostly for himself. Ironically, this scene reveals the growing dissonance between the conscious layer and the subconscious in the personality of R. Yohanan, and between him and his surroundings. The passages spoken by Rabbi Yohanan (from Jeremiah’s prophecies of wrath against Edom) represent two differing viewpoints. On the one hand they allow ‘penetrating the soul of the hero,’ by reflecting Rabbi Yohanan’s perception/viewpoint, which now appears even more extreme than that exposed in Scene 2. On the other hand, these passages enable the narrator to use critical irony to illuminate Rabbi Yohanan’s self-perception. Rabbi Yohanan, who identifies totally with the ‘Master signifier,’ once again does not differentiate between the genuine Master (that is, God) and a flesh-and-blood master. Lacan differentiates between ‘master’ (ego) and ‘Master.’ The latter is the ‘great order’ of culture/ the law, (in all of its various permutations) which is represented in discourse and which turns each individual coming under its aegis via learning the language, into a citizen (slave). See: M. Bracher, 'On the Psychological and Social Function of Language: Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses', in: Lacanian Theory of Discourses (Above, note 25), pp. 107–128, in particular pp. 109–113. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. W. R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups and Other Papers* (London: Tavistock publications, 1961). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Ibid., pp. 98-101. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Ibid., p. 65: “Group mentality is the unanimous expression of the will of the group, contributed to by the individual in ways of which he is unaware, influencing him disagreeably whenever he thinks or behaves in a manner at variance with the basic assumptions. It is thus a [mechanism] of intercommunication that is designed to ensure group life in accordance with the basic assumptions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. This is a defense mechanism of the individual within the group. These three stances are based on the division of instincts suggested by Wilfred Trotter: the compulsion for self-protection, the compulsion for sex, the compulsion for nourishment. See: N. Torres, 'Gregariousness and the mind: Bion and Trotter, an Update', N. Torres and R.D. Hinshelwood (eds.) *Bion's Sources: The Shaping of his Paradigms* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 10. For characteristics common to the ‘Basic assumptions’ see Bion, Ibid., pp. 146-68. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Ibid., pp. 143-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. On the 'The Dependence Group' see Ibid., pp. 74–75. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Ibid., p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat is considered Rabbi Yohanan’s most outstanding pupil. He served Rabbi Yohanan for many years and was the most loyal and important of those who transmited Rabbi Yohanan’s teachings. Indeed, it became known that all of Rabbi Elazar’s teachings were in fact those of Rabbi Yohanan. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Bion (Above, note 46), p. 96: 'There is no direct conflict between basic assumptions, but only changes from one associated state to another, which are either smooth transitions or brought about through intervention of the sophisticated [i.e. work S.M.] group; p. 154: 'The contemporary basic assumption that pervades its activities can be changing frequently; there may be two or three changes in an hour or the same basic assumption may be dominant for months on end'. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Ibid., p. 151–152. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Both according to Bion’s conclusions from his experience with groups (Ibid., p. 151), and the ‘Master discourse’ of Lacan, as I shall show as follows. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. And that he is, according to Slavoj Zizek’s addition to Lacan’s ‘Master Discourse,’ a mere imposter. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. For the unsolvable stance of the ‘Master signifier,’ which is unable to grant recognition to the ‘slave’ (since in this case he would cease being master), and yet is dependent on the slave and needs his recognition, see Lev (Above, note 26), p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. The sphere of knowledge represented by the sister/woman at scene 4 is that of ‘family relationships’ (the ’home’). It is based on a different model from the hierarchic arrangement of ‘power over’ people and things that exists in the outside world, in which ‘a violent man is a real man’ (and is represented by Resh Lakish in the past), and that existing within the beit midrash and expressed by the collocation ‘made him’ in Scene 2 (representing relations of control and dominance of Rabbi Yohanan over Resh Lakish, who is beneath the former in the hierarchy). The alternate model is cooperative, ‘power with and power for,’ expressed by the sister in the collocation ‘act for’ [See: D. Francis, 'Culture, Gender and Power Asymmetries and Gender in Conflict Transformation', in: Berghhof handbook for Conflict Management 2004, p. 3–4. Retrieved from http://www.Berghof-handbook.net. For application of these models in analysing relationships between organizations see: T. Rubel-Lifschitz and D. Kazhdan, 'Partnership, Power and Culture: Lessons from an Inter-Organizational Forum' (Hebrew), Organizational Analysis 16 (2012), pp. 45–67]. The knowledge created in the ‘home’ sphere differs from the violent, power-based, physical knowledge of Resh Lakish and from the verbal knowledge of Rabbi Yohanan. The ‘home’ knowledge is emotional, symbolized by the sister’s weeping - an expression which is nonverbal. The verbal language of discourse - feminine, emotional - is direct language. It symbolizes the object as it is, in its ‘natural order’ in reality: according to its place within the family (son, husband, wife). The language of ‘nature’ does not throw upon the object the perceptions of other subjects which include value judgments that are associated with it as a result of the language of the male-cultural discourse, which is a symbolic language that relies on signifiers (words), loaded with images, allegories and metaphors. Compare: Kosman (Above, note 22), pp. 45-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. The gap between the image and reality is largely reminiscent of Frisch's analysis of psychoanalysis, as a body of knowledge used to gain power within societies for psychoanalytic psychotherapy. See S. Frisch, “The legacy of power play in societies for psychoanalytic psychotherapy,” J. Pestalozzi (Ed.), Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in Institutional Settings (London: Karnak books 1998), pp. 175-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)