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Syntax: Modern Hebrew

1. Introduction

Modern Hebrew is a fusion language, including elements from all the historical layers of the language. To quote Ben-Hayyim (1992:59), “nothing in it has died and so there exist—and are in use—different chronological layers side by side, not on top of one another as in languages with a historic continuity”. However, very frequently, in cases in which A’ succeeds A of an earlier layer of Hebrew, both A and A’ coexist, though differentiated either functionally or stylistically. In addition, apart from recent grammaticalizations and pragmatizations, there are also inherited constructions that are reinterpreted under the influence of similar constructions found in the contact-languages to which Hebrew speakers/writers have been exposed over the more than one hundred years of its existence, especially Slav-Yiddish at the revival time and English in more recent decades.

Unlike morphology, the syntax of Modern Hebrew is dynamic and subject to rapid changes. The microsyntax (‘internal form’) of Modern Hebrew is Semitic (Goldenberg 1996), though there are a few scholars who contend that it is a distinct Europanized language.

different from its classical Semitic origin (Rosén suggested that it be renamed ‘Israeli Hebrew’). Yet, the macrosyntax displays strong influence of European languages. Its Semitic essence is clearly demonstrated by the use of the pure nominal clause (lacking a copula; → Nominal Clause), word order of determinant noun before determiner (→ Word Order), agreement between noun and adjective (→ Agreement), and the profuse use of the genitive construction of construct state nominals (→ Construct State). Unlike some other spoken Semitic languages (e.g., nea-Aramaic and neo-Ethiopian languages), Modern Hebrew still preserves the inherited (Hebrew, Semitic) patterns of verbs and nouns. Synthetic verb and noun patterns, however, are employed in complementary distribution with analytic constructions comprised of a semantically depleted verb or noun and a nominal adjunct carrying the lexical burden of the expression (Halevy 2000b). Transitivity of unergative/unaccusative (→ Unaccusative) verbs is spreading within present-day Hebrew, while, on the other hand, there is a remarkable expansion of datival constructions (→ Dative).

Modern Hebrew is susceptible to rapid processes of change not only because of its intensive exposure to European languages, but also due to the special circumstances of its relatively recent revival as a medium of everyday and casual usage. While in normative usage the definite article serves frequently for marking of definiteness in the construct state (→ Agreement), the genitive noun, in colloquial language it may alternatively co-occur occasionally as superlatives (possibly English-induced). As a result, the definite article is not attached to the adjective as normatively required, but is rather preposed as a definite marker of the entire phrase, e.g., תדה איה ha-yosi ha-żot 'she is one of the most talented actresses'.

A deviation from the classical order of determine before determiner and from agreement in definiteness occurs in a very limited number of cases, crucially where the determiner is interpreted as a ‘semantic prefix’, e.g., ha-yossiqot ‘parties of Bar-Mitzva’, instead of normative הבנין bne īsra. In contemporary Hebrew the comparative determiners הבנות ha-yaqar ‘Dear Dan’. In colloquial language, however, undetermined vocatives prevail, too (possibly Yiddish/English-induced), e.g., gveret ‘Miss, Lady’; מטומי motem ‘driver’; המורה ha-more ‘Teacher’. Hebrew has retained the classical agreement between noun and adjective, including demonstrative modifiers following a head noun, not only in gender and number, but also in definiteness. However, with respect to the marking of definiteness in the construct state there is often inconsistency between normative and casual usage. While in normative usage the definite article is attached only once, to the genitive noun, in colloquial language it may be preposed to the entire construct state, particularly, but not only, in highly lexicalized constructs, e.g., ha-orexi ha-din ‘the lawyer’, instead of helyi ha-orexi ‘orex ha-din; and in the same fashion in some lexicalized constructs the plural is suffixed to the genitive noun, at the end of the construct form, and not to the construct head noun, e.g., הבנות ha-yaqar ‘Dear Dan’. In colloquial discourse the definite article serves frequently for emotive meaning, e.g., ha-yosi ha-żot ‘That (the) Yossi is smart!’. With nouns denoting time the definite article denotes ‘this’, e.g., הבנות ha-orex ‘this evening’. In colloquial discourse the definite article serves frequently for emotive meaning, e.g., ha-yosi ha-żot ‘That (the) Yossi is smart!’.

Generic nouns are commonly marked by a neutralized definite article, e.g., תדה ha-dat ‘religion’. In equational sentences the generic noun may alternatively co-occur in the indefinite form, namely without any special marking, e.g., peguin ba-‘orex ha-żot ‘of (the) penguin is a bird’ (→ Generic). Hebrew has only definite articles, hence colloquial language utilizes various devices to denote indefiniteness,
particular use of the unstressed numeral דודא 'exad (and respectively in feminine and plural forms) and והذهب 'ezo, e.g., מֵרִית pagαšši baṣur 'exad/ezo, baṣur 'I met some guy' (Agmon-Fruchtman 1982; Wintner 2000; for a generative account see Danon 2001).

3. The Copula

(→ Copula; Nominal Clause; Extraposition)

In Biblical Hebrew 3rd person pronouns in the middle or at the end of a nominal sentence stand for resumptive pronouns of an extraposition construction (used in 3rd person even when the subject is a 1st or 2nd person pronoun). However, due to the weakening of nominal sentences and to the fact that the expressive value of the extraposition is worn out, 3rd person pronouns evolved in Modern Hebrew into agreement markers reinterpreted as copular markers similar to verbal forms in Indo-European languages (Berman and Grosu 1976; Goldenberg 2005; for generative accounts see Doron 1986; Greenberg 2002; 2008), e.g., והذهب הוות אום והנה ha-hefex hu ha-naxon 'the opposite is the truth'. Copular markers can be realized with זה ze 'it/this', מתי mi 'who', and הנה ma 'what', e.g., והذهب זוהי-ゼ 'that's it' (available only in 3rd person singular); הנה/ha-dibur hino / ha-naxon 'talking is a characteristic of'. In Modern Hebrew in a very limited fashion and journalistic writing, e.g., כמדומני ki-mdumani 'it seems to me' (employed in Modern Hebrew only for 3rd person); and respectively in feminine and pluralاري sømøn 'you are not connected'. Reduced nominal predicates suffixed by possessive pronouns occur occasionally in some restricted forms of one-term sentences (infrequently evidenced in Biblical Hebrew), e.g., ויהי ašrexa 'you must be lucky (lit. 'your happiness')'; ובא be-šuvo 'on his returning (when he returned)'. Construct states with a gerundive כמדומני / כימי 'it seems to me' (lit. 'in my desire'). Reduced predicates suffixed by a 1st person singular personal pronoun can be encountered in a limited number of participles of Rabbinic Hebrew origin, e.g., אני bu ha-menahel 'I (and nobody else) am the manager'. Extraposed constructions with postposed 3rd person independent pronouns (attested in Biblical Hebrew) are rare, e.g., אני bu ha-menahel 'I (and nobody else) am the manager'. In colloquial language, הנה hine (lit. 'here, behold') plus a suffixed pronoun features as copula, e.g., מבוגר מבוגר אחרון שבל חמיד ha-dibur hino me'aßen 'it is a characteristic of the human species'. In colloquial language, noninflected, invariable, זה ze 'it (lit. ‘this’)’ features instead of 3rd person copular forms, e.g., על זה ha-maṭara ze (hi) liḥmod 'the goal is to learn'. Yet, frequently there is a functional distribution between these semi-copular forms. While 3rd person copular pronouns function as identifiers or classifiers of the subject-noun, ze often functions as a comment on the subject-noun (Rosén 1977:247), e.g., יולד בִּנְו יִלָּד̄י הַמַּעֲשָׂה 'Children are (=means) happiness'.

4. Nominal Predicates

Suffixed with a Pronominal Subject

Unlike verbal predicates, the subject of a nominal predicate is not included in it. Nevertheless, in some exceptional cases a nominal predicate can co-occur with a suffixed pronominal subject, e.g., as person-like copular, e.g., הוא bino / ha-rebu 'he is'; as object-like personal pronoun attached to an existential verboid: אני bu ha-naxon 'you are people' (employed in Modern Hebrew only for 3rd person); and respectively "enxa mεxυβαρ 'you are not connected'. Reduced nominal predicates suffixed by possessive pronouns occur occasionally in some restricted forms of one-term sentences (infrequently evidenced in Biblical Hebrew), e.g., ויהי ašrexa 'you must be lucky (lit. 'your happiness')'; ובא be-šuvo 'on his returning (when he returned)'. Construct states with a gerundive כמדומני / כימי 'it seems to me' (lit. 'in my desire'). Reduced predicates suffixed by a 1st person singular personal pronoun can be encountered in a limited number of participles of Rabbinic Hebrew origin, e.g., אני bu ha-menahel 'I (and nobody else) am the manager'. Extraposed constructions with postposed 3rd person independent pronouns (attested in Biblical Hebrew) are rare, e.g., אני bu ha-menahel 'I (and nobody else) am the manager'. In colloquial language, הנה hine (lit. 'here, behold') plus a suffixed pronoun features as copula, e.g., מבוגר מבוגר אחרון שבל חמיד ha-dibur hino me'aßen 'it is a characteristic of the human species'. In colloquial language, noninflected, invariable, זה ze 'it (lit. ‘this’)’ features instead of 3rd person copular forms, e.g., על זה ha-maṭara ze (hi) liḥmod 'the goal is to learn'. Yet, frequently there is a functional distribution between these semi-copular forms. While 3rd person copular pronouns function as identifiers or classifiers of the subject-noun, ze often functions as a comment on the subject-noun (Rosén 1977:247), e.g., יולד בִּנְו יִלָּד̄י הַמַּעֲשָׂה 'Children are (=means) happiness'.
5. Possessive Constructions and the Genitive Relation

Modern Hebrew is a ‘non-habere’ language, with no distinct verb meaning ‘have’ or ‘possess’. To mark possession Hebrew employs an existential predicate, for present tense the verb שָׁלֹשׁ balanced with no distinct verb meaning ‘have’ or ‘possess’. Typically encoded (in possessive and existential constructions alike) with features normally associated with the object, e.g., שָׁלֹשׁ בְּכֵלָה בְּצִוְלָה שָׁלֹשׁ הָא-שֵׁפֶר ‘I have a book (lit. “there is to me [a] book”).’ However, as a presentational noun (non-topical) the syntactic position of the possessee-noun is not clear, as in the definite construction שָׁלֹשׁ בְּכֵלָה בְּצִוְלָה שָׁלֹשׁ הָא-שֵׁפֶר ‘I have a book (lit. “there is to me [a] book”).’

Definite constructs comprised of an adjectival head (singular or plural) and a construct noun in the plural function as superlative genitives, e.g., נִכְנֵס גדוֹל הָא-וֹמָן ‘the greatest artists’. In newly emerging compounds with a nominal component reanalyzed as a semantic suffix or prefix, the morphosyntactic properties of the classical construct are not strictly kept, e.g., בתו קֹדֶם חַבֶּר יֶהוּדִי ‘friend’s card/ticket’, تحديث שָׁלֹשׁ בְּכֵלָה ‘very loudly (lit. ‘in/with voices of voices’).’

Possessive datives encoded without the overt existential שָׁלֹשׁ בְּכֵלָה שָׁלֹשׁ הָא-שֵׁפֶר as commonly used in Biblical Hebrew can be encountered in some special environments, e.g., התו שָׁלֹשׁ בְּכֵלָה שָׁלֹשׁ הָא-שֵׁפֶר ‘I have a request of you (lit. ‘I have a request to me to you’).’ The genitive relation provides Modern Hebrew with a rich and varied set of constructions for expressing the relation between two nouns, or between a noun and its modifier. Modern Hebrew integrates the Biblical annexation in the construct state along with the post-Biblical ( Mishnaic) שָׁלֹשׁ phrase and double genitive ( םוּשָׁנַב Construct State; Genitive), e.g., קַארַט קַארַט ‘member(ship) card’, קַארַט קַארַט ‘a friend’s card/ticket’, קַארַט קַארַט lit. ‘card/ticket of his of a friend’. Modern Hebrew has, however, developed a functional distinction (stylistic, semantic, and sometimes syntactic) between these inherited constructions. The construct state is the bound and lexicalized form, preserved for vocabulary extension by lexicalized compounds, and for annexation of definite nouns and numerals. The analytic שָׁלֹשֶׁה phrase, on the other hand, is the free construction, the relations between its components more transparent. In colloquial language this construction is preferred particularly, but not exclusively, to express possessive relationships. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that the semantic relationships between the constituents in the genitive construction are very wide-ranging, and that possessiveness is only one of them. Inherited paronomastic constructs, mostly in the plural (like in Rabbinc Hebrew), are utilized for intensification, e.g., בְּקַוָּה בְּקַוָּה תְּרוּפָּה ‘very loudly (lit. ‘in/with voices of voices’).’

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In addition, Modern Hebrew makes ample use of the inherited adjectival constructs. The ‘reversed adjectival construct’ co-occurs in lexicalized expressions, e.g., yeledeq
gsar re’iya ‘a shortsighted boy’ (Goldenberg 1998d; Halevy 2000b; for a different perspective see Rosén 1968:98–101); and also adjectival constructs with stative verbs, notably verbs of abundance and wearing/covering otherwise co-occurring with applicative -b be-with, e.g., garqad revuyat mayim ‘watered/saturated land’. Biblical construct states may also stand for periphrastic adjectives, e.g., לארשי (anašim) bne tarbut ‘civilized (people)’, הרברע ‘ešet gevra ‘socialite’ (Goldenberg 1998d).

Encoding denominative adjectives with suffix -i in competition with the classical construct represents a departure from classical Hebrew. Unlike in classical Hebrew where the denominative adjective (→ Adjective) with the suffix -i mainly indicates ‘someone or a collective of the origin of’, in Modern Hebrew it is employed as a suffix of denominative adjectives indifferent to their meaning, and it has become a major device for denominal adjective formation. Noun phrases with denominative adjectives first deployed in Modern Hebrew at the revival time under the influence of Russian as equivalents to the inherited classical constructs (Rosén 1977a:192; 1977b:118). Contemporary Hebrew, however, has developed a functional differentiation between them and the construct state, e.g., המורה sevet refu’i ‘medical staff’ (consisting of various professionals in the medical area) versus המורים sevet rof’im ‘physicians’ staff’ (consisting of medical doctors) (Taube 1990). Denominative adjectives of this kind are excluded from predicative position. The semantic and syntactic composition of such phrases is similar to that of phraseological expressions of noun +adjective (Rosén 1977a:83–93; Halevy 1992:331).

Modern Hebrew employs both bound and free possessive pronouns for purposes of stylistic variation or, occasionally, differentiates them semantically, e.g., for distinction between inalienability (appurtenance) and alienability (non-appurtenance possession) יבש bšari ‘my flesh’ versus יהבש ba-bšar šeli ‘my meat’ (Rosén 1977a:151–153). The possessive dative is currently employed when referring to an affected possessor, crucially of an inalienable object, e.g., יברע ילב hy’ar le-roš ‘I have an headache (lit. “aches to me the head”).

6. The Function of Pronouns

Although insertion of overt pronouns (crucially in 1st and 2nd person) is not necessary with past and future tense forms, they are encoded for expressive purposes, for highlighting the subject (as topic or focus) in stamped at -ma at ‘omeret? lit. ‘and you—what do you say?’; or for marking contrastive subjects, e.g., הוא הוא ההא ata dibarta va-ani ‘as you spoke and I have done (it)’.

There is a requirement for an explicit 3rd person subject, whether noun or pronoun, much more than in previous layers of Hebrew, e.g., זו זה שאר בשאר הבור bu be-loto zug ‘her boy-friend is (lit. ‘he’) in the same department’; notably in topicalization, e.g., bu ha-borim—hem tamid yašav ma yomar lah ‘and you—what do I say?; or as a retrospective pronoun bu ‘each person and his own views (lit. ‘his views he’)’. In some exceptional cases of highly literal register, the 3rd person singular pronoun is employed with an endophoric function (referring to previously mentioned content in the text), e.g., bu אמר bu ha-zoo ‘Dani (and none else) is (lit. ‘he he’) the winner’; or as a restrictive pronoun bu ‘each person and his own views (lit. ‘his views he’)’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop), e.g., in both embedded and coordinated clauses Dani yada’ se-yikaseš ‘Dani knew that he would fail (3rd person pro-drop); bu ‘אמר bv ašerše-amarti ‘that is what (lit. ‘he that’) I said’. Yet, 3rd person verbal forms are often to be found without an overt pronoun (treated in generative framework as ‘pro-drop’) (→ Pro-Drop).
pro-drop) her when she left (3rd person pro-drop) and he thought (3rd person pro-drop) what he would say (3rd person pro-drop) to her; and also in relative clauses, e.g., "בָּמָאָרָמָא́ שֵׁי-סיוֹג בְּאֹנוֹ דּוֹדָה ל... in the paper that he introduced (3rd person pro-drop) at the conference he thanked (3rd person pro-drop)...’. 3rd person plural verb forms without the explicit pronoun are currently used to designate impersonality (→ Impersonal Constructions) (Bar 2007).

(Pro)nominal expressions of generic reference in Modern Hebrew can also express impersonal views by using generic nouns and pronouns, e.g., "בּוּדָה יַעַד אֵשָׁי... ba-ben’adam šarix gam lehanot me-ha-xayim ‘a man also needs to enjoy (his) life’ (colloquial); or alternatively "אֵשֶׁי שְׁעֵרָי... anāsim šrixim gam lehanot me-ha-xayim ‘people also need to enjoy (their) life’. A generic 2nd person masculine singular pronoun is employed in speech acts expressing advice, instructions, and general truth, e.g., "אֵשֶׁי בֶּ' אָלֶף... im ’ata be-sara ’ata mitqašer la-sagrit ‘if you (generic) are in trouble you (generic) call the embassy’.

Apart from lexical, inflected demonstratives (→ Demonstrative Pronouns; Deixis) there is widespread use in the current language of invariable (concordless) הָזֶ ‘it’ in the following functions: (a) as a pro-copular marker and particularly as a comment on the subject-noun (see above); (b) as a reference to a situation known in the discourse, or alternatively as a conceptually empty pro-subject (expletive), e.g., "בּוּדָה יַעַד אֵשֶׁי... kaxxi/kaxxa ze ba-xayim ‘it is like that in life’; מִזְּרִית הָזֶ הַמִּזְּרוּ הָני... ze margiš na’im (colloquial) ‘it feels good (nice)’; (c) as a means of foregrounding, e.g., "רְכֵ הָזֶ דּוֹר... רק הוה zer li, libyot gole ‘this is what I’m missing (sarcastically), to be ill’; הָזֶ בסְָאָס... ze bu še-nisa’s ‘it is he who won’; (d) in emphatic context, e.g., in exclamatory expressions, like "זְחבָּזֹ וְזְחוֹ... ze ma-ze mes’damen ‘this is so boring’; and in rhetorical questions, e.g., "בּוּדָה יַעַד אֵשֶׁי...דָא זוּע (שְׁעֵרָי) ex ze (še-)šaxaxta ‘how did you forget (lit. ‘how is it that you forgot’)’; (e) in formal register, as part of a temporal adverbial phrase (presumably rennent of an adverbial clause), e.g., "בּוּדָה יַעַד אֵשֶׁי... (מִזְּרִית) בּוּזָּן רָא... (mi-)ze zman rav ‘it has been a long time (since)’ (Halevy 2006).

The conventionalized pronominal reciprocal expression (→ Reciprocals) in Modern Hebrew is the Rabbinic Hebrew construction of a doubled demonstrative pronoun הָז... הָז ze...ze ‘each other, one another (lit. ‘this (ms)...this (ms))’, where the demonstratives are inflected for gender and number. This reciprocal construction is susceptible to mixed gender (e.g., הָז ze [ms]...אֵש... ha-exad... mišnehu ‘each other, one another (lit. ‘the one...his second one’)’ (also available in the feminine) is an innovation of Modern Hebrew. In higher registers it may be replaced by the reciprocal expression הָז... הָז ze...ez ‘each other, one another (lit. ‘the one...his companion’)’ (available also in feminine singular) represents a higher register (Haleyv 2011a; 2011b).

The reflexive pronoun in Modern Hebrew (→ Reflexive) is the grammaticalized inflected noun עֵמֶש ‘esem ‘self (lit. ‘bone’)’, which came into use in the post-biblical period. Modern Hebrew also encodes reflexivity in the morphological verbal patterns of hitp’del (commonly) and nip’al (rarely), as in Biblical Hebrew and unlike in Mishnaic Hebrew, where the reflexive is almost exclusively encoded in the syntactic construction of a transitive verb and inflected reflexive pronoun esem ‘self’ (→ Binyanim: Modern Hebrew). The functional distinction between reflexives expressed in verbal morphology and in those expressed by syntactic constructions in Modern Hebrew occasionally results in semantic differentiation e.g., מִדְרָכָא עֵמֶש maxar ‘asmu ‘(he) sold himself’ versus הביתקר hitmaker ‘(he) became addicted’.

7. IMPERSONAL CONSTRUCTIONS

(→ Impersonal Constructions)

Impersonalization is associated with agency defocusing and generalization of habitual states of affairs, or, rather, with lack of a distinct (individual, referential) subject. Different constructions ranging on a descending cline from 3rd person plural active to passive and middle voice are employed for denoting an action of an unspecified agent (Taube 2007; Berman 2011). In addition, there is a paradigm consisting of
different parts of speech for weather, circumstantial (‘thetrical’) predicates, and modal and evaluative predicates of syntactically, morphologically, and lexically mixed groups, lacking pronominal and number marking (known in Hebrew literature as מ‘ח zagam, an acronym for yaser guf umatic ‘lacking person and number’, suggested by Rosén 1977a:220).

Unlike their restricted occurrence in Biblical Hebrew, impersonal passives in 3rd person singular are common in Modern Hebrew, generally as a more formal alternative to their active-voice plural-verb counterparts. They can be derived from transitives as well as from intransitive verbs, e.g., יהב הלוחים למשות ‘he will not be forgiven (lit. ‘[it] will not be given to him’)’. Among such verbs, passive lešanot ‘the law’ / יבש חק ‘ze it is confined to more colloquial registers, e.g., זה הרינוים ומרתי אם אתה זה ze birgish li muzar lišmod ‘[it’s] it felt strange to me to hear that’. A subset of subjectless predicates includes one-term sentences consisting of a noun and suffixed pronoun, e.g., בגדי מולם la mašer ‘(it’s) your duty to worry about (i.e., take care of) order’ (Rosén 1977a:218–222; Kuzar 2000).

8. Grammaticalization of Function Words

Modern Hebrew has developed pronominal determiners (adjectives) which did not exist earlier and has also reanalyzed some inherited nominal and adverbal adjuncts. The bound accusative 3rd person ותא oto (and its other 3rd person counterparts), which functioned in Rabbinic Hebrew as an anaphoric demonstrative pronoun (e.g., ותא adam ‘that man’), has been reanalyzed in Modern Hebrew (possibly under the influence of European languages) as a signifier of intense identification, conveying the meaning of ‘that very, self same’, e.g., נתיי ותא אתו מחשב התה oto maxsev ‘I bought the same computer’. The object marker ותא et may be added regardless of the apparent duplication that results, and even with no definite article -ו אתו (the definite article is optional), e.g., נתיי ותא אתו מחשב התה oto maxsev ‘I bought that same computer’, and in colloquial usage נתיי ותא אתו מחשב ככול שלי oto maxsev kmo selxa ‘I bought the same computer as yours’. Yet, its original meaning as an anaphoric demonstrative still prevails in the standard written language (Agmon-Fruchtman 1982:20; Glintert 1989:97).

An innovation of Modern Hebrew is the adjective הוב ka-ze composed of -ב ke- ‘as’ incorporating the definite article and הוב ‘this (one)’ (Is תוא ka-zot, cpl חל נא ka-ele) meaning ‘such’ (possibly inspired by European languages), e.g., הוב בתא הבית ka-ze / הבית ka-ze ‘such a house’. Any preposition can be applied to it, even another -ב ke- ‘as’, which results in duplication (Rosén 1977a:44–53;
Subordinate Clauses

Encoding a relative clause (→ Relative Clause) with a freely movable resumptive (retrospective) pronoun is a notable feature of Modern Hebrew, for example רוח הרוחות הבו ba-siyur še-hitbonanta bo ‘the painting that you looked at (lit. ‘at it’)’, or, alternatively, העיניים הבו ba-siyur še-bo hitbonanta lit. ‘the painting at which you looked’. The asynchronous construction (lacking formal subordination) רוח הרוחות ברו ba-siyur bo hitbonanta represents standard formal language (Reshef 2004). Subject-relatives are occasionally realized with an embedded subject pronoun, e.g., אני אנחנו, אתה לא כל דבר, אל מי אני ‘I, we, you, he, she, it (do) not at all understand’. A direct object resumptive pronoun is regularly omitted in Hebrew (it is encoded only in cases where clarity calls for it). However, in some cases even other resumptive pronouns are omitted, in particular time adverbial pronouns (already attested in Biblical Hebrew), e.g.,ccion hebben, in een dromen ‘we should act before we reach the day (on which) it will already be too late to do something’. Infrequently, in casual usage, some other oblique pronouns are omitted, e.g., השיעות והעונות ba-šita še-hištamašmu (bab) lo mat’ima ‘the system that we used (it) isn’t appropriate’ (Maschler 2011; for a generative framework Doron 1982; Borer 1984). The Biblical relativizer הוא aser ‘who, which’ features only in higher registers in Modern Hebrew, and so does -ה ha- preceding a participle form (in Biblical Hebrew -ה ha- is also found, albeit rarely, as a relativizer of verbs in the past form), e.g., כה ימיות הלומדים את ha-studentim ha-londim kan ‘the students who are studying here’.

Content clauses (→ Content Clause) in Modern Hebrew function in four syntactic roles: subject, predicate, attribute, and object (Biblical Hebrew has no content clauses in the predicate role, while content clauses in the subject and attributive roles are rare), e.g., substative and subject clause הבועה ט緊יא ha-še-hu lo mivzar ‘it is a fact/the fact is that he was not elected’; substative predicate clause הבועה את השם ha-še-en heskem ‘the problem is that there is no agreement’. Content clauses of these types are in common use in Arabic-influenced Medieval Hebrew, however, it seems that their modern use was inspired by the contact-languages of revived Hebrew (Zewi 2009).

In standard formal language subordinating -ש še- is replaced by כי ki, e.g., roš ha-memšala †dan ki lo ʼiser et ha-hesekem ‘the Prime minister claimed that he did not approve/had not approved the agreement’. Replacing -ש še- by כי ki is possible only with a content clause. It is not licensed with a relative clause (Landau 1976; Kogut 1984).

Adverbial clauses are introduced by various function-words (of time, location, manner,
The linking of a subordinate clause to a preceding preposition frequently requires the nucleus of a constituent devoid of semantic content referring to the content of the clause, e.g., cataphoric elements such as *kax* 'so', *ze* 'this/that', or words with a very general semantic content, such as *biglal ha-še-hiskim* 'because of having agreed (lit. 'because of the fact that [he] agreed') (these elements are termed 'space words' in Ornan 1971).

Subordinative conjunctions (*→ Conjunctions*) with *wh*-words (interrogatives), such as *蔗* 'where and when *matay* 'when' are not used in Modern Hebrew syntax (the use of antecedent interrogatives with the subordinator -*še*- is available only for *mi* 'who' and *ma* 'what'). Instead, nouns which belong to the lexical domain of the interrogative word are preferred, e.g., *be-ša* 'when, while', *be-magom* *še* 'where'. In colloquial language, however, -*še*- appears also adjacent to adverbial interrogatives. A construction of interrogatives with the subordinator -*še*- and *lo* 'no' as a generalizing enclitic devoid of negating meaning is an innovation of Modern Hebrew (probably due to Slavic influence), e.g., *le-šan še-lo nelex yir’u* 'otamu 'wherever we go (lit. 'wherever we won’t go'), they will see us’ (Rosén 1977b:73, 229).

### 10. Tenses

The opposition between the verb forms in Modern Hebrew is essentially temporal (present, past, future), except for the imperative. Past and future tense agree with the grammatical subject in number, gender, and person. Past tense has suffix conjugation (*qatal* forms), while future tense has predominantly prefix conjugation (*yiqtol* forms). Present tense is construed in the participle form. It agrees with the grammatical subject only in number and gender. Unlike the situation in European languages, the tense system of Modern Hebrew lacks specific forms for expressing relative tenses. Thus Hebrew does not require sequence of tenses, but instead there is embedding of the 'absolute' time of the situation (as opposed to the speaker's situation), e.g., *al yarid ba-shabbat* 'I didn’t go out because I thought you would call' (Sharvit 2008).

### II. The Participle (*→ Participle*)

The participle, in both its active and passive forms, though morphologically nominal, is tense-characterized and is not exclusively nominal, though it retains nominal and substantivized functions (for the development of the present tense see Gordon 1982; Zewi and Reshev 2009). Unlike the past and future forms, it is not inflected for person, but for gender and number alone. The tense formed with a participle is unmarked for time and modality (similar to the Greek *aorist*: Rosén 1977b:194–195). It can refer to the speaker’s present, but may also refer to the future or past depending on what is implied by the adverbial complement, e.g., *mah nameh utzivy* 'we are leaving tomorrow'. As a descriptive historical present it features in narrative-historical texts, and in telling jokes, conveying a dramatic, emotional dimension. In spoken language active participles in the impersonal form of the 3rd person plural co-occur frequently in modal functions (*→ Optative Expressions*).

One of the distinctive features of Modern Hebrew is the remarkable extension of passive participle forms (*→ Passive*), crucially in the patterns of *mefo’al* and *mufal*, which refer not to the result of an action, but to the noun associated with the verb, or are denominative in the first place, e.g., *te’ur mofarat* 'a detailed (=with details) description'; *ülavla mešubese* 'checkered shirt'. Modern Hebrew also utilizes *mefo’al* and *mufal* to denote an activity or process that occurs in the present, e.g., *ha-sisma mešulaf* 'the password is changed every month'. The actional passive participles...
of *mefo‘al* and *muf‘al* are employed to denote deliberate and resultative actions or states, whereas the equivalent forms of middle-passive *nifal* and *hitpa‘el* are employed to denote ongoing actions, and are not marked as deliberate actions (→ Binyanim: Modern Hebrew), e.g., הָעַבֵּד הַמַּעֲנָה בַּלַּיְלָה ‘the color changes at night’. Also, as opposed to other adjectival forms, *mefo‘al* and *muf‘al* denote the result of an action, e.g., כִּהֵן זָאֶזֶק ‘strong’—הוֹמֵכֶמ *mexuzaq* ‘strengthened’ (Rosén 1956; Doron 1999; Taube 2009).

12. Modality and Aspect

The loss of Biblical Hebrew morphological distinctions (of the *jussive* and *cortobative*) is compensated in Modern Hebrew by lexical and syntactic means (→ Optative Expressions). Modal ways of expression often interact with the domain of tense/aspect. The common strategy to mark the optative (wish, desire, hope) is by employing the subordinating particle *še*-attached to a future form indicating a potential tense, e.g., מִיָּדֶךָ, *še*-טֵיְלֵך ‘okay, he may go’. The most common lexical expression for denoting a wish is —שֶׁהָלָכָה הָלֶבֶּעָי *še*-were it that (Rabbinic Hebrew inheritance). The simple future is marked as optative or as a mitigated demand in formal language, e.g., אני *yo‘el* (na) אַדְוַיְנִדֵד *adoni l’adom* ‘will you, Sir (lit. ‘will he, my lord’), be so kind as to stand up’.

In directives, e.g., speech-acts of request, suggestion, instruction, permission, and the like, the infinitive construct (with ְלַ-) is currently employed, e.g., אִם אִלֵּהוּ עַל (*N* הַלֵּה הַף) *lo lehafóż* ‘do not disturb’; *lavo maţăr*? ‘shall I come (lit. ‘to come’) tomorrow?’. In some fixed expressions an infinitival form or a nominal form of the verb suffixed with a possessive pronoun denoting the object participant is employed to convey the modal meaning ‘I/we want to’, e.g., נָהָלַת הַלֹּאכְץ *nahalat ha-lokatza* ‘as a reminder (lit. ‘to remind you’); לְדוּרִיתָך *l-idóret* ‘for your information’. Interrogatives such as *lamo* הַלִּכֶּמ ‘why’ followed by a subordinating particle and negator, are employed in spoken language in speech-acts such as giving advice, making suggestions, and posing rhetorical questions, e.g., מִיָּדֶךָ שֶׁל אָזְנִי תַּלְעָס ‘why don’t you not take a vacation?’.

There are also lexico-syntactic constructions for urging or challenging (equivalents to the Biblical Hebrew cortobative), e.g., הָבַה הַהֵב הָנֶא *hava nelex* (formal register) or הָבַה בָּא *bo nelex* ‘let’s go’; קְדִיָּה, הָלוֹלֵם, *qiddim, hol-šem* lit. ‘forward, going (us)’; כֹּל יָדָים, *kol yódím*, lex ‘forward march, get going’. Coordinated verbs with an initial depleted motion verb in syndetic (with the conjunction ְוְ- or asyndetic construction are another lexico-syntactic strategy, e.g., מָעָקֵר הָדוֹר *me-akrer ha-dor* 1c *lexu*-תוּדֵּבַר ‘go (cpl) (and) talk (cpl) with him’.

Grammatical aspect is inflectionally unmarked (→ Aspect: Modern Hebrew; Aspectual Markers). Thus, Modern Hebrew utilizes the tripartite temporal system for modal-aspectual meanings, usually combined with inherited lexical adverbs. Out of the Rabbinic Hebrew modal-aspectual periphrastic system Modern Hebrew makes extensive use only of the התו ‘to be’ in the past + present participle. However, whereas in Rabbinic Hebrew this periphrastic construction denotes a state (→ Syntax: Rabbinic Hebrew), in Modern Hebrew it regularly marks the habitual past (besides its modal-counterfactual function). Habitual action may also be expressed, however, by the simple past, e.g., / הָיָה מִיָּדֶךָ *haye yádá* ‘only a crazy person would go on insisting like that’;
In journalese and narrative style, the future form is employed as a relative tense to denote a terminal point in a sequence of events in the past (attested in Biblical Hebrew, but possibly inspired by European languages), e.g., or by depleted verbs, crucially amad ‘to be about to (lit. ‘to stand’)’ and halax ‘to be going to (lit. ‘to go’)’ in the participle or past form plus infinitive, e.g., Modern Hebrew employs different mor-

phemes and constructions in conditional clauses (→ Conditional Hebrew). The realis conditional is encoded with the conjunction הוא ‘if, whether’. When future forms occur in both pro-
tasis (conditional) and apodosis (consequent), the reference is to something that may happen; when past forms are employed, the reference is to something that conceivably might have occurred, and when encoded in the present, the reference is to a general truth. The counterfac-
tual (irrealis) construction is comprised of the conjunction אילו אילו ‘if’ (negative אילו אילו) plus simple past in the protasis and composite past tense in the apodosis, e.g.,...

13. Word Order

In contrast to Biblical Hebrew, which is classified typologically as a Verb-Subject (VS) language, Modern Hebrew has evolved into a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) language in terms of basic (i.e., unmarked) word order. This change is clearly felt not only in the spoken language, but also in written and formal literary registers. However, Modern Hebrew allows, and in some cases requires, sentences which are predicate-initial, and like in classical Hebrew, noun modifiers (adjectives, determiners, and noun adjuncts) follow the head noun, and in genitive relation the possessee noun precedes the possessor. VS or rhematic order is generally the unmarked order in the following cases (commonly with indefinite subject and unaccusative verb): (a) existentials: נידר נשכחת 'it is raining'; with verbs denoting...
occurrence, e.g., 'there is no kitra nes 'a miracle occurred'; statements of existential possession (involving the verboids shin yeš and מ' en), e.g., they do not remember shin yeš li mənex翁 'I have a car'; (b) assertion of generic situations, e.g., pronouns. Otherwise, non-lexical ה is 'it, this' is employed, e.g., היער ba-erev 'it is only in the evening that she is like that'. Lack of agreement between the rhetemized pronoun and the verb in the substantivized clause occasionally occur, e.g., נ syslogız se-hipqiq 'it is not I who stopped (3ms)'. Furthermore, the substantivized clause may be asyndetic, (forming imperfectly transformed cleft sentences, Goldberg 1998b), e.g., 'Is it you (who) painted it?' (Wertheimer 2001; Bar 2009).

14. Negation

Whereas in Classical Hebrew the negator of nonverbal predicates is mainly מ' en, in Modern Hebrew it is standard to use la לא 'lo. Only for existentials and possessive clauses is מ' en obligatory. The choice between לא lo and מ' en before nominals and participles depends on the stylistic level of the text. In highly literary style it is not recommended to use the compound form מ' en + personal pronoun, e.g., לא ani ze še-hifṣiq 'it is not I who painted it'.

In extrapositional sentences the expressive subject (theme) is fronted (Schwarzwald 1976; Bar 2004), e.g., lidim šedelam batim ushalom יאלדעם se-gdelim bi-tna'im ka-ele 'efsar lehin 'otam 'children who grow up in such conditions—one can understand them'; or in rear extraposition ze ba-dam selo, ha-musiga 'it is in his blood, (the) music'.

For the purposes of extraposition of the lexical component of the predicate Modern Hebrew employs a paronomastic construction of infinitive with מ' le- + finite verb (tautological infinitive, Goldberg 1998c), e.g., תאן nešiqa 'a man shall not park his vehicle in his car' (Kuzar 2002; 2005).
future that have evolved into modal expressions, e.g., לָשׁוּם לא אֵין that is, "lo ye'amem 'unbelievable' (Glinert 1982; Tzivoni 1993b).

A notable feature of Modern Hebrew is the use of doubly negated constructions, crucially with originally positive nouns which evolved into negative expressions. Such are: הלóm קְלוּם ‘nothing (lit. 'something')’, פָּאַר פָּאַר ‘af pa'am ‘never (lit. 'even once')’, רֹאִית רֹאִית ‘af 'exad ‘nobody (lit. 'even one')’, and their cognates. The above negative noun phrases interact with the canonical negators, e.g., לא רֹאִית לא רֹאִית ‘af 'exad lo ba ‘nobody came (lit. 'nobody did not come'). The response in an exchange such as A: ma 'aštâ? B: קְלוּם (instead of הלóm קְלוּם ‘lo klun) ‘A: What have you done? B: Nothing’ is thus considered as an elliptical negation (Levy 2008). In negative polarity contexts with indefinite nouns the construction may imply ‘not even’, e.g., לא בָּתָם אֵין alt. לא בָּתָם קלוּם ‘lo hevanti mila ‘I didn’t understand (even a (single) word’ (literal reading ‘I didn’t understand a word’) (Sharvit 2008). Illogical negation is occasionally realized elsewhere as well, e.g., דע שְׁלֹשֶׁת תֹּפָלָה ad še-lo tešalem lo tikanes ‘you won’t get in unless you pay (lit. 'until you won’t pay you won’t get in').

Modern Hebrew is thus considered a ‘negative concord’ language. Slavo-Yiddish influence is a possible explanation for this shift in Modern Hebrew (Altbauer 1964:2–4).

15. ‘Free’ Dative Constructions (→ Dative)

Modern Hebrew exhibits traits of a dative-oriented language (Berman 1982:33). This is manifested by an expansion of ‘free’ (non-valence, non-lexical) dative clitics deployed for creating greater affective closeness between hearer, speaker, and the message. Most conspicuous is the use of ethical dative pronouns that are not co-referential with any argument in the sentence (absent from other periods of Hebrew, and most likely due to Yiddish influence), e.g., הבָּתָם מַעַל מַעַל ha-yeled gala lanu ‘the child got sick on us (lit. 'to us')’; and likewise the use of the subject co-referential dative pronoun, e.g., יום ‘exad hi pašut naša lah ‘one day she just (simply) left (lit. ‘to her’) [-fancy that! / at her leisure']. Both are non-lexical dative pronouns functioning on the suprasentential (pragmatic, illocution) level (Halevy 2007; Al-Zahre and Boneh 2010). The modern usage of the subject-coreferential dative pronoun is most likely a reinvention of the construction found on a limited scale in Biblical Hebrew. Presumably, like the ethical dative, it spread into Modern Hebrew through the Yiddish-Slavic substrate languages of the first generation of speakers of Modern Hebrew. Due to similar motivation is the increasing preference for possessive datives employed to mark the speaker’s stance regarding the effect on the possessor, e.g., כִּי נוּכָס הנבָּה לְדָרָה niknesu lab la-yeder ‘they entered into her (lit. 'entered to her’) room [~'she didn’t want them to’]. Noteworthy is also the preference for dative marking of the experience role, e.g., לא נומס nım’sas lanu ‘we are sick of (it)’ (lit. ‘loathsome to us’). The preference for dative marking is often so strong that the ordinary non-dative option seems the marked one, having a somewhat different interpretation. Furthermore, as in many European languages, in the unmarked word order there is a preference for dative-first ordering, unlike in Classical Hebrew (Mishor 1994).

16. Changes in Valency and Case-Marking of Role-Participants

Unergative and unaccusative verbs are occasionally subject to transitivization in standard Modern Hebrew depending on the vantage point from which the event is presented, e.g., השיחות תא בא-גמא šaxiti ‘et ba-‘agam ‘I swam the (whole) lake’ (versus בא-גמא ba-‘agam ‘in the lake’); לְכָּל עָשָׁרת הלָצֵא עָשָׁרת תא הַכָּר בָּא-א ‘et ha-kadur la-ša ‘The player kicked the ball into the goal’ (versus -ב בָּא-א ba-‘at be-kicked at’). Transitivity of unergatives/unaccusatives is amply attested in commercial advertising, e.g., לע-אל תאמ פָּסָמ תאמ פָּסָמ tasim ‘el ‘al ‘flying EL AL’ (instead of לע-אל be-‘el ‘al ‘with EL AL’) (Borochovski 1988:21–26).

Modern Hebrew admits diathesis alternations in case-marking or semantic arguments of a verb which leave the form of the verb unchanged, but add to or change the meaning of the verb. The case alternation of accusative (תא ‘et/0) and non-accusative -ב be ‘in’ is maintained especially, but not only, in verbs of contact by motion, e.g., דַּנ מַשָּׁה מָזוּב פָּאַר Dan pulled on the rope (versus

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