BRILL

Superfluous Negation in Modern Hebrew and Its Origins

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Abstract

In this article, we survey a variety of constructions in contemporary Modern Hebrew that include seemingly superfluous instances of negation. These include free relatives, exclamative rhetorical questions, clausal complements of 'until,' 'without,' and 'before,' clausal complements of 'fear'-type verbs, after negated 'surprise,' and the complement of 'almost' (a construction by now obsolete). We identify possible sources for these constructions in pre-modern varieties of Hebrew. When an earlier source cannot be found, we examine earliest attestations of the constructions in modern-era corpora and consider the role of contact (primarily with Yiddish and Slavic) in their development.

Keywords

negation – superfluous negation – expletive negation – Modern Hebrew – language contact

Introduction

Superfluous negation (henceforth Super Neg) is the general term we will use for an instance of negation that appears not to have the usual reversal effect on the truth conditions of the containing sentence.[1] While we believe there are reasons to suspect that this is not a unitary phenomenon (i.e., that, synchronically, not all the kinds of Super Neg that we have identified have the same underlying analysis), we will not attempt an analysis of the various constructions here. Our goal in this short contribution is much more modest. In the following section, we survey the constructions in which Super Neg is observed in contemporary Modern Hebrew. We then ask whether these constructions (and an additional construction, which is by now obsolete) existed in earlier stages of Hebrew and, if not, when they entered the modern language. We identify possible contact-induced sources for Super Neg, focusing primarily on Yiddish and Slavic.

Survey

Contemporary Modern Hebrew exhibits Super Neg with the negative morpheme לא *lo* in a variety of constructions.[2] The negative morpheme generally resists stress when it is "superfluous" (Avinery 1964:242, 253; Eilam 2009).[3]

Free Relative Clauses

Super Neg is observed with relativization from subject, object, and adjunct positions, and with a variety of interrogative pronouns (e.g., מה *ma* 'what,' מי *mi*

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1   The phenomenon is variably referred to in the literature as *expletive, pleonastic, redundant, supplementary*, or *paratactic negation*. The broad definition given above may very well include instances of negation that do have the regular semantic contribution, though masked by other factors. An anonymous reviewer correctly points out, for example, that negation in Y/N questions could be considered superfluous by this broad criterion, even though it still probably has its regular semantic contribution. We leave for future study the proper analysis of the instances of Super Neg identified below, along with the question whether in all or any of them negation truly sheds its normal semantic contribution.

2   In some of these constructions, the negative marker can also have its usual contribution. We set such uses aside. Other negative morphemes in Modern Hebrew do not support Super Neg (see below).

3   The order of presentation of Super Neg constructions roughly represents the amount of attention that the various constructions received in the literature.

'who,' איזה *ʔeyze* 'which,' איפה *ʔeyfo* 'where,' מתי *matay* 'when,' איך *ʔeyx* 'how').[4] With negation, the sentence conveys that the claim does not depend on the precise identity of the free relative's referent (Eilam [2009] notes, employing terminology from the literature on free relatives crosslinguistically, that in Hebrew the inference is primarily one of indifference rather than ignorance).[5]

(1)   מה שדני לא כתב התפרסם בעיתון.
    ma   *še-dani*   *lo*   *katav*   *hitparsem*   *ba-ʕiton*
    what   that-Danny   NEG   wrote   was.published   in.the-newspaper
    'Whatever Danny wrote was published in the newspaper.'
    (Eilam 2009)

Rhetorical Questions Expressing Surprise or Noteworthiness

These interrogatives are used as exclamatives and convey a universal implication (in (2), he was blamed for *everything*).[6]

(2)   במה לא האשימו אותו?!
    be-ma   *lo*   *heʔešimu*   *ʔoto*
    in-what   NEG   blamed.3MPL   him
    'The things he's been blamed for!'

Clausal Complements of עד *ʕad 'until'*

The presence of negation contributes the sense that there is a non-accidental connection between the 'until'-clause event and the matrix event (Eilam 2009; Avinery 1964) such that the 'until'-clause describes a necessary condition for a change in the main-clause event. In (3), the sentence conveys that the team

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4   *Why*-free relatives are ungrammatical in Hebrew, as in many languages (see Citko 2010:222 on Polish; Larson 1987), hence למה *lama* 'why' is not included in the list. See Francez (2015) on negative *lama* interrogatives and their interpretation as positive suggestions.

5   A note about glossing: since we do not commit ourselves to a semantic account of the various uses of superfluous negation in this paper, we gloss negation simply as NEG and rely on the English translations to reflect the fact that in these constructions it does not have the standard effect.

6   A theoretical question we set aside is whether rhetorical questions and exclamatives are grammatically similar or distinct crosslinguistically. In relying for classificatory purposes on formal properties rather than function or use, we follow Eilam's (2009) classification of this construction as a negative rhetorical question. We translate the rhetorical question as an idiomatic English exclamative only because English lacks negative rhetorical questions of this sort. See also Tzivoni (1993:320–321).

is in such bad shape that it would take a Russian billionaire to put it back on track. Without negation, the 'until'-clause receives its usual interpretation.

(3)   עד שלא יגיע מיליארדר רוסי, ניוקאסל תתקשה.
     ʕad   *še-lo*   *yagiaʕ*   *milyarder*   *rusi*   *nukasel*
     until   that-NEG will.arrive billionaire Russian Newcastle
     titkaše
     will.have.trouble
     'Newcastle will be in trouble until a Russian billionaire comes along.'
     (http://sports.walla.co.il/?w=/7/2685702, accessed August 26, 2014)

Clausal Complements of לפני *lifney 'Before,'* בלי *bli 'Without'*
There is more variation among speakers regarding the acceptability of these examples. For those who accept them, the negation contributes the sense of a necessary condition noted above for 'until' (in (4), leaving without an answer is not possible).

(4)   אני לא רוצה שמישהו ייצא מפה בלי שהוא לא קיבל מענה על השאלות שלו.
     ʔani   *lo*   *roce*   *še-mišehu*   *yece*   *mi-po*   *bli*
     I   NEG   want   that-someone will.leave from-here without
     še-hu   *lo*   *kibel*   *maʕane*   *ʕal*   *ha-šeʔelot*   *šelo*
     that-he NEG received response on   the-questions his
     'I don't want anyone to leave here without having gotten answers to his questions.'
     (Protocol of the Tel Aviv-Yafo local Design and Building Committee meeting of Aug. 24, 2011, accessed August 31, 2014)[7]

Embedded under Negated 'Surprise'[8]
Negation in the embedded clause is optional and is naturally used when the speaker takes issue with an opposing expectation in the discourse. In (5), for example, the expectation that 'he' may be behind the incident is considered by the speaker to be at odds with the prevailing view. Super Neg is restricted to sentences with future tense morphology in the matrix clause, which, notably, involve the complementizer 'if,' raising the possibility that the clause under 'if' is a conditional adjunct clause. In the past tense, 'surprise' takes an ordinary 'that'-complement and Super Neg is not licensed.

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7 See the website at http://www.tel-aviv.gov.il/Tolive/Infrastructures/Hadaot/פרוטוקול מליאת הועדה המקומית (תוכנית בניין עיר) - סטנוגרמה.pdf.

8 The pattern may extend to other expressions of expectation, e.g., שאני אמות אם ... *še-ʔani ʔamut ʔim* ... 'I'll be damned (lit. dead) if. . . .'

(5) אני לא אתפלא אם הוא לא יזם את כל התקרית המכוערת הזו.

Ɂani   lo   Ɂetpale   Ɂim   hu   lo   yazam   Ɂet   kol
I   NEG will.be.surprised if   he   NEG initiated ACC all

ha-takrit   ha- mexoɁeret   ha-zo
the-incident   the-ugly   the-this

'I wouldn't be surprised if he is the one behind this ugly incident.'
(Haim Kadman, *ŠkiɁa Ɂafrikanit* 'African Sunset,' 2010, http://cafe.the marker.com/blog/288913/display/?archive=2010_8, accessed September 17, 2014)

Clausal Complements of 'Fear'-type Predicates

Another somewhat restricted manifestation of Super Neg occurs in the complements of verbs like פחד *paħad* 'fear,' דאג *daɁag* 'worry,' and חשש *ħašaš* 'worry' (and derived nouns), mainly in colloquial language (Sagi 2000:95).

(6) פחדתי שלא ינדו אותי בגלל שאני ערביה.

paħadti   še-lo   yenadu   Ɂoti
feared.1SG   that-NEG   will.ostracize.3MPL me

biglal   še-Ɂani   Ɂarviya
because   that-I   Arab.FSG

'I was afraid I would be ostracized because I was Arab.'
(http://club.malka-net.co.il/Page.asp?PiD=0.692&id=1773, accessed August 30, 2014)

Clausal Complement of כמעט kimɁat 'Almost'

This is an obsolete construction that was short-lived in early Modern Hebrew. It was used to describe near-disastrous events (Avinery 1964:253; Sagi 1997, 2000; Farstey 2006; in (7), the revival of a blood libel).

(7) בעיר פרערוי [...] כמעט שלא נתחדשה לפני ימים אחדים עלילת הדם.

ba-Ɂir   freroy   kimɁat   še-lo   nithadša   lifney   yamim
in.the-city Freroy   almost   that-NEG   was.renewed   before   days

aħadim   Ɂalilat   ha-dam
ones   libel.CS the-blood

'The blood libel was almost/all but revived in the town of Freroy a few days ago.'
(*Ha-melic*, February 26, 1886)[9]

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9 The town referred to is probably Kremsier in Mähren, today Kroměříž in the Czech Republic.

Origins of Super Neg Constructions: First Attestations and Contact

We begin with a brief overview of other cases of so-called 'redundant' or 'repet-itive' negation that have been identified in Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. We then turn to the contemporary constructions given above. Although in a num-ber of cases there exist sporadic pre-modern examples that resemble the con-temporary uses, we suggest that these constructions were not inherited with superfluous negation from previous layers of Hebrew. We date the earliest attestation of the modern uses in our corpora (Historical Jewish Press [HJP] and the Ben-Yehuda Project [BYP]) and consider the plausible role of contact in their emergence.

Biblical Hebrew

Two types of redundant negation in Biblical Hebrew are discussed by gram-marians (Gesenius 1910:483; Joüon & Muraoka 2006:573). The first is exempli-fied by בְּטֶרֶם לֹא *bə-ṭerɛm lō* 'before NEG' used to express temporal precedence.[10] Although it resembles Modern Hebrew *lifney še-lo*, the lexical choice of prepo-sition is different. Another, more productive, type is *mi-blī/mē-ʾēn.* It is ana-lyzed as containing two negative morphemes, 'mi$_{without}$-NEG,' that give rise to a single, emphatic, negative interpretation (e.g., *mi-blī yōšēḇ* meaning '(land) without inhabitants'). In our survey above, the closest counterparts of these two types are classified together (*lifney/bli še-lo* 'before/without that-NEG'). Note that while negation is realized as *blī/ʾēn* in the Biblical Hebrew construc-tion, in Modern Hebrew it is restricted to *lo* (**bli (še-)ʔeyn*).

Mishnaic Hebrew

Both Ben David (1967) and Azar (1995) mention the same phenomenon under the heading 'repetitive negation,' where negation is marked on each element of a conjunction in addition to matrix negation (e.g., *ʾeyn meḇarkin lo ʿal ha-ner ve-lo ʿal ha-beśamim šel noḵrim*, 'It is not allowed to recite a blessing NEG over candles and NEG over fragrances of foreigners'; Beraḵot 8:6). This is an interest-ing construction that exists in Modern Hebrew too, but we do not consider it an example of Super Neg. The repetition of negation in the two conjuncts con-veys emphasis, on a par with English *neither ... nor*, and the additional repeti-tion of negation in the matrix clause may be an instance of negative concord, obligatory in Modern Hebrew in the context of *N-words*.[11]

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10   Zephaniah 2:2.

11   N-words are Negative expressions such as *nobody* in English אף אחד or *ʔaf ʔexad* 'nobody' in Hebrew. Since Hebrew has negative concord, an N-word is necessarily accompanied by

First Attestations and Possible Contact

Free Relative Clauses

Super Neg in free relative clauses (FRs) is not entirely absent from the language of the Talmud (Avinery 1964:289) and is also attested in responsa of the early modern period (Sagi 1997, 1999).[12,13] The construction is well attested in literary writing of the revival period, with early examples in Modern Hebrew found around the turn of the 20th century (several instances in Mendele's *Be-ʕemek Ha-baxa* [1896–1908] and *Susati* [1909], Eliyahu Maidanik's 1900 publications, and a 1902 letter by Yosef Vitkin).

We observe a clear quantitative preference (43 out of 53 examples in BYP) for Super Neg in כמה *kama* 'how many/much' FRs over three other representative types ('what,' 'who,' and 'which.MSG . . .'). This may be noteworthy in light of Sagi's (1999) finding that *kama* accounted for all examples of Super Neg FRs in the 16th–19th c. responsa, and *kama* together with איך *ʔeyx* 'how' accounted for the majority of relevant examples in the 20th c. responsa. It may also represent a preference for Super Neg in adjunct over argument FRs, a possibility that merits further investigation.

Despite the existence of attested examples in the pre-revival era, grammarians of Modern Hebrew tend to view Super Neg in FRs as resulting from Yiddish or Slavic influence (Garbell 1930; Haspelmath & König 1998; see also Blanc 1956, 1965; Altbauer 1964; Sagi 2000; Eilam 2008, 2009). Haspelmath and König (1998) establish the areal nature of the phenomenon among certain eastern European languages. They speculate that Yiddish borrowed the construction from Russian, Polish, or Ukranian (pp. 615–616). Two points should be noted regarding the proposed borrowing from Yiddish into Hebrew. First, Yiddish has two types of FRs that Hebrew could have potentially borrowed, one expressed with expletive negation and one with the focus particle *nor* 'only' (Haspelmath

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sentential negation. We remain agnostic as to whether the negation that is interpreted in Negative Concord is the actual negative marker or some other, abstract, negative operator (Zeijlstra 2011).

12   It is not entirely clear that negation in the example cited by Avinery is indeed an instance of Super Neg (אמר להן המלך יגע זה לשתי שעות יותר ממה שלא יגעתם אתם כל היום כולו, 'The king said to them: he worked in two hours more than you NEG worked all day long,' Jerusalem Talmud, Berakot 2:8; two other versions of this text lack the comparative *yoter mi-* 'more than,' and negation does not seem superfluous: '. . . he worked in two hours what you did NEG work all day long'; (Šir ha-Širim Raba 6:2, Qohelet Raba 5:11). (Ch. Ariel, p.c.).

13   Sagi mentions four occurrences in 16th–19th c. responsa but does not cite specific examples. A cursory search in the current version of the Responsa Project revealed many more examples. Notably, כמה שלא *kama še-lo* is preceded by כל *kol*, 'every' in many of them.

& König 1998:613). Only the first type is attested in Modern Hebrew.[14] Second, while the Yiddish constructions typically involve subjunctive marking on the verb (e.g., *Vos er* zol *ništ zogn, gleybt zi im ništ* 'Whatever he would tell her, she doesn't believe him,' Schaechter 1986:321), Hebrew Super Neg FRs are found with a variety of tense-aspect markings from early on. Sentence (8) is a 1904 example of Super Neg in a past tense free relative.

(8) [...] וכמה שלא התגעגעתי להיות פעם אחת בקונגרס ולראות את יוצרו

    ve-xama   *še-lo*   *hitgaʕgaʕti* *lihiyot* *paʕam* *aħat*
    and-how.much that-NEG   longed.1SG   to.be   time   one
    ba-kongres   *ve-lirʔot*   *ʔet*   *yocro*
    in.the-congress and-to.see   ACC   his.creator
    'And however much I wanted to attend the [Zionist] Congress once and
    see its creator [...].'
    (I.L. Peretz, *Be-ʕolam ha-ʔotiyot ha-maħkimot*, 1904)

         Rhetorical Questions Expressing Surprise or Noteworthiness
Non-questioning uses of interrogatives are well attested in Biblical, Rabbinic, and Medieval Hebrew (Moshavi 2013, 2014; Stadel 2013; Gryczan 2013), as is the specific use of interrogatives to express exclamation (e.g., with מה *ma* 'what' in Biblical Hebrew; Moshavi 2013). These examples do not contain superfluous negation, however, and therefore the Modern Hebrew construction seems not to have been inherited from these earlier varieties.[15] Our searches reveal many examples in Hebrew literature already in the 19th century, with מי לא *mi lo* 'who

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14   An anonymous reviewer correctly points out that Modern Hebrew does have occurrences
      of 'only' FRs of the sort found in Yiddish:
      i.   *ʔani* *ʔeten*   *lax*   *ma*   *še-rak*   *tirci*
          I   will.give   you   what   that-only   you.will.want
          'I will give you whatever you want.'
      This variety is restricted in Hebrew to particular verbs, and especially *want*, as in (i). Note
      that with other verbs, such as *ask* below, 'only' FRs are degraded in Modern Hebrew:
      ii. **ʔani ʔaʕane*   *lax*   *ʕal*   *ma*   *še-rak*   *tišʔali*
           I   will.answer   you   on   what   that-only   you.will.ask
           Intended: 'I will answer whatever you ask.'
15   One issue under debate in the literature is whether the Biblical Hebrew particle הֲלֹא *hălō*,
      which had a non-negative presentative function in rhetorical questions, should be ana-
      lyzed as a combination of a polar interrogative *hă-* and negation. See Driver (1973) for an
      early discussion and Gzella (2013), Moshavi (2013) for a recent evaluation and additional
      references.

NEG' attested as early as Judah Leib Gordon's *ʔahavat David U-Mixal* (1856) and
מה לא *ma lo* 'what NEG' in Avraham Mapu's *ʔašmat Šomron* (1865).

(9)   נער אדמוני הוא ויפה עינים—דוד הרעה—מי לא יכירנו?!

    naʕar   *ʔadmoni*   *hu*   *vi-yfe*   *ʕeynayim*   *david*
    lad   redheaded   he and-beautiful.CS   eyes   David
    ha-roʕe   *mi*   *lo*   *yakirenu*
    the-shepherd who NEG will.know.him
    'He is a red headed lad with beautiful eyes, David the shepherd, who
    doesn't know him?!'
    (Judah Leib Gordon, *ʔahavat David u-Mixal*, 1856)

A distinct pattern of emergence is observed in comparison to FRs: the major-
ity of examples are found with מי/מה...לא *mi/ma...lo* 'who/what...NEG'
(103/24 respectively in a sample of BYP) while examples based on כמה *kama*
'how many/much' are not attested. Despite the superficial similarity between
the two constructions, this type of Super Neg also seems to have emerged
somewhat earlier than the FR type.

    Eilam (2008, 2009) proposes that while negative rhetorical questions are
common crosslinguistically and may have developed independently in Modern
Hebrew, it is plausible that the construction was in fact calqued from Yiddish.

Clausal Complement of עד *ʕad* 'until'

Examples of *ʕad še* with a negated clause are attested since at least Mishnaic
Hebrew (Braverman 1995:172–173; Morgenstern 2013; possibly from Aramaic;
Rosén 1956:64), but with a temporal precedence meaning as in (10). Avinery
(1964:443) argues that *ʕad* is a variant of *ʕod* 'while' in these cases, such that *ʕad
še-lo* contributes a 'while not' or 'before' meaning.[16] In contemporary Modern
Hebrew, *ʕad* means 'until' and no longer has the 'while' meaning. Early Modern
Hebrew inherited the rabbinic *ʕad še-lo* (Eilam 2008, 2009), with examples
attested in our corpora from the 1860s (11).

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16   According to BDB (p. 725), *'ad* in the sense of 'while' is also found in Biblical Hebrew
    (rare). There are three instances of עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא *'ad 'ăšer lō* in the sense of 'while not' in the
    Bible (all in Ecclesiastes 12:1,2,6), and another occurrence with no complementizer (עַד לֹא
    'ad lō 'while' in Proverbs 8:26).

(10) [...] עד שלא יתחילו במלאכה צא ואמור להם

    ʿad   *še-lo*   *yatḥilu*   *ba-melaḵa*   *ṣe*
    while   that-NEG   will.start.3MPL   in.the-work   go.out.2MSG
    ve-ʾemor   *lahem*
    and-tell   them
    'Before they start working, go out and tell them ...'
    (Original rabbinic use; Babylonian Talmud, Bava Meciʕa 83A)

(11) חובה עלינו לתת תודתנו לאלה החכמים אשר קדמו לעזור לנו עד שלא קראנו אליהם
                                                                 [...]

    ḥova   *ʕaleynu*   *latet*   *todatenu*   *le-ʔele*   *ha-ḥaxamim*   *ʔašer*
    duty   on.us   to.give   our.thanks   to-those   the-wise   who
    kadmu   *laʕazor*   *lanu*   *ʕad*   *še-lo*   *karanu*   *ʔeleyhem*
    were.early   to.help   to.us   while   that-NEG   we.called   to.them
    'We are obliged to the wise who were early to help us before we asked
    them.'
    (Rabbinic type; *Ha-karmel*, May 1, 1868)

A random sample of examples in the Mishnah and Babylonian Talmud revealed
a preference for verbs with past tense morphology in the adjunct. This prefer-
ence seems to have been maintained in early Modern Hebrew (e.g., (11)), still
with the 'before' meaning. The current Super Neg use is observable in the BYP
and HJP from the 1880s:

(12) ...ע"כ נצטוה [הנציב] לבלי צאת מסטשוואן עד שלא יוחלט הדבר בנוגע לתשלומי
                                                                 נזקי המיסיונרים.

    ʕal-ken   *nictava*   [*ha-naciv*]   *li-vli*   *cet*
    therefore   was.ordered.3MSG   [the-commissioner.3MSG]   to-NEG   exit
    mi-setšuan   *ʕad*   *še-lo*   *yuḥlat*   *ha-davar*   *be-nogeaʕ*
    from-Sichuan   until   that-NEG   will.be.decided   the-issue   regarding
    le-tašlumey   *nizkey*   *ha-misyonerim*
    to-payments.CS   damages.CS   the-missionaries
    'Therefore the commissioner was ordered not to leave Sichuan until com-
    pensation is settled for the damage done by the missionaries.'
    (New type; *Ha-melic*, August 1, 1895)

Some of the modern examples utilize the complementizer *ʔašer* (of Biblical
origin). Note the non-past morphology in the 'until'-clause in (12) and the
sense of a non-accidental connection between the events mentioned (recall

(3) above). As is also typical of the contemporary Super Neg use, negation can be omitted in (12) with only a slight change in meaning.

Both the Rabbinic type and the new type of *ʕad še-lo* coexisted for a while in early Modern Hebrew, but by 1920 the new type had become prominent, accounting for over eighty percent of occurrences in our sample. As the new type continued to expand in Modern Hebrew, the Rabbinic type diminished and became rare and archaic (though examples are still found in 1937 and even later, e.g., in the Zionist Orthodox newspaper *Ha-cofe*, probably attributable to its readership's familiarity with the Mishnah and Talmud).

While the contemporary, new *ʕad še-lo* could in principle be seen as a language-internal development, i.e., as a semantic narrowing of an old Hebrew form, it is notable that Yiddish (Schaechter 1986:321) and Russian (Timberlake 2004:464; Abels 2005; Wade 2011:501–502) both have similar Super Neg constructions. Yiddish has been suggested as the source of the Modern Hebrew calque (Eilam 2008, 2009), and seems the more likely source of influence, since negation in the 'until'-clause is optional in Yiddish, as in Modern Hebrew, but obligatory in Russian.[17] Besides the main semantic shift, the greater variety of tense marking in the *ʕad še-lo* adjunct could be a reflection of the same freedom in Yiddish and Russian 'until'-clauses (Schaechter 1986; Abels 2005; Wade 2011:502).

Clausal Complements of לפני *lifney* 'Before', בלי *bli* 'Without'

These forms were not found in BYP or HJP and seem to be more recent. As far as we can tell, they are not mentioned in the literature on Yiddish and Slavic, but both are attested, for example, in German (Krifka 2010) and in French. Interestingly, in French as in Modern Hebrew, there is some disagreement between grammarians as to their acceptability (van der Wouden 1994; Sanchez Valencia et al. 1994). It is possible that these Super Neg uses are an extension of the 'until' construction discussed above and not a direct result of contact.

Embedded under Negated 'Surprise'

The expression of expectation using superfluous negation in 'if'-clauses following negated 'surprise' appears to be a recent development of Modern Hebrew. While לֹא יִפָּלֵא *lo yipale* 'NEG will.surprise' occurs quite frequently in BYP, negation in the 'if'-clause has its usual truth reversal effect:[18]

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17   We refer specifically to *poka … ne* clauses in Russian, in which *poka* 'while, by the time' is obligatorily followed by a negative morpheme to give the meaning of 'until.'

18   Verbal patterns searched for included the roots פ.ל.א *p.l.ʔ*, שׁ.מ.מ *š.m.m*, and י.שׁ.א *š.ʔ.y*.

(13) ועל כן לא יפלא כי רוב העם לא ידעו מה שכתוב במגלות ההן

     ve-ʕal ken   lo   yipale   ki   rov   ha-ʕam   lo
     and-therefore NEG will.be.surprising that most the-people NEG
     yedʕu   ma   še-katuv   ba-megilot   ha-hen
     will.know what that-written in.the-scrolls the-those
     'Therefore it is not surprising that most of the people do not know what
     is written in those scrolls.'
     (Ordinary negation; Ephraim Deinard, *Ha-yaʕar be-ʔeyn Dov*, 1929)

A similar construction exists in English and German (as in *I won't be surprised if he isn't given a hard time*),[19] but, according to our informants, seems not to exist in Russian or in Yiddish.

Clausal Complements of 'Fear'-type Predicates

In Rabbinic and Medieval Hebrew, complements of י.ר.א *y.r.ʔ* 'fear' and other verbs of this class were introduced by both שמא *šema* 'lest' (and other complementizers, e.g., פן *pen*) and שלא *še-lo* 'that-NEG' (Avinery 1964:241–242; Sagi 2000:92). Super Neg uses of *še-lo* in this construction are attested in the early rabbinic texts (Avinery 1964:241ff.), in Medieval Hebrew (Goshen-Gottstein 2006:141–142), in the pre-Haskalah literature (e.g., Luzzatto's *Mesilat Yešarim*, 1740), and from the mid-19th century throughout the revival literature (e.g., (14)). Our search in BYP retrieved thirteen relevant literary occurrences with *še-lo* (clearly the less common construction, as there were hundreds of examples with the specialized complementizers: 422 with *šema* and 703 with *pen*).[20] *šema* and *pen* complementation represents a phenomenon distinct from Super Neg and is today formal and archaic.

(14) נשים טסות והולכות, ממהרות להתענג, לראות עולמן בחייהן, כאילו מתוך יראה
    שלא לאבד שעה קלה לבטלה . . .

     našim   tasot ve-holxot, memaharot lehitʕaneg, lirʔot
     women fly   and-walk, hurry   to.enjoy,   to.see
     ʕolaman be-ħayeyhen, keʔilu mi-tox yirʔa še-lo
     their.world in-their.life, as.if   out.of fear   that-NEG
     leʔabed šaʕa kala le-vatala
     to.lose   hour light to-idleness
     'Women rush by, hurrying to enjoy as much as they can in their lifetime, as if afraid to spend a single hour in vain.'
     ("Ħulša," *Ha-šiloaħ*, Eliyahu Maidanik, May 1904)

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19   See http://baketown.blogspot.co.il/2005_02_01_archive.html, accessed September 17, 2014.

20   The roots searched for were ד.ח.פ *p.ħ.d*, ג.א.ד *d.ʔ.g*, ש.ש.ח *ħ.š.š*, and א.ר.י *y.r.ʔ*.

Super Neg in the complement of 'fear'-type verbs is also widespread crosslinguistically (found in Yiddish, Russian, French, Shakespeare English, 17th-century Dutch, and Latin; Weinreich 1958; Schaechter 1986; Timberlake 2004; van der Wouden 1994, among others). While the construction is quite old in Hebrew, external influences may have facilitated its preservation over the ages. Goshen-Gottstein (2006:141–142) suggests the influence of Arabic on Medieval Hebrew, and the existence of corresponding constructions in Yiddish and Slavic may have played a role more recently.

Clausal Complements of כמעט kimʕat 'Almost'

Super Neg in the complement of *kimʕat* is attested in small numbers in Medieval Hebrew (Goshen-Gottstein 2006:131; Sagi 2000) as well as in responsa of the 16th–19th centuries (Sagi 2000). Our searches show that the construction existed in the late 19th century (with examples attested from 1872) and reached its peak around 1900–1902. A sharp decrease in use is observed around 1905, followed by a gradual decline. Today, Super Neg *kimʕat še-lo* sounds odd to native Hebrew speakers.

(15) שלשום כמעט שלא נקטפו חיי אדם מחמת אי-זהירות של שוטר אנגלי.

šilšom		*kimʕat*	*še-lo*	*niktefu*	*ħayey*

šilšom   *kimʕat*   *še-lo*   *niktefu*   *ħayey*
the.day.before.yesterday   almost   that-NEG   were.plucked   life.CS
ʔadam   *meħamat*   *ʔi-zehirut*   *šel*   *šoter*   *ʔangli*
human   because.of   lack-caution   of   policeman   English
'Two days ago a British officer's carelessness almost cost a man's life.'
(*DoʔAr ha-yom*, November 19, 1931, Jerusalem)

Goshen-Gottstein (2006:131) attributes two occurrences in medieval texts to Arabic influence, and Avinery (1964) attributes the occurrence in Rashi's writing in the 11th–12th c. to French influence. The same construction exists in Yiddish (Schaechter 1986:322; Sadan 1971:121ff.) and in Russian (Wade 2011:113,295; Kagan & Wolf to appear), and was proposed to be another instance of Yiddish influence on Hebrew (perhaps from the 16th century; Sagi 1997, 2000; Farstey 2006). Hebrew prescriptivists shared this view and denounced the use of *kimʕat še-lo* (*Lešonenu la-ʕam*, December 14, 1934).[21]

   Before concluding, we note another construction that is obsolete in contemporary Modern Hebrew and can potentially be analyzed as an instance of Super Neg: -ל *le* 'to/for' and a special negative form (*le-val, li-vli, le-vilti*) in the complement of אסר *ʔasar* 'prohibit, bond.' Examples are attested in earlier

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21   This may be one reason for the disappearance of the construction in Modern Hebrew, an
     issue we must leave for future research.

varieties of Hebrew and in the late 19th-century literature in the BYP and HJP. While Super Neg in complements of prohibition predicates is attested cross-linguistically (van der Wouden 1994:109 mentions 'forbid'), the ambiguity of Hebrew *ʔasar* as meaning both 'prohibit' and 'bond' is compatible in principle with an analysis of the negation as non-superfluous in these examples.[22]

Conclusion

Constructions with superfluous negation in Modern Hebrew do not all share the same path of development. While several constructions were denounced as "vulgar Russianisms or Polishisms"[23] over the years, some disappeared (*kimʕat še-lo*) while others lived on to become part of the Modern Hebrew grammar. Language contact may have reinforced existing patterns of Hebrew ('fear' verbs), led to reanalysis of others (*ʕad še-lo*), and introduced altogether new forms into the language (FRs). A better understanding of the semantic contribution of negation in the different constructions may shed further light on these diverse paths of development.

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22   The scope of our survey is limited to contemporary Hebrew and does not cover every historical case of Super Neg. We enriched the discussion by including obsolete *kimʕat še-lo*, and we suspect there may be similar cases of short-lived Super Neg constructions. One possible instance of Super Neg in Rabbinic Hebrew which did not survive to be part of Modern Hebrew is counterfactual 'if' אלמלא *ʔilmale* or אילולא *ʔilule* (M. Taube, p.c.). *ʔilmale* is used with a negated clause in the following sentence:

    [...] ניצוץ זה היה עומם ונעלם, **אלמלי** המסבות והמאורעות של אותו הזמן **לא** היו מפיחין בו.

nicoc	ze	haya	ʕomem	ve-neʕelam,	ʔilmale		ha-mesibot
spark	this	was	dim	and-disappear	if.COUNTERFACTUAL		the-circumstances
ve-ha-meʔoraʕot	šel	ʔoto	ha-zman	lo	hayu	mefiħin	bo
and-the-events	of	same	the-time	NEG	were	breath.life	in.him

    'This spark would have dimmed and vanished, had the events of that time not brought it back to life.' (Mendele Moxer-Sfarim's *Masʕot Binyamin ha-šliši*, 2nd ed. (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1949–1950), p. 12).

23   Shapiro (1909/1938).

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