

## **A change process never completed: Two unconventional causal conjunctions in Emergent Modern Hebrew**

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The emergence of Modern Hebrew opens up unique possibilities for historical linguistics due to continuous textual evidence, not usually available in language genesis. As the modernization of the written modality preceded the transformation of Hebrew into a spoken vernacular, the examination of written texts throughout the emergence period enables to trace various types of linguistic change involved in the formation of the new linguistic variety (Doron et al. 2019). The current study is based on data from the early Hebrew press, which served as a major channel for the transformation of Hebrew into a modern means of communication. The research corpus, consisting of more than 280,000 morphologically-parsed words, was designated to provide a representative picture of Hebrew as it was used for journalistic activity over six decades in the seminal period of modernization, from the early 1870s to the early 1930s.

A recurrent process in the early phases of standardization, highlighted in several recent studies, manifests in the formation of apparent proximity between Modern Hebrew and the classical linguistic stages due the rejection of certain non-classical features (Reshef 2020). Due to this process, present-day usage does not necessarily directly continue common linguistic practices that spread in written Hebrew since medieval times (compare Kahn 2018), but often reflects a return to an earlier linguistic state, closer to the classical models. This process will be demonstrated here by the discussion of the usage patterns of two prepositions – *ʔaḥare* ‘after’ and *ʕal yede* ‘by means of’ – as causal conjunctions. Up to the early 1920s, both prepositions are well attested not only in their conventional use (namely in temporal clauses and *by*-clauses, respectively) but also as causal conjunctions. However, during the accelerated standardization of the early 1920s, the employment of both prepositions in the causal function completely disappeared.

The transition from temporal to causal meaning is well-attested in the linguistic literature (e.g. Traugott and König 1991: 194-199; Kortmann 2001: 846-849; Hopper and Traugott 2003), reflecting the logical deduction “if *q* happened when/after *p* happened > *q* happened because of *p*”. As will be shown, in the case of *ʔaḥare* ‘after’ the causal function was highly conventionalized, as the temporal and causal functions correlated in the corpus with different syntactic

constructions. By contrast, the transition from instrument to cause in the case of *ʕal yede* ‘by means of’, though based on the similar logical deduction “*q* happened by *p* > *q* happened because of *p*” (Kortmann 1997: 196), had not been conventionalized, and the distinction in the corpus between the instrumental and causal reading is based on context-dependent pragmatic inference rather than on overt linguistic coding (Blackmore 1987; Meyer 2000). Despite this difference, in both cases the non-classical causal function had been discarded in the early phases of standardization, reflecting the intersection between various synchronic and diachronic, linguistic and sociolinguistic factors, such as linguistic ideology, distribution, redundancy and the availability of alternative means of expression. Hence, while the transformation of *ʔaḥare* and *ʕal yede* into causal conjunctions reflects general linguistic processes, their abrupt rejection in that function in the early 1920s is best attributed to the unusual sociolinguistic circumstances of the emergent speech community.

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