

## One Verb, Two Forms: On Morphological Variation in the Verbal System of Hebrew

This talk examines the morpho-phonological criteria that are responsible for morphological variation in the verbal system of Hebrew. The Hebrew verbal system consists of prosodic patterns (called binyanim and binyan in sg.): *CaCaC*, *niCCaC*, *hiCCiC*, *CiCeC* and *hitCaCeC*. The relation between Hebrew binyanim is manifested via valence changing operations (e.g. *nišek* ‘kiss’ and *hitnašek* ‘kiss each other’). Some verbs demonstrate morphological variation with regard to their binyan. I define morphological variation as cases where two verbs occur in (at least) two different binyanim, but share the same (i) stem consonants (ii) thematic grid and (iii) denotation. For example, the verbs *nirtav* and *hitratev* are formed in *niCCaC* and *hitCaCeC* respectively, where they both denote ‘get wet’. Morphological variation results from a change that takes place in the verbal system, where a verb takes another form. I have collected data from dictionaries and by online searches; their analysis reveals that the use of certain binyanim decreases and is taken over by other binyanim (e.g. *hitCaCeC* instead of *niCCaC*). The analysis addresses two main questions: (i) Which verbs are likely to change their binyan, and why? (ii) Which binyanim are selected for the ‘newer’ form?

I argue that morphological variation occurs as a result of the interaction between the following morpho-phonological and thematic-syntactic criteria.

**Prosodic Markedness:** Some binyanim are more marked than others because of their prosodic structure. *niCCaC* and *CaCaC* are the most marked forms due to the complex morphology of their inflectional paradigm (Schwarzwald 1996, Bat-El 2001); they do not preserve their syllabic structure throughout the inflectional paradigm (e.g. *nimšax-yimašex* ‘last’). The change of binyan is always towards a less marked one, as illustrated below.

Old Binyan	New Binyan	Examples	
<i>niCCaC</i>	<i>hitCaCeC</i>	<i>nisgar~histager</i>	‘close oneself’
<i>CaCaC</i>	<i>hiCCiC</i>	<i>takaf~hitkif</i>	‘attack’

**Base vs. derived forms:** Most of the verbs that demonstrate variation are forms that are the output of thematic operations such as decausativization and reflexivization, where reduction in syntactic valence is involved. I assume that such operations in Hebrew apply in the lexicon (with Reinhart & Siloni 2005). From the morphological point of view, I adopt the word based approach (Aronoff 1976 among others) according to which the lexicon consists of words with complete phonological representation. Consequently, the morphological derivation of forms that are the outputs of lexical thematic operations also applies in the lexicon. I assume that outputs of lexical operations are listed in the lexicon differently than basic entries. The morphological component in the lexicon is sensitive to such differences, and therefore derived forms have a greater chance to undergo variation.

**Transitivity vs. Intransitivity Marking:** Binyan *CaCaC* is considered a neutral binyan with respect to transitivity, as it hosts both transitive and intransitive verbs (Berman 1978). Some *CaCaC* verbs change their binyan in order to be marked as transitive or intransitive. *CaCaC* intransitive verbs change into *niCCaC* (*acar~ne'ecar* ‘stop’) or *hitCaCeC* (*yavaš~hityabeš* ‘become dry’), while transitive verbs change into *CiCeC* (e.g. *ya'ac~yi'ec* ‘consult’) or *hiCCiC* (e.g. *takaf~hitkif* ‘attack’). There is no crossing of transitivity boundaries with regard to morphological variation (e.g. there is no variation between *CiCeC* and *hitCaCeC*).

This talk provides an insight into the factors that play a role in the constant shift that the verbal system of Hebrew undergoes. While morphological variation cannot be fully predicted, it demonstrates rather clear tendencies. The analysis lends support for a unique type of morpho-phonology that applies in the lexicon, while taking into account both morpho-phonological and thematic-syntactic considerations. The morphology that applies post-lexically is more transparent and is not subject to the same extent of variation. The analysis

supports the claim that morphology is an independent component of the grammar that interacts with the lexicon. (Aronoff 1976, Anderson 1977, Scalise 1984, Borer 1991, Booij 1996 among others).

## References

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