The Dative in Modern Hebrew

The basic function of the dative case, in Hebrew and in many other languages, is to mark an indirect object bearing the relation of recipient (*datum*) to the event. It therefore typically occurs with verbs of transfer (prototypically verbs of 'giving'). In Hebrew the accusative is unmarked while the dative is marked and represented by the ex-allative preposition ־ל *l-* 'to', which also appears in the inflected form, e.g. לו *lo* 'to-him'. The dative marker is also used to encode the infinitive, e.g., ללכת *lalexet* 'to go'. The dative-marked argument can be governed by verbs as well as by nouns and adjectives.

In Modern Hebrew the dative case is well-established, in constrast to Biblical and especially Early Biblical Hebrew, where the obligatory dative, as a case required by the verbal predicate, is not yet well-governed, and still alternates with expanded forms such as אֶל *ʾel* 'towards' and the archaic form ־עִמָּד *ʿimmāḏ-* 'with', e.g. וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ *way-yiqrā YHWH ʾĕlōhīm ʾɛl hā-ʾāḏām way-yōmɛr lō* 'and God called Adam and said to him:' (Gen. 3.9); הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר נָתַתָּה עִמָּדִי הִוא נָתְנָה־לִּי *hā-ʾiššā ʾăšer nāṯattā ʿimmāḏī hī nāṯǝnā lī* 'the woman that you gave me, she gave (it) to me' (Gen. 3.12).

It is noteworthy that in Modern Hebrew only the 'recipient' relation is obligatorily marked by ־ל *l-*, whereas other functions are marked by various expanded particles that have come to be conventionalized for these meanings, e.g. בשביל *bišvil* 'for (lit. in the path of)'; לשם *lešem* 'for the purpose of (lit. to-name-of)'; לכבוד *lixvod* 'for (lit. to-honor-of)'; של *šel* 'of'; עצם־ *ʿeṣem* (lit. bone), e.g. בעצמו *beʿaṣmo* 'by himself', etc. However, indirect objects with non-recipient semantic content are occasionally marked with ־ל *l-* as well. Furthermore, in Modern Hebrew many types of adverbials are associated with the dative marker, e.g. locative: נסעתי לאילת *nasaʿti le-ʾElat* 'I went to Eilat'; purpose: קניתי פרחים לשבת *qaniti praxim le-šabat* 'I bought flowers for Sabbath'; time: חמש דקות לשבע *xameš daqot le-ševaʿ* 'five minutes to seven'; manner: לאט/לאיטו *leʾaṭ/leʾiṭo* 'slowly (lit. to-slow/to-his-slow)', and various sentence adverbials, e.g. למעשה 'in fact', 'actually', and so forth.

Datives are prototypically animate and thus have the potential of being affected by the event. Consequently, employing the dative with inanimate entities has the force of ascribing an animacy of sorts, and therefore agency, to them, e.g., בלב הבריכה פעפעה לה מזרקה חרישית *be-lev ha-brexa piʿpeʿa la mizraqa xarišit* 'in the middle of the pool, a fountain was bubbling quietly to itself (lit. to-it)' (A. Oz, *Story* 356).

In Modern Hebrew, as in many European languages, the dative element is adjacent to the verb in the unmarked word order, and precedes the direct object, e.g., הוא תפס לי את המקום *hu tafas li ʾet ha-maqom* 'he took my (lit. to-me) place', whereas in Biblical and post-Biblical Hebrew, the direct object generally precedes the indirect object. This change from the classical word order, like some of the other manifestations of the increasingly dative orientation of Modern Hebrew, is first attested in the 1920s–1940s, in the language of the first generation native speakers of Modern Hebrew (Mishor 1994), probably owing to Russian, Polish and Yiddish influence on the Hebrew spoken by their non-native parents.

This dative-first ordering is the unmarked option in Modern Hebrew when the datival argument is a definite N(oun) P(hrase) or pronoun (i.e. a referential or presupposed element). Similarly, with intransitive verbs the unmarked order is verb + datival element (unstressed) + postposed subject, e.g., כואב לי הראש *ko'ev li ha-roš* 'I have a headache (lit. hurts to-me the-head)'; לא זכור לי שמו *lo zaxur li šmo* 'I can't remember his name (lit. not remembered to-me his-name)'; מגיע לו כבוד *magiaʿ lo kavod* 'he deserves respect (lit. comes to-him respect)'. However, when the direct object or the subject are focused or emphasized, the dative appears at the end of the clause, e.g., את המחשב כבר קלקלת לה, מה עוד אתה רוצה לקלקל?! *ʾet ha-maxšev kvar qilqalta la, ma ʿod ʾata roṣe leqalqel?* 'you've already wrecked her computer,

what else do you want to wreck?! (lit. the computer-ACC you already ruined to-her, what else do you want to ruin?!)'.

Depending on whether the dative is governed by the verb (or a deverbal form) or not, one can distinguish between obligatory and 'free' (*nonvalence* or non-lexical) datives. Nonvalence datives in Modern Hebrew can be divided into five categories, as detailed below. The distinction between them depends, in general terms, on the affectedness of the referent and on the extent of his/her involvement in the event, as perceived by the speaker. Hence, some of these datives are interpreted at the suprasentential level, i.e. at the level of the utterance (pragmatics, illocution).

1. The possessive dative

In Semitic languages the preposition ל- *l-* is often used as a genitive marker, predominantly to introduce a human possessor, e.g. in Biblical Hebrew: מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד *mizmōr la-Dāwid* 'a psalm of (by) David' (Ps. 22.11); and also in the relative construction אשר ל-, e.g.: שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לִשְׁלֹמֹה *šīr haš-šīrīm 'ăšer li-Šlōmō* 'the Song of songs, of Solomon' (Song 1.1). In post-Biblical Hebrew the dative alternates with the unmarked genitive של *šel*. Some restricted biblical uses of the possessive dative have been retained in Modern Hebrew, e.g. in referring to authorship, הספר "מיכאל שלי" לעמוס עוז *ha-sefer* Mixa'el šeli *le-ʿAmos ʿOz* 'the book *My Michael* by (lit. of/to) Amos Oz', and in names of institutions, e.g. הקרן הקיימת לישראל *ha-qeren ha-qayemet le-Isra'el* 'the Jewish National Fund (lit. the permanent fund to/of Israel)'.

Furthermore, as in many non-*habere* languages, the dative marker also functions as a possessive marker when co-occurring with the verb היה *haya* 'be' in the past and future tenses, or with the present-tense existential verboid form יש *yeš*, e.g., היה/יהיה/יש לו כסף *haya/yihye/yeš lo kesef* 'he had/will have/has (lit. to-him there-is) money'. In Biblical Hebrew equivalent sentences in the present tense generally appear without an overt existential predicate. Modern Hebrew likewise allows the possessive ל- *l-* to occur without the overt existential יש *yeš* in some marked environments, e.g., היה מלך ולו שלוש בנות *hayo haya melex ve-lo šaloš banot* 'once upon a time there was a king and he had three daughters (lit. to-him three

daughters)'; לכובע שלי שלוש פינות *la-kovaʿ šeli šaloš pinot* 'my hat has three corners (lit. to-hat of-mine three corners; from an Israeli children's song)'; בקשה לי אליך *baqaša li 'elexa* 'I have a request of you (lit. a-request to-me DAT to-you)' versus יש לי בקשה אליך *yeš li baqaša 'elexa* (lit. there is to-me DAT a request to-you).

The nonvalence dative also frequently competes with the ordinary genitive של *šel* 'of' and with the adnominal possessive suffix in the expression of inalienable possession. That is, it denotes a participant who stands (as a possessor) in a whole-part relationship to an affected element (the exact nature of this whole-part relationship is sometimes pragmatically determined), and is therefore affected by the event himself, e.g., נשבר לי הלב לראות אותו כך *nišbar li ha-lev lir'ot 'oto kax* 'It breaks my heart to see him so (lit. broken to-me the-heart to see him so)', versus לבי נשבר לראותו כך *libi nišbar lir'oto kax* (lit. my-heart is broken to see-him so). The latter construction is literary or archaic and is quite rare in the contemporary language.

Possessive datives behave like full arguments in that they may appear as full NPs, rather than clitics, and may be focused and questioned. They occur with verbs that denote an action which affects the possessor or causes him or her to undergo change. With perceptual verbs they often denote a possessor who is involuntarily subjected to the event, e.g., רואים לה את התחתונים *ro'im la 'et ha-taxtonim* 'Her underwear is showing (lit. see-impersonal to-her the underwear)'. The expression of an animate referent in non-subject position introduced by the dative clitic conveys a lesser degree of involvement of the referent or denotes a referent whose responsibility or agentivity is denied, e.g., נולד לשרה בן *nolad le-Sara ben* 'a son was born to Sarah'; אבדו לדני המפתחות *'avdu le-Dani ha-maftexot* 'Dani lost his keys (lit. were-lost to-Dani the-keys)'.

2. Dative of interest

The dative of interest, traditionally known as *dativus commodi/incommodi* marks the affected argument as 'benefactee' or 'deprivee', e.g., הוא החנה לרותי את המכונית *hu hexna le-Ruti 'et ha-mexonit* 'he parked Ruti's car for her (lit. he parked the car to-Ruti)' versus הוא

הרס לרותי את המכונית *hu haras le-Ruti ʾet ha-mexonit* 'he wrecked Ruti's (lit. to-Ruti) car'.

The nature of the affectedness is sometimes only pragmatically determined, e.g., לקחתי לו את התיק *laqaxti lo ʾet ha-tiq* (lit. I took to-him the bag) may indicate either 'I took the bag for him' or 'I took (stole) his bag from him'.

This kind of dative is frequently used in colloquial (lexicalized) expressions such as יופי לך! *yofi lexa!* 'good for you! (lit. nice to-you)'; טוב לך?! *ṭov lexa?!* 'are you happy now?; or 'I tell you, no matter what you think, I'm going to do as I please and you won't stop me' (lit. good to-you?!).

3. THE EXPERIENCER DATIVE

Typically, and most conspicuously in 'dative oriented' languages (such as the Slavic, German and Romance languages), experiential predicates do not occur with a grammatical subject. Instead, they select a dative-marked (i.e. thematic) subject representing the experiencer, i.e. the possessor of the action and its result. These constructions contrast with the unmarked (nominative) construction, e.g., נדמה לי *nidme li* 'it seems to me' versus דומני *dom-ani* (lit. seem-I); נמאס לי *nimʾas li* 'I am sick of (lit. disliked to-me)' versus אני מואס *ʾani moʾes* (lit. I dislike). Like possessive datives, experiencer datives behave like full arguments (i.e. they can appear as full NPs and can be focused/questioned). They appear frequently in impersonal constructions, e.g., עצוב לרותי *ʿaṣuv le-Ruti* (lit. it.sad to-Ruti) versus רותי עצובה *Ruti ʿaṣuva*, both of which mean 'Ruti is sad'); לא איכפת לרותי *loʾ ʾixpat le-Ruti* 'Ruti doesn't care (lit. it.not care to-Ruti)'; למי קר? *who is cold? (lit. to-whom it.is-cold?)'.

The increasing preference for the experiencer dative in contemporary Hebrew is best exemplified by the prevalence of lexicalized constructions such as בא לי לאכול *ba li leʾexol* 'I feel like eating (lit. it.is-coming to-me to-eat)'; הולך לו עם נשים *holex lo ʿim našim* 'he is successful with women (lit. it.is-going to-him with women)'.

4. THE ETHICAL DATIVE

In the Indo-European languages this dative is common in familiar speech and writing, but is very rare in classical Semitic. Unlike the nonva-lence datives discussed above, the ethical dative of Modern Hebrew denotes a referent that is not an argument in the sentence, nor even a participant in the event it describes, but is merely an onlooker perceived as being intensely affected by, or as having a strong emotional stake in, the state of affairs described in the sentence, e.g., באמצע השיעור הוא נכנס לי *be-ʾemṣaʿ ha-šiʿur hu nixnas li* 'in the middle of the class he walked in (lit. to-me) [in his impudence]'; שוב הילד חלה לכם?! *šuv ha-yeled xala laxem?!* 'the kid got sick on you (lit. to-you) again?! [you have my sympathy]'.

Like other expanded uses of the nonvalence dative, the use of this dative in Modern Hebrew was probably inspired by Slavic-Yiddish, as reflected by loan translations such as שתהיה לי בריא *šetihye li bari* 'be well (lit. to-me)'; לא בוער לי *lo boʿer li* 'I'm not in any hurry (lit. it.not-burn to-me)'.

The ethical dative must be adjacent to the verb. Unlike the datives discussed previously, it cannot be focused or questioned, and it is nearly always a pronoun. It can also appear as a full NP, but these cases are rare and are more properly analyzed as borderline cases of the possessive dative, e.g., אל תקלקל לדני את הילדה *ʾal teqalqel le-Dani ʾet ha-yalda* 'don't spoil Dani's girl (lit. don't spoil to-Dani the-girl)'. This dative also differs from those discussed above in that it is a non-propositional element in the sentence which is interpreted at the suprasentential level, i.e. at the pragmatic or illocutionary level. By using this dative personal pronoun, the speaker invites the hearer to share his feelings about the event or to be a witness to it.

5. SUBJECT-COREFERENTIAL DATIVE PRONOUN

Such a pronominal post-verbal dative is coreferential with the subject, e.g., ככה סתם שוטטנו לנו בשדרות קק"ל *kaxa stam šoṭaṭnu lanu bi-sderot qaqal* 'we were just hanging around (lit. to-us) on Qaqal Boulevard' (Israeli song by A. Hillel); ישבתי לי בפינה ושתקתי *yašavti li ba-pina ve-šataqti* 'I was sitting (lit. to-me) [casually] in the-corner and was silent'. Found in both Hebrew and Aramaic, this construction has traditionally been lumped together with the ethical dative. However, this does not seem to be warranted, because the dative pronoun

under discussion must be coreferential with the subject, while the ethical dative (in Modern Hebrew and in Indo-European languages) typically refers to someone other than the subject. Other researchers call this construction the 'reflexive dative' (Borer & Grodzinsky 1986: 185ff.; Berman 1982b: 51ff., among others). However, as a name for the Modern Hebrew construction this term, too, is misleading, since the pronoun in question is not interchangeable with the conventionalized reflexive pronoun עצם ʿeṣem- (unlike in Biblical Hebrew, where the subject-coreferential ל- l- is ambiguous and the reflexive is one of its ordinary meanings). Furthermore, the subject-coreferential dative, unlike the regular reflexive pronoun, can occur with intransitive verbs and with verbs in the middle-reflexive form (typically in the *nifʿal* and *hitpaʿel* templates).

Subject-coreferential datives are also found in Biblical Hebrew, but only on a limited scale and apparently with a different function than their Modern Hebrew counterparts, e.g., in God's command to Abraham לֶךְ־לְךָ מֵאַרְצְךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ *lek ləkå mē-ʾarṣəkå ū-mim-mōlaḏtəka ū-mib-bēt ʾåḇīkå* ('Go [lit. go to you] from your-country and-from-your-mother-land and from-the house (of) your-father') (Gen. 12.1). Evidence suggests that the contemporary construction is not patterned on the Biblical Hebrew dative at all, but was reinvented by the first generation of Modern Hebrew speakers under the influence of similar constructions in Russian and Yiddish (Even-Zohar 1986:31; Halevy 2007: 318, forthcoming:...).

The subject-coreferential dative can be characterized as 'subject-oriented', for it signals that the situation in which the subject is immersed is perceived by the speaker as somehow autonomous, or free from outside intervention. Depending on the context, this sense of autonomy can take on overtones of isolation or loneliness, or of egoistic, frivolous or leisurely action. Since autonomy is prototypically ascribed to animate entities, this dative, when appearing with non-animate subjects, ascribes to them a sense of animacy (See above בלב הבריכה פעפעה לה מזרקה חרישית *be-lev ha-brexa piʿapeʿa la mizraqa xarišit* 'in the middle of the pool, a fountain was bubbling quietly to itself'.

While in Biblical Hebrew this dative is almost exclusively confined to imperative-hortative-jussive constructions, in Modern Hebrew it also appears in narrative contexts, most typically in informal speech.

The subject-coreferential dative can occur with verbs of various classes, most commonly intransitive verbs of motion, stationary and engrossed activity, but also (unlike its Biblical Hebrew counterpart) with transitive verbs, e.g., היא כתבה לה אי-מיילים והילדים קפצו לבד למים *hi katva la ʾi-mailim ve-ha-yeladim qafṣu levad la-mayim* 'she wrote (lit. to-her) e-mails while the kids jumped alone into the water'. In this example, the pronominal *l-* implies that the activity was conducted for the subject's own pleasure, while marking it as a contrastive focus.

Like the Modern Hebrew ethical dative discussed above, and unlike other nonvalence datives, the subject-coreferential dative can only appear as a clitic, and cannot be focused or questioned. This stems from the fact that, like the modern ethical dative, it is a non-propositional element that functions on the pragmatic level: it signals a re-evaluative attitude on the part of the speaker towards the subject and the situation in which he/she/it is immersed. It can be said that both these datives have the effect of enlisting the solidarity or complicity of the hearer, or simply of creating a greater affective closeness between hearer, speaker and message.

It is important to note that this construction differs in essential ways from a formally identical construction attested in Mishnaic Hebrew, which serves as an aspectual marker indicating ingressive as opposed to stative meaning: הלך לו *halax lo*, for example, in Mishnaic Hebrew means '(he) went off, departed', in contrast to the bare הלך *halax* '(he) went'. In Modern Hebrew, the same datival construction yields an inference of 'fancy! he just went off' or 'he was walking at his leisure' (depending on the particular flavor with which the speaker wishes to imbue the utterance).

In contrast to earlier stages of the language, Modern Hebrew may thus be characterized typologically as a dative-oriented language.

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