

THE MODERN HEBREW ASYNETIC RELATIVE CLAUSE:
THE RISE OF A NEW SYNTACTIC MECHANISM*

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1. One of the variants of the relative clause in Modern Hebrew is an asyndetic construction, which does not include a formal marking of the subordination by means of a relative subordinator. Instead, it is connected to the main clause by a declined preposition containing a resumptive pronoun referring to the head noun, e.g.

- (1) *ha-ulam bo neerax ha-diyun*
the-hall in-it took-place the-discussion
'the hall in which the discussion took place'
(example from Shlesinger 1994: 76)

This construction is not attested in Hebrew prior to the modern period. It is one of the syntactic constructions that separate it from previous linguistic layers.

The rise of the construction is customarily attributed to the contact between English and Hebrew during the British occupation of Palestine (1917-1948). According to the accepted account, it emerged as a direct *calque* on the English zero relative: "since in English it is possible, as is well known, to omit the [relative subordinator] (e.g. *The family he lived with*), one started to do so in Hebrew as well" (Bendavid 1965: 74). The influence of English is considered as the sole factor behind the emergence of the construction.

This article suggests a modification to this explanation. An examination of textual data from the early layer of Modern Hebrew, as well as a structural comparison between the English and the Hebrew constructions, indicate that English had not been the sole factor behind the rise of the construction. The structural comparison reveals significant differences between the languages. The textual data – which were so far overlooked – provide an explanation for these differences and show that change processes started to affect the structure of the Hebrew relative clause long before the contact between English and Hebrew was first created. While English indeed played a role in the rise of the construction, its influence was the culmination of the process rather than its trigger.

A preliminary comment is at place regarding the marked discrepancy between speakers' perception of the construction and its desired status according to prescriptive normative standards. Among speakers, the construction is considered "most elegant"

* Various points in this article benefited from my consultations with scholars in adjacent fields. While I am grateful to all of them, I would especially like to thank Prof. Benjamin Harshav and Prof. Sally Thomason, whose comments and questions helped me to elaborate and clarify my initial ideas.

(Bendavid 1965: 68). They tend to turn to it in a relatively formal style, and it is stylistically associated with "certain intellectual registers" (Rosen 1986: 80), such as journalistic, academic and bureaucratic language (Glinert 1989: 372; Shlesinger 2000: 115, 116). This practice contradicts the demands of prescriptive grammar, which considers it as unacceptable due to its deviation from the inherited grammar (Ben-Asher 1969: 74; Zixronot 1970: 63-66). The construction's diffusion in educated usage does not grant it legitimacy, and language purists consider it as a sign for speakers' insufficient command of the rules of Hebrew grammar (See Bahat 1987: 533; Zixronot 1970: 63-66, various speakers; Yannay 1991; Kaddari 1996: 136).

Such a discrepancy between speakers' perceptions and the actual demands of prescriptive grammar is a common phenomenon in the Hebrew-speaking speech community (Rabin 1977). Despite a decades-long activity of the official linguistic establishment and freelance language planners, no agreed-upon canon of prescriptive rules has been created (Ben-Asher 1969; Rabin 1983: 49-50; Spolsky and Shohamy 1999: 74-75). Moreover, where agreement had been reached among language purists, it is not necessarily known to the general public.¹ Consequently, speakers' judgements concerning the acceptability of linguistic features often contradict explicit and repeated prescriptive demands (Rabin 1977). The asyndetic relative clause is one example for this widespread phenomenon.

This article does not discuss the construction's desired status according to prescriptive normative standards, but concentrates on its presence in actual language practice. The first sections present structural features of the Hebrew relative clause and its asyndetic varieties (sections 2-3), and compare them to English (section 4). The subsequent sections discuss the emergence of the modern asyndetic construction.

2. The relative clause is most frequently introduced in Modern Hebrew, both spoken and written, by an indeclinable relative subordinator *še-*, placed between the head noun and the clause modifying it, e.g.

- (2) *ha-baxur še-dibarnu ito* with-him
 the-boy that-we-spoke with-him
 'the boy with whom we spoke' (example from Berman 1997: 328)

In written and formal language *ha-* alternates with *še-* before present participle forms, and in elevated style *še-* is occasionally substituted by the biblical *ašer* (Berman 1997: 328; Glinert 1989: 361).²

In the written and formal registers an asyndetic variation of the relative clause is also used. In this construction the relative subordinator is absent, and the first slot in

1 A 1970s survey revealed that educated speakers were normally familiar with only around 25 prescriptive rulings (Rabin 1977: 155). Due to changes in school curriculum (Spolsky and Shohamy 1999: 82-87), this number has now probably decreased even further.

2 On the relative clause in previous linguistic layers see Gesenius (1910: §138, 155); Azar (1995: 214-222); Rabin (2000: 171-172); Peretz (1967).

the clause is taken by a declined preposition containing a resumptive pronoun referring to the head noun, e.g.

- (3) *ha-kis 'ot alehem* *yašavnu*
 the-chairs on-them we-sat
 'the chairs on which we sat' (example from Berman 1997: 328)

The declined preposition is an essential component of the construction, and its place is fixed. These properties are especially manifest in the case of the direct object marker. While in the syndetic construction its place can vary and it can also be omitted altogether (Givón 1973), in the parallel asyndetic construction it has to appear, and it is always placed in initial position. As a result, the former construction has several variants, whereas the latter has only one possible format:

- (4) Syndetic construction: a. *ha-yeled še-rina ohevet oto*
 the-boy that-Rina loves him
 b. *ha-yeled še-oto rina ohevet*
 the-boy that-him Rina loves
 c. *ha-yeled še-rina ohevet (ø)*
 the-boy that-Rina loves

- (5) Asyndetic construction: *ha-yeled oto rina ohevet*
 the-boy him Rina loves
 'the boy Rina loves'
 (examples from Borer 1984: 220)

In the case of the indirect object and the adverbial there is a more limited variation, as – diversely from the direct object marker – the prepositions marking them cannot be omitted (Glinert 1989: 362–365, Shlonsky 1992: 444–445). Option (4c) is therefore ruled out, but the freedom in word order presented in options (4a) and (4b) still exists, and the declined preposition can either precede the predicate or follow it. In the asyndetic construction, on the other hand, the fronting of the declined preposition is obligatory in all syntactic cases, and it is as central to the structure of the construction as the absence of the relative subordinator.

The four options presented in examples (4) and (5) differ in their level of formality and in their acceptability according to prescriptive standards, but all of them are structurally well-formed, and they are all common in standard Modern Hebrew.

3. A further construction which requires attention is the biblical asyndetic relative clause.³ This construction is occasionally found as a stylistic device in modern texts, primarily in poetry, but it never turned into a productive syntactic mechanism in

3 Other kinds of asyndetic constructions found in the historical layers of Hebrew (Rabin 2000: 171–172) can be ignored, as they did not influence Modern Hebrew.

Modern Hebrew. As it takes part in our argumentation below, it is essential to delimit the boundaries between it and the modern asyndetic construction.⁴

The biblical construction originates in the poetic layer of biblical Hebrew (Gesenius 1910: §155b; Davidson 1912: 191; Waltke – O'Connor 1990: 332, 338). From the structural point of view it differs from the modern construction both in the place of the declined preposition and in the possibility to omit it. When the declined preposition appears, it follows the predicate rather than precedes it, e.g.

- (6) *B^e-'ereš lo 'āvar bāh 'iš* (Jeremiah 2, 6)⁵
 In-land not passed in-it nobody
 'In a land that no one passes through'

Furthermore, it is not a necessary component of the construction. Its omission is especially common with transitive verbs complemented by a direct object (Gesenius 1910: 138b), though it is found with various prepositions, e.g.

- (7) *w^e-hōlakhti 'iww^erim b^e-derekh lo yādhā'ū (θ)* (Isaiah 42, 16)
 and-I-conducted blinds in-a-road (they) not knew
 'I will lead the blind by a road they do not know'
- (8) *madrīkh^e khā b^e-derekh iēlēkh (θ)* (Isaiah 48, 17)
 guides-you in-a-way you-will-go
 'leads you in the way you should go'
- (9) *habbīfū 'el sūr hušsavtem (θ)* (Isaiah 51, 1)
 look-PL at rock you-were-hewn
 'look to the rock from which you were hewn'

The possibility to omit the resumptive pronoun highlights a fundamental difference between the biblical and the modern constructions. The biblical construction is truly asyndetic, as it does not contain an obligatory slot for an element formally linking it to the main clause. Such link can be implicitly created by the mere apposition of the clauses. The modern construction, on the other hand, retains a slot for a linking element in initial position, transferring this function from the relative subordinator to the resumptive pronoun (compare Shlesinger 1994: 74).

The biblical and the modern constructions also differ from the stylistic point of view. The former preserved the poetic and archaic character it had in biblical Hebrew, while the latter belongs to the standard register of Modern Hebrew. The two constructions are, therefore, not interchangeable, but each has its own functions and usage domains in the language.

4 Discussions of the relative clause do not always properly distinguish between the two constructions. See for example Percz (1967) or the contributions of various speakers in the Academy of the Hebrew Language assembly meetings (Zixronot 1970: 63-66). See also the 1939 citation in section 8 below.

5 The transliteration of biblical passages represents all the orthographic differences marked in the vocalized text of the Bible. The Translations follows *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New revised standard version. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

4. The view that the modern asyndetic relative clause reflects the influence of English on Modern Hebrew is based on the construction's most conspicuous feature, namely the absence of a relative subordinator. Attention to the construction's internal organization reveals, though, that the two languages differ considerably. While in Hebrew the fronting of the preposition to initial position is a constitutive feature of the construction, in the English zero relative the place of the preposition is at the end, e.g.

(10) *The people (ø) we were staying with* (Greenbaum 1996: 189)

The fronting of the preposition to initial position is possible in English only when a *wh*-subordinator is employed, e.g.

(11) *the day in which she arrived* (Quirk et al. 1985: 1254)

The differences between Hebrew and English are summarized schematically in the following table:

	Possibility of fronting		Status of fronting
English	syndetic	partial (<i>wh</i> -subordinator only)	optional
	asyndetic	-	impossible
Hebrew	syndetic	+	optional
	asyndetic	+	mandatory

Despite the obvious structural differences between the English and the Hebrew asyndetic constructions, the only explanation provided in the literature for the emergence of the Hebrew construction describes it as a *calque* on the English zero relative. The following assertions are representative:⁶

- [in the British Mandate period], when it was necessary to translate official material from English accurately, those servile habits to imitate the foreign language in every bending of the mouth were born (Bendavid 1965: 74)
- I asked myself since when it is customary to write ... without the relative subordinator. I took the Mandatory law in Hebrew and Arabic, and saw that ... in Hebrew everything was according to English (Z. Ben-Hayyim, Zixronot 1970: 65)
- [The construction originates in] the Mandate period, in which stuff was translated from English. The English construction *The man I saw, The book I picked up, the law mentioned in*, without *that* or *which*, is the one which imprinted our language with the construction *ha-iš oto ra'iti* [=the man I saw] (Bahat 1987: 535)

Such assertions disregard the fact that the exact verbatim translation of the English construction does not result in the modern word order, but in the word order found in the biblical construction (example based on Bahat 1987: 534):

6 The citations are from prescriptive literature. Structuralist accounts do not provide an alternative explanation.

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(12)	The subject	we spoke	of	(English construction)
	1	2	3	
	<i>ha-nose</i>	<i>dibarnu</i>	<i>alav</i>	(biblical construction)
	1	2	3	
	<i>ha-nose</i>	<i>alav</i>	<i>dibarnu</i>	(modern construction)
	1	3	2	

The biblical construction provides an exact word-to-word translation of the English construction in terms of word order,⁷ whereas the modern construction involves an inversion. In other words, the construction which already existed in the Hebrew grammatical tradition reflects the structure of the English zero relative better than the construction which was presumably created in the modern period as a *calque* on it. The influence of English alone could have therefore paradoxically prevented an apparent deviation of Modern Hebrew from the inherited grammar rather than trigger such a deviation.

The role of English as the sole factor behind the rise of the modern asyndetic construction is further challenged by textual evidence from the early layer of Modern Hebrew. Such evidence indicates that the construction appeared independently in two types of texts – late 19th century poetry and non-literary early 20th century prose. These corpora reflect two separate lines of development, and neither of them can be fully explained by the influence of English. Such influence was only partial in the case of non-literary writing, and is completely ruled out in the case of poetry.

Late 19th century Hebrew poetry was centered in Eastern Europe, where poets were exposed to the influence of central and eastern European languages and literatures, but had no significant contact with English. The presence of the construction in their work indicates that it could have emerged in Hebrew independently of the English construction.

Even more significant is the evidence that in ordinary, non-literary writing the construction emerged in a two-phase process. The first phase, which was not connected to English neither structurally nor historically, affected the internal organization of the relative clause. It involved the movement of the declined preposition from its classical post-predicate position to initial position. This development was crucial to the emergence of the asyndetic construction, as it placed a resumptive pronoun next to the relative subordinator. Both elements connect the relative clause to the main clause, and the redundancy created by their co-presence in initial position enabled the omission of the relative subordinator under the influence of the English zero relative at a later stage.

Accounting for the rise of the modern asyndetic construction solely in terms of *calque* on English is therefore not compatible with the textual data, and provides a simplistic explanation for change processes that involved the input of multiple factors over an extended period of time.

7 Diversely from English, in Hebrew the preposition is necessarily declined to accommodate a resumptive pronoun due to a general prohibition on the use of stranded prepositions (Glinert 1989: 362; Borer 1984: 220 n. 1).

5. Asyndetic relative clauses were first attested in changes in written language (Harsanyi 1999), which changes, which (Rabin 1999a).

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(13) *ereis* 'land will be' 'land will be'

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8 The translation of this poem

9 See example

5. Asyndetic relative clauses featuring the declined preposition in initial position are first attested in Hebrew in late 19th century poetry. This period was marked by crucial changes in written Hebrew and by the first efforts to transform Hebrew into a spoken language (Harshav 1993). These developments resulted in comprehensive structural changes, which led to the emergence of the linguistic form known as Modern Hebrew (Rabin 1999a).

The asyndetic construction was fairly common from inception in the period's poetic style. It already occurs in the first poem published in 1892 by Haim Nachman Bialik, the leading figure among the period's poets and the forerunner of the new style in the realm of poetry, e.g.

- (13) *erets ba yanets ha-šaked, ha-tomer*⁸
land in-it will-flourish the-almond, the-palm
'land where almond trees and palms flourish'

(*'el ha-tsipor'*, Miron 1983: 180, 183)

This example is not coincidental or isolated. The construction repeatedly occurs in contemporary texts,⁹ and its distribution among a variety of writers marks it as an established linguistic feature in the period's poetic language. Its usage domain, however, was restricted to poetry, and it was not found in non-poetic contexts. Rather than reflecting general linguistic processes, its origins should therefore be sought in poetry's special traits.

One of the syntactic peculiarities of Hebrew poetry in various historical layers, late 19th century poetry among them, was the relatively sparse use of particles and other linking elements as compared to prose. This tendency had a prosodic function, as it helped poets to control the number of syllables in the poetic line, as well as a stylistic function, as it granted language use in poetry a poetic tint. Combined with a centuries-long tradition to follow a biblical style in poetry writing (Rabin 1973: 56), it explains poets' use of the asyndetic relative clause derived from the poetical layer of biblical Hebrew. These clauses are found in the period's poetry primarily in the biblical word order, but occasionally they also appear with an inverted word order.

The occasional fronting of the declined preposition in these asyndetic constructions should not be interpreted as a structural innovation. It was merely a modification of the biblical word order in response to the set of constraints poets operated within. The reshuffling of word order is a technique often exploited by poets in their struggle to reconcile competing pressures deriving from the complex system of linguistic, poetic, esthetic, prosodic and thematic constraints involved in poetry writing (Enkvist 1988: 132ff.; Short 1996: 134ff.). The freedom to choose between various relative subordinators (*še*, *ašer* and zero) and between various internal organizations of the

commodate a
(Glinert 1989:

8 The transcription reflects contemporary pronunciation rather than the Ashkenazi pronunciation in which this poem was originally composed.

9 See examples in Reshef (in press).

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relative clause granted poets flexibility, and enabled them to select the possibility which best suited their needs in any given context.

The assumption that the deviation from the biblical word order was merely a stylistic variation on the biblical construction is supported by the fact that word order was not an active component of grammatical knowledge at that time. 19th century linguistics in general, and traditional Hebrew grammar in particular, were focused on phonological and morphological aspects of language, and dedicated only limited attention to syntax (Glinert 1990; Rabin 1999b: 109). The relatively free word order characterizing Hebrew further hindered an explicit discussion of the topic within Hebrew grammar. Word order was therefore not considered to be subject to binding rules, and as late as the 1960s a discussion of the Hebrew relative clause still concluded that

it is plausible that in some sentences the choice of the resumptive pronoun's place ... has a specific motivation ... But until the rules governing this construction will be eventually crystallized ... – if they will – ... a discussion of the details of these motivations is not the concern of linguistics, but merely the concern of stylistics (Peretz 1967: 107, my emphasis)

The unawareness of the novelty of the inverted word order could have also been affected by the prevalence of a similar word order in the parallel syndetic construction. While the omission of the relative subordinator was peculiar to poetry, the fronting of the declined preposition was customary in the period's prose too, e.g.

(14) *zo ksalon ha-ir, še-ba eštax et*
 this Ksalon the-town, that-with-it-FEM I-will-start ACC
sipuri, xašuva hi beyoter
 story-mine, important it-FEM very-much

'The town Ksalon, with which I start my story, is very important' (S.Y. Abramovitz, 'Be-seter raam', 1886 [Mendele Moxer Sefarim 1968: 377])¹⁰

(15) *mixtavim le-meot [...]* *ašer bahem yagid lo*
 letters in-hundrededs [...] that in-them (he)-will-tell him
mea peamim ve-axat ki hu "ha-exad"
 hundred times and-one that he (is) "the-one"
 'hundreds of letter, in which he repeatedly tells him that he is "The One"
 (D. Frishman, 'ha-mešorer u-šlošet ha-etim', *Luax axiasaf li-šnat 5655* [1894/5])

The internal organization of the relative clause was open to variation that was not perceived to be regulated by grammar, and both the canonic and the inverted word order were common in the period's linguistic practice. In prose they were realized in the syndetic construction only, while in poetry they were also found in the asyndetic construction.

¹⁰ There were no changes in the relative clause since the 1886 original version ("ksalon ir mesosi, še-ba eštax et sipuri, nikret be-šedek ir va-'em be-yisrael"). My thanks to Doron Rubinstein from the Academy of the Hebrew Language for this information.

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Towards the beginning of the 1930s, asyndetic relative clauses started to appear in ordinary, non-poetic writing.¹¹ These clauses were identical with the construction first used in poetry, but the similarity between them was only coincidental. Rather than reflecting an expansion of the poetic usage, they reflected the rise of a new syntactic mechanism due to an independent set of factors (see below).

But although there was no direct continuity between the two phenomena, the precedence provided by poetry may have facilitated the change processes in ordinary writing. Late 19th century poetry immediately gained canonical status, was considered exemplary and was subject to imitation (Blau 1978: 9). The presence of the asyndetic construction in this well-known textual corpus hindered its perception as contradicting the rules of Hebrew grammar, and probably facilitated its rapid diffusion once it was introduced into ordinary writing. Poetry therefore contributed to the admission of the construction into standard Modern Hebrew, although originally the two registers reflected two different lines of development.

6. The appearance of asyndetic relative clauses in ordinary writing during the 1930s had not resulted from a sudden change in the structure of the Hebrew relative clause under the recent contact with English. Rather, the construction emerged in a graded process, which involved first a change of word order within the relative clause, and only later an omission of the relative subordinator. The first phase in the process preceded the contact between Hebrew and English, and by the time such contact was created, the classical word order was no longer dominant in the Hebrew relative clause.

The change process in the internal organization of the relative clause is attested in Modern Hebrew from its inception (see examples 14-15).¹² The tendency towards the fronting of the declined preposition gradually took precedence, and by the time the contact between Hebrew and English was created at the end of the First World War, the inverted word order was clearly preferred to the classical word order, at least in non-literary writing. Thus, for example, in an examination of administrative correspondence from the first decade of the British rule on Palestine, the classical word order was found in a quarter of the cases only, while in all other cases the declined preposition appeared in initial position.¹³

The findings in administrative correspondence are significant, as they reflect the character of the daily use of Hebrew for practical purposes in the emergent speech community. As opposed to other genres of the written language, which were modeled after styles borrowed from previous linguistic layers (Blanc 1954: 389; Rabin 1975: 154; Even-Zohar 1996), administrative correspondence featured a spontaneous and routine language use, relatively free from the interference of stylistic considerations.

11 While isolated examples were found in a literary text published in 1926 (Bistrizky 1926), the use of the construction became a repeated phenomenon in non-literary texts during the 1930s. In literary language its occurrence is atypical down to our day (Kaddari 1996: 136).

12 For further examples see Peretz (1967: 104-105). For earlier linguistic layers, see Peretz (1967: 98-102).

13 The data are based on an examination of a large textual corpus from the years 1920-1929. Curiously enough, the figures are compatible with the estimation of Peretz (1967: 109 n. 7) that the inverted word order amounts to 80% of all the occurrences of the relative clause in standard Modern Hebrew.

The clear preference for the inverted word order in this corpus indicates that the classical word order was no longer felt to be natural or binding in the relative clause.

From the lexical point of view, the fronting of the declined preposition was not restricted to a specific set of lexical items, but occurred with a variety of prepositions, e.g.

- (16) *bemešex* 7 *ha-šavvot še-bahem ha-dever haya*
 during 7 the-weeks that-in-them the-plague was
be-tokpo be-yafo u-ve-tel aviv
 in-strength-its in-Jaffa and-in-Tel Aviv
 'during the 7 weeks in which the plague was at strength in Jaffa and
 Tel-Aviv' (18.10.22, Tel Aviv Historical Archives [=TAHA] 3-40)
- (17) *noda lanu ki omdim atem lesader et tsrif*
 it-got-known to-us that intend-PL you to-arrange ACC DEF-cabin
ha-kria, še-alav kibaltem et rišyon
 (of) the-reading, that-on-it received-you ACC DEF-license (of)
ha-iriyā, le-tsorkey asefol, hatsagot u-nesafim
 the-municipality, for-needs (of) meetings, shows and-balls
 'we have been notified that you intend to fit the reading-hut, for which you
 received the municipality's license, to accommodate meetings, shows and
 balls' (25.12.23, TAHA 3-73c)
- (18) *ha-davar ha-ze yesudar miyad kaašer*
 the-thing DEF-this will-be-arranged immediately when
tuxšar ha-taxana ha-xadaša še-eleha
 will-be-prepared the-station the-new that-to-it-FEM
toovarna ha-agalot
 will-be-moved the-wagons
 'this thing will be arranged immediately when the new station, to which the
 wagons will be moved, will be ready' (15.12.26, TAHA 3-168)
- (19) *anu mevašim mi-kem lehodia miyad la-gv[eret]*
 we ask from-you to-inform immediately to-Mrs.
etingen - še-la hivaxtem et ha-ulam le-oto yom,
 Etingen - that-to-her promised-you ACC the-hall for-that day,
ki [...] lo tuxlu timsor la et ha-ulam
 that [...] not (you) will-be-able to-give to-her ACC the-hall
 'we ask you to inform immediately Mrs. Etingen, who was promised the
 hall for that day, that you will not be able to put the hall at her disposal'
 (6.1.26, TAHA 3-2b)

(20) *masarti*
 I-have-hand
mesader et
 arrange ACC
 'I have hand
 in the street

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 which *aser* is used

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indicates that the relative clause. reposition was not prepositions, e.g.

- (20) *masarti* *ha-yom* *arvi* *exad*, *še-olo* *matsati*
 I-have-handed today Arab one, that-him I-found
*mesader et tsorxav*¹⁴ ba-rexov, le-mišpat
 arrange ACC excrement-his in-the-street, to-trial
 'I have handed today to trial one Arab, which I found defecating
 in the street' (4.5.23, *TAHA* 2-63)

The inverted word order is also dominant in this corpus in the infrequent cases in which *ašer* is used instead of *še-* as the relative subordinator, e.g.

- (21) *kvodo* [...] *tala* *al gabei xanuto* *šelet ašer*
 honor-his¹⁵ [...] hanged on shop-his sign that
bo kava la-ivrit makom tsanua lemata u-le-safa
 in-it (he) fixed to-Hebrew space modest below and-to-language
loazit makom bolet u-mexubad lemaala
 foreign space salient and-respectable above
 'you hanged on your shop a sign, in which you dedicated to Hebrew
 a modest space below and to a foreign language a salient and respectable
 space above' (25.6.28, *TAHA* 4-140a)

The wide range of prepositions fronted to initial position, combined with the high frequency of the inverted word order in the texts, testify to the vitality of the new word order in the period examined. As opposed to the omission of the relative subordinator, which was a poetic feature, the fronting of the declined preposition has become an integral part of the modern use of written Hebrew from inception.

7. What was the reason for the deviation of Modern Hebrew from the classical word order within the relative clause? As opposed to other phenomena, this change cannot be attributed to the vernacularization processes Hebrew had gone through since the 1880s. The inverted word order appears in the texts *before* Hebrew turned into a daily means of communication. Moreover, down to our day it is uncommon in the spoken language. While standard written Modern Hebrew prefers the fronting of the declined preposition in the relative clause, colloquial Modern Hebrew shows an apparent tendency to place it in a post-predicate position, in accordance with the classical word order (Givón 1976: 166-167, 178 n. 26).¹⁶

The change of word order in the written language can in principle be accounted for in two ways: external influence or internal dynamics. The first explanation seeks the origins of change in the influence of a foreign language on Modern Hebrew in its formative phase, while the second explanation considers structural properties of the relative clause that could have generated a deviation from the inherited models. The

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¹⁴ The spelling attests to this vocalization rather than to the normative *tsra:av*.

¹⁵ On the use of 3rd person singular forms as honorifics, see Reshef (2002).

¹⁶ My own intuition as a native speaker supports this claim, but no corpus of spoken Hebrew is currently available to provide an empirical verification.

two lines of reasoning are not mutually exclusive, but reflect the complexity of factors underlying processes of linguistic change.

The most probable external trigger for the change is the influence of Yiddish, the major substrate language during the transition period in which Modern Hebrew emerged. In Yiddish, the relativization of the oblique case is realized by an indeclinable relative subordinator + preposition + resumptive pronoun, a construction which is structurally identical to the new internal organization of the Hebrew relative clause, e.g.

(22) *di menshen, vos mit zey ken men nit reden zaynen vider do*
the people, that with them can one not speak, are again here
'The people with whom one cannot communicate are here again'
(Katz 1987: 247)

(23) *die kinder, vos vegen zey hob ich dir derzeylt*
the children, that about them have I to-you told
'the children I told you about' (Weinreich [1999]: 157)

This construction was dominant in oral and written Yiddish in the relevant period,¹⁷ reflecting a Slavic usage which was extant in some of the colloquial vernaculars Jews in Eastern Europe were in contact with.¹⁸ The first generation of Modern Hebrew speakers was largely exposed to it, and it is plausible to assume that it influenced their practice in their newly acquired language, Hebrew.

Another possible source for the inverted word order lies in the information structure of the relative clause. Notwithstanding the relatively free word order in Hebrew, Modern Hebrew is considered to be a SVO language, while ancient Hebrew was prevalently a VSO language (Schwarzwald 2001: 65-66).¹⁹ In terms of information structure, old or known information typically appears in Modern Hebrew in the beginning of the utterance, while new information tends to appear at the end.

The resumptive pronoun has by definition the status of old information, as it refers to an established discourse entity. Its fronting to initial position places it in a slot compatible with such a status, whereas in the classical word order it appears in a slot typically reserved in Modern Hebrew for new information. The general drift of Hebrew

17 An alternative construction used in modern Yiddish employs a declined relative pronoun, e.g.

Di froy, mit velkher/venen ich red, is mein profesorshe
the women, with whom I speak, is my professor
(example from Katz 1987: 247).

This construction reflects the relatively recent contact of Yiddish with standard High German. Though it is not authentic in Yiddish (Mark 1978: 69-70), it is considered by many to be more grammatical than the original *vos* construction. Some Yiddish grammars mention the *vos* construction as secondary to it (e.g. Katz 1987: 245-247), and in some the *vos* construction is absent altogether (e.g. Birnbaum 1979: 306).

18 Weinreich (1980: 616); Prof. Benjamin Harshav, Prof. Max Taube and Prof. Paul Glasser, email communication. This usage is absent from the standard register of the Slavic languages, and is only rarely discussed in the literature (see for example Toman 1998).

19 On the complications in this typological categorization see Givón (1976: 173ff).

from a VSO language preference for the

The two expected influence of formal well-recognized internal dynamic Hebrew in the 1999a: 370-371; the external and the written language the way was paved under the influence

8. The contact with structure of the Hebrew ordinary writing after the British occupation

(24) *anu mekayem*
we wait
al pgišon
on meeting
šney mixet
two letters
hodaat

DEF-announced
'we are waiting
your meeting
informed
of the Letter

(25) *ha-yevod*
the-basis
'the only

(26) *ha-mivtza*
the-fortress
'the first

Initially the decade they had literature. The prescriptive language "one of the lister

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from a VSO language to an SVO language could have therefore supported the preference for the new word order within the relative clause.

The two explanations proposed here should be best treated as complementary. The influence of foreign languages on the formation of Modern Hebrew is a well-recognized phenomenon (Blanc 1954; Rosen 1977; Blau 1981), but the impact of internal dynamics should also not be ruled out, as radical structural changes affected Hebrew in the modern period even before it turned into a spoken vernacular (Rabin 1999a: 370-371; Izreel 2002). In the case of the relative clause, the combined effect of the external and the internal forces explains the rapid spread of the new word order in the written language. Once this word order was established in the linguistic practice, the way was paved for further changes in the structure of the relative clause, this time under the influence of English.

8. The contact with the English zero relative did not have an immediate effect on the structure of the Hebrew relative clause, and the asyndetic construction started penetrating ordinary writing as a regular, repeated phenomenon in the early 1930s, more than a decade after the British conquest of Palestine, e.g.

- (24) *anu mexakim le-mixtav mi-kvodo bo yodienu*
we wait for-letter from-honor-his in-it he-will-inform-us
al pgišotav be-beyrut. [...] anu metsarfim la-ze
on meetings-his in-Beirut. [...] we attach to-this
šney mixtavim [...], bahem modim lanu al
two letters [...], in-them (one) inform us on
hodaat ha-memšala

DEF-announcement (of) the-government

'we are waiting for a letter from you, in which you will inform us about your meetings in Beirut. ... we attach two letters ... in which we have been informed of the government's announcement' (letter from the management of the Levant Fair, 14.11.33, *TAHA* 4-3177a)

- (25) *ha-yesod ha-yexidi alav uxal levases et hatsaotay*
the-basis the-only on-it I-will-be-able to-base ACC suggestions-mine
'the only basis on which I can base my suggestions' (Jabotinsky 1930: 35)

- (26) *ha-mivсарim ha-rišonim mehem yatsa ha-dibur ha-ivri*
the-fortresses the-first from-them came-out the-speech the-Hebrew
'the first fortresses from which Hebrew speech emerged' (Jabotinsky 1930: 35)

Initially the distribution of such examples was sporadic, but towards the end of the decade they had become conspicuous enough to attract some attention in the linguistic literature. The construction is explicitly mentioned for the first time in 1939 in a prescriptive language column in a daily Hebrew newspaper, anonymously signed by "one of the listeners [to the radio], Jerusalem":²⁰

²⁰ I thank Smadar Barak from the Mazzy Institute for providing me with this reference.

Now there appeared in the radio (sometime also in our press) a new, even worse innovation – the omission of the relative subordinator *ašer*: *še- before the preposition be-*. Like this: *nitparsem din ve-xešbon bo neemar* [=was-published (a) report, in-it was-said] (should be: *še-ne'emar bo* [=that-was-said in-it]). And behold, a few days ago we were astonished to hear the expansion of this barbarism to other prepositions as well. Like this: *ha-hodaa aieha xatmu* [=the-statement on-it-FEM they-signed] (should be: *še-xatmu aieha* [=that-they signed on-it-FEM], *niipesu šloša anašim, axarehem xipsu* [=were-caught three men, after-them (one) searched] (should be: *še-xipsu otam* [=that-one-searched them]).

The omission of the relative subordinator is found in the poetic language of the Bible, but not in simple prose. Who gave permission to the radio clerks to omit this pronoun in the very prosaic prose of theirs? And especially, who gave them permission to distort the word order in the clause, and in general to introduce innovations that ruin the good linguistic taste of their listeners? (*Haaretz*, 6.1.39)

In the same period the construction was also included in a textbook of elementary Modern Hebrew, compiled by the intellectual and political leader Zeev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky shortly prior to his death (Jabotinsky 1949). Jabotinsky treated the construction as a structural equivalent for the syndetic relative clause, and introduced subordination by sample sentences in which the relative subordinator appears in brackets, e.g. (Jabotinsky 1949: 60; transliteration and translation follow the original):

- (27) *Ha adon (asher) oto pagashit* – the gentleman “whom” I met
 (28) *Ha bayit (asher) odotav dibbarnu* – the house “of which” we spoke
 (29) *Ha simla (asher) āvurah shillamt yoter midday* – the dress “for which” you paid too much

Subsequently Jabotinsky explicitly comments that “*asher* can always be replaced by *she-* or omitted altogether” (Jabotinsky 1949: 60). Differently from his contemporaries, he treats the construction as an integral part of Modern Hebrew syntax. He does not inform his readers of its novelty, does not condemn it and does not delimit its use to specific registers of the language. Furthermore, he was one of the first writers who adopted the construction in practice (see examples 25-26).

Prescriptive grammar objected to the new syntactic mechanism, and language planners (e.g. Bendavid 1965: 68-75; Bendavid – Shay 1974: 135, 149, 207, 233; Sivan 1979: 15, 288; and see also Ben-Asher 1969: 74), as well as the Academy of the Hebrew Language (Zixronot 1970: 63-66), condemned the construction and repeatedly demanded its eradication from the language.²¹

The prescriptive activity was not crowned with success. Rather than disappearing from the language – like many other early phenomena (Rosen 1992) – the asyndetic relative clause turned into one of the most conspicuous features of standard written Modern Hebrew. It did not expand into colloquial language, nor absorbed into the literary register, but remained stylistically associated with publicist, academic and

administrative to undermine its usage of Modern Hebrew.
 9. A central question followed by written Hebrew deviated (Rabin 1975: 13) counter examples classical Hebrew became customary.

It is understood the relative subordinator Modern Hebrew omission, is typically influenced the process, namely spoken language influence of Yiddish clause on the other spoken Modern Hebrew language while the asyndetic gap between the The exploration known about the underlay the form

The asyndetic gap between the The exploration known about the underlay the form

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administrative language. Regardless of grammarians' efforts to eradicate it, or at least to undermine its prestigious status, it turned into a typical characteristic of the educated usage of Modern Hebrew, in which the accepted community standard is reflected.

9. A central question which remains open regards the different lines of development followed by written and spoken Modern Hebrew. While in principle spoken Modern Hebrew deviated more readily from the inherited models than written Modern Hebrew (Rabin 1975: 152, 154; Rabin 1999b: 109), the case of the relative clause presents a counter example. Colloquial language retained the original construction inherited from classical Hebrew, whereas in the written language a structural innovation emerged and became customary.

It is understandable why the second phase in the process, namely the omission of the relative subordinator, remained restricted to the written and formal registers of Modern Hebrew. The English zero relative, which was the active factor behind the omission, is typical to the formal register of English (Greenbaum 1996: 226), and it influenced the parallel register of Hebrew. It is less clear why the first stage in the process, namely the change of word order within the relative clause, did not affect the spoken language. As noted above, the possible forces behind this change were the influence of Yiddish on the one hand, and the information structure of the relative clause on the other hand. Both forces had a marked influence on the development of spoken Modern Hebrew, yet in the case of the relative clause they affected the written language while leaving the spoken language intact.

The asyndetic relative clause is one of the clearest examples for the relatively wide gap between the written and the oral dimensions of educated Modern Hebrew usage.²² The exploration of the construction's emergence demonstrates how little is currently known about the development of each of these registers and about the reasons which underlay the formation of such a gap between them.

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22 A maximizing view presented by Berman (1997: 332) considers this gap as a state of diglossia.

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1. Introduction

In this article and Middle responsible for the form of the Complement

It is a verb from finite relatives which configuration

- (1) a. the
b. the
c. an
d. an

- (2) a. the
b. the
c. an
d. an

Assuming 1995), where operators in order to check the literature are moved to

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 | As is well (frummat |
| 2 | The proc previous this paper |