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What Is New in the NP-Strategy for Expressing Reciprocity in Modern Hebrew and What Are Its Origins?

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Abstract

This essay focuses on various aspects of the NP-strategies for expressing reciprocity in Modern Hebrew and inquires about their origin. It attempts to determine the exact type of relationship that exists between the contemporary constructions and their equivalents in older periods. It describes a situation in which Modern Hebrew added a new NP-construction to express reciprocity, due to a calque of a construction existing in Indo-European languages. This is an interesting example of the way Modern Hebrew grows richer by incorporating external influence. The new construction did not replace the older one, an inheritance from Mishnaic Hebrew. Instead, it provided a means to distinguish between registers. Despite the semantic and the syntactic resemblance between the new and the old constructions, they remained independent, and they differ in their sociolinguistic distribution, grammatical properties, and semantic nuances.

Keywords

reciprocal constructions – Modern Hebrew – Mishnaic Hebrew – calque

* I wish to thank Nora Boneh, Edit Doron, and Yael Reshef for reading and commenting on an early version of this article. This work is supported by European Union grant IRG 030-2227. Since the point of the Modern Hebrew examples in the article is to show the schematic distribution of the reciprocity elements, I am using very simple uncontroversial examples that I have constructed on the basis of my capabilities as a native Modern Hebrew speaker.

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Introduction

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This short essay focuses on various aspects of the NP-strategies for expressing reciprocity in Modern Hebrew and inquires about their origin.¹ It relies on my previous work on the constructions of the Semitic NP-strategy for expressing reciprocity and their history (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011, 2012, 2014a, and 2014b; for a definition of these strategies, see 2014b). Modern Hebrew has two major constructions and both consist of two pronominal expressions:

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The numeral-construction (1): the regular components of this construction are the cardinal number *exad*, 'one,' and a definite form of the ordinal number *šeni*, 'second.' *Prima facie*, this is an odd combination, consisting of a pair of cardinal and ordinal numbers.

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The demonstrative-construction (2): this construction consists of a repetition of demonstrative pronouns.

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- (1) Numeral construction:

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הילדים שיחקו אחד עם השני

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ha-yelad-im Sixku exad im ha-šeni

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DEF-child-PL play.PST.3.PL one.M with DEF-second.M

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'The kids played with each other.'

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(http://www.yoledet.co.il/forum/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=209343#, accessed December 5, 2010)

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- (2) Demonstrative construction:

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הילדים שיחקו זה עם זה

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ha-yelad-im Sixku ze im ze

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DEF-child-PL play.PST.3.PL DEM.SG.M with DEM-SG.M

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'The kids played with each other.'

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(http://www.beofen-tv.co.il/cgi-bin/chiq.pl?%E1%E3%E9%E3%E5%FA_%E0%E7%F8%E9_%E4%F6%E4%F8%E9%ED, accessed February 16, 2003)

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These two constructions are used in different registers. The numeral-construction is restricted in use to the informal, mostly spoken language. Occasionally, it appears in the written language, mostly in the context of

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¹ In the NP-strategy the encoding of the reciprocity is non-verbal, i.e., verbs in the relevant constructions are transitive (unlike verbal encoding of reciprocity), and it is not morphologically encoded on the verb.

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informal venues, such as the Internet. In contrast, the demonstrative-construction is marked for the written language and other contexts where higher register is expected.² This distribution is probably related to the fact that normativists approve only the demonstrative-construction, since only this construction has a precedent in Mishnaic Hebrew (and a few attestations in the Bible; see Bar-Asher Siegal 2012). The numeral-construction is considered as an innovation of Modern Hebrew,³ and in the following section I will discuss its origin and to what extent it is indeed an innovation.

The driving question of this article is, therefore, the following: what can the similarities, both between modern and classical versions of Hebrew and between Modern Hebrew and other languages of the modern period, teach us about the historical connections between Modern Hebrew and these languages regarding the specific phenomenon?

The Origin of the Modern Hebrew Constructions

As is often the case with syntactic constructions, Modern Hebrew inherited the components of the reciprocal demonstrative-construction from Mishnaic Hebrew and not from Biblical Hebrew. This is to be expected, as the demonstrative-construction was the standard NP-strategy to express reciprocity in all the literature written in Hebrew in the Middle Period, when Hebrew ceased to be spoken.

As for the peculiarity with the numeral-construction, that its first component is a cardinal number and the second an ordinal number, the origin of this construction seems to be a calque of a construction common in many of the Indo-European languages. The components of the relevant constructions in the Indo-European languages are “one” and “another” (*inter alia*, *einander* in German, *l'un l'altro* in Italian, and *yek* and *din* in Kurdish). This calque could have happened as a result of the fact that in various Jewish languages the relevant NP-constructions have these components as well (from *אַנאַנדער*, *an'ander* in Yiddish, to *xa*, “one” and *xit*, “another” in the Neo-Aramaic of Zakho).

2 The phenomenon that a language with more than one reciprocal construction demonstrates a sociolinguistic specialization in their use is known from other languages as well. Similarly, Kjellmer (1982) and Biber et al. (1999) propose a sociolinguistic distinction between registers in the case of English.

3 Bahat & Ron (1980:177–178); <https://www.safa-ivrit.org/style/zeetze.php>, accessed 6 October 2014.

1X But how did the European “another” turn into “second” in Hebrew? This is
 2 probably due to the fact that the ordinary use of “another/other” is expressed
 3 in Hebrew as “second.” For example, if we consider the following sentence,
 4 “I met two people, one was tall and the other was short,” then the equivalent
 5 sentence in Hebrew, from all periods, would most likely be expressed with
 6 “one” and “second.” This can be shown in the following sentences and their
 7 English translations:
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9 (3) שֵׁם הָאֶחָד בְּעֵנָה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִי רֶכֶב
 10 *Šem ha-’ehād ba’āna we- šem ha-šēni rēkāv*
 11 name.of DEF-one.M Baanah and-name DEF-second.M Rekab
 12 ‘One was named Baanah and the other Rekab.’
 13 (2 Samuel 4:2)

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 15 (4) ומשאמר האחד דעתו אם אמר השני כמותו
 16 *u-miše-’amar ha-’ehād da’t-o ’im*
 17 and-as-say.3.PST.M.SG DEF-one.M opinion-POSS.3.M.SG COND
 18 *’amar ha-šēni kmot-o*
 19 say.3.PST.M.SG DEF-second.M like-3.M.SG
 20 ‘As one of them expressed his opinion, if the other one expressed a simi-
 21 lar opinion, ...’
 22 (Geonic Responas, *Ša’arey Sedeq*, 4:36, from around the 8th century CE)

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 24 (5) מכי משך האחד דינרי זהב, קנה השני דינרי כסף
 25 *mākī māšak ha-’ehād dīnār-ē zāhāv*
 26 As pull.PST.3.M.SG DEF-one.M dinar-PL.of gold
 27 *qānā ha-šēni dīnār-ē keseḇ*
 28 purchase.PST.3.M.SG DEF.second.M dinar-PL of silver
 29 ‘As soon as the one pulled golden dinars, the other purchased silver
 30 dinars.’
 31 (Obadiah ben Abraham of Bertinoro 1440–1510, *Mishnah*, B. Meši’a 4: 1)

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 33 Alternatively, or maybe in addition, it is possible to suggest that this con-
 34 struction developed in the vicinity of speakers of Lithuanian, in which
 35 one of the relevant NP-constructions consists of the components *vienas-*
 36 *antra*.⁴ In Lithuanian, the word for “other” is *antra*. This word in Lithuanian

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 4 The historical connection between the numeral-construction and the Indo-European construction consisting of the elements “one-another” was proposed in the past (Baraḡ & Gadish 2008:192). As far as I know, the stronger connection to the Lithuanian elements was not mentioned.

developed into the expression for the ordinal number “second.” Thus, the construction that consists of *vienas-antra* could have been translated literally either as *vienas*=one (cardinal number), *antra*=another or as *vienas*=one (cardinal number), *antra*=second (ordinal number). The calque in Modern Hebrew, accordingly, could be the result of the latter. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that in the database of the *Responsa Project*, which includes texts of all the rabbinic literature from the 2nd century CE to the contemporary era, the first appearances of the numeral-construction are in citations from rabbis of the eastern part of what today is Belarus, the area which historically belongs to Lithuania. Here are two examples:

(6) ביטל אחד את השני

Bittēl

eḥād

et-ha-šēni

cancell.3.PST.M.SG

one.M

ACC-DEF-second.M

‘They cancelled each other.’

(Responsa Divrey Malkiel 1:84, Malkiel Tenenbaum, lived in Gardinas at the end of the 19th century)

(7) כששני נביאים מכחישים בנבואתם אחד את השני

kāše-ššney

nəbīʿ-īm

makhšīš-īm

when-two

prophet-PL

contradict.PTCP-M.PL

b-nəbuʿat-ām

eḥād

et-ha-šēni

in-prophecy-POSS.3.PL

one.M

ACC-DEF-second.M

‘When two prophets contradict each other in their prophecy . . .’

(Hiddušey hagriz 103, Isaak Zeev Soloveitchic, who grew up in Valozhyn at the end of the 19th century)

The Two-Unit Construction in Modern Hebrew

An additional dimension is relevant for the classification of constructions within the NP-strategy. Each of the two constructions mentioned above is further subdivided according to whether the subcomponents of the reciprocal expression form one unit within the clause (as was the case in all reciprocal examples given so far), or whether they are distributed over two separate units (Bar-Asher Siegal 2014b):

I. One-unit constructions: constructions with a one-unit expression, which co-refers with another plural NP in the clause and never occupies the non-embedded subject but all other positions, as required by the predicate.

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II. Two-unit constructions: constructions with two components, each filling a different argument position of the predicate.⁵

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Akkadian, for example, has both types. The two-unit construction consists of a repetition of *aḥum* ‘brother,’ while the one-unit type contains variants of *aḥāmiš/aḥāiš* ‘each other.’ The former was predominant in the earlier dialects (8a), while the latter developed only in Middle Babylonian and Middle Assyrian (8b) (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011).

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(8) a. Old Akkadian:

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urkatam aḥ-um ana aḥ-im lā

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afterwards brother-NOM to brother-GEN NEG

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inappuš

14

make.a.claim.DUR.3.SG

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‘Afterwards one will not make a claim against the other.’

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(TCL 19 63:45)

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b. Late Babylonian:

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aḥāmeš Ippalū

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RECP pay.DUR.3.M.PL

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‘They will compensate each other.’

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(Dar 321:29)

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The components of the numeral-construction, seen (1) above in the one-unit construction, appear also in the two-unit construction (9). While the numeral-construction in general is affiliated with the lower register, in its two-unit appearance it has the flavor of a higher style, usually of writing. This variant almost never emerges in earlier periods of Hebrew (Bar-Asher Siegal 2012), but it is well attested among other Semitic languages (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011, 2014b).

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⁵ There are, in addition, hybrid constructions, which have some of the characterizations of the one-unit constructions but are still two-unit constructions in their essence. The three types of constructions also represent stages of a diachronic development of such constructions (two-unit construction > hybrid construction > one-unit construction). From a typological point of view, the two Modern Hebrew constructions, as they appear in (1)–(2), belong to the same type of construction. Despite their appearance of fitting into the hybrid construction, Bar-Asher Siegal (2014b) demonstrates that, grammatically speaking, they are in fact a one-unit construction.

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(9)	יוסי ודני - האחד שיחק עם השני					1X
	<i>yosi</i>	<i>ve-dani</i>	<i>ha-exad</i>	<i>sixek</i>	<i>im</i>	2
	Yosi(M)	and-Danny(M)	DEF-one.M	play.PST.3.M.SG	with	3
	<i>ha-šeni</i>					4
	DEF-second.M					5
	'Yosi and Danny played with each other.'					6

On the other hand, the demonstrative-construction is incompatible with the two-unit construction. I could not locate anywhere in its long history a reciprocal use of the demonstrative-construction in a two-unit type prior to Modern Hebrew. In Modern Hebrew too such examples are extremely rare and sound marginal in acceptability.⁶

For our purposes it is worth mentioning that in other languages, when both the two-unit and one-unit construction are grammatically possible, it is demonstrable that in an earlier stage of the history of that specific language only the two-unit construction existed. This is the case, for example, in Italian (Vezzosi 2010, Bar-Asher Siegal 2014b), Akkadian (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011), and Arabic (Bar-Asher Siegal 2014b). Clearly, this is not the case in Modern Hebrew, for the simple reason that the components *ehād-šēni* 'one-second' were never parts of a reciprocal construction in the past. In fact, in the classical texts of the Biblical and Mishnaic corpora, tokens of the two-unit constructions (in other constructions, which are not the demonstrative-construction) appear only rarely.

Therefore, it is likely that once the numeral-construction was in use in Modern Hebrew, the two variants were easily accepted by speakers, since, as noted, in various languages that have a similar construction to those of Modern Hebrew, the two variants may occur. This, for example, is the case in the Judeo-Arabic dialect of Tafilat:⁷

(10)	a.	<i>ya'ku</i>	<i>u-musi</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>wkkel</i>	<i>si</i>	30
		Jacob	and-Moses	someone	feed.PST.M.SG	someone	31
							32
	b.	<i>ya'ku</i>	<i>u-musi</i>	<i>wkkelaw</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>l-si</i>	33
		Jacob	and-Moses	feed.PST.PL	someone	DEF-someone	34
		'Jacob and Moses fed each other.'					35

6 It is beyond the scope of the current article to discuss the conditions for when and why it is grammatical and when it is only marginally grammatical.

7 I wish to thank my consultant, Moshe Bar-Asher, for the data.

1X Thus, as long as the two elements of the reciprocal construction are phono-
2 logically separated (for example, in Modern Hebrew it is transparent that origi-
3 nally there were two components *eḥād* and *ha-šēni*),⁸ both the one-unit and
4 two-unit constructions may co-exist. Once speakers have the two construc-
5 tions in their native language, they could develop in Modern Hebrew a real
6 two-unit construction as well, as a result of an analogy to a similar situation in
7 their native languages.

8 Why did this analogy not take place with the demonstrative-constructions?
9 In the current context we may only speculate, and we can think of two reasons:
10 1) history/register: as noted, the demonstrative-constructions appear in high
11 register, and this register imitates what is found in the old literature. In this
12 literature, the two-unit version does not appear, hence it appears in Modern
13 Hebrew only in the one-unit construction; 2) it might be related to the fact
14 that the components of this construction still function in Modern Hebrew as
15 demonstratives. When they are separated, they function as deictic expressions
16 and therefore are interpreted in a way that each one of the demonstratives
17 refers only to one individual, and not in a reciprocal manner.
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20 Two Additional Notes Concerning the Demonstrative-construction

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22 In the one-unit version of both constructions of Modern Hebrew, the numeral
23 one and the demonstrative one, the pronominal expressions agree in gender
24 with the subject (11a, 12a). When the participants of the reciprocal relation are
25 not of the same gender, then both constructions have two variants (11b, 12b);
26 either the two pronominal expressions are masculine, or one is masculine and
27 the other is feminine:
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- 29 (11) a. יעל ורבקה שיחקו אחת עם השנייה
30 *yael ve-rivka sixku axat im ha-šniya*
31 Yael(F) and-Rivka(F) play.PST.3.PL one.F with DEF-second.F
32 'Yael and Rivka played with each other.'
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39 ⁸ As opposed to a situation such as, for example, that in the Bavarian dialect of German, where
40X the bipartiteness of *a(rà)nand(à)*, which originated from *ein* 'one' and *ander* 'another', is not
41 transparent (Plank 2008).
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- b. (ה) יוסי ויעל שיחקו אחד עם השני(ה) 1X
yosi ve-yael sixku exad im 2
 Yosi(M) and-Yael(F) play.PST.3.PL one.M with 3
ha-šeni/ha-šniya 4
 DEF-second.M/F 5
 ‘Yosi and Yael played with each other.’ 6
- (12) a. יעל ורבקה שיחקו זו עם זו 8
yael ve-rivka sixku zo im zo 9
 Yael(F) and-Rivka(F) play.PST.3.PL DEM.SG.F with DEM.SG.F 10
 ‘Yael and Rivka played with each other.’ 11
- b. יוסי ויעל שיחקו זה עם זה/זו 13
yosi ve-yael sixku ze im 14
 Yosi(M) and-Yael(F) play.PST.3.PL DEM.SG.M/F with 15
ze/zo 16
 DEM.SG.M/F 17
 ‘Yosi and Yael played with each other.’ 18

The reason behind this variation is that, on the one hand, logically speaking, if strong reciprocity is indeed held between the participants (i.e., if each of the participants holds the relation described by the verb with each of the other participants), it would not follow to represent either the masculine or feminine demonstrative alone in a certain position, as each should appear in both positions. On the other hand, the attempt to have agreement causes the change of gender in the pronouns in order to match both members of the set represented by the subject.

Normativists consider the change of gender a hyper-correction.⁹ This conclusion is due to the fact that allegedly, in similar cases in Mishnaic Hebrew, both demonstratives were masculine. In fact, however, this is not entirely true. For, throughout the history of Hebrew literature, we find similar “mistakes,” although it must be admitted that it is impossible to know whether they reflect the original languages or textual corruptions in their transmissions. Let us then consider the following examples:

9 Avinery (1964: 161); see also Avshalom Kor, *Beofen Miluli*: <http://yitzhakavinery.wordpress.com/2011/01/14/%E2%80%9D%D7%96%D7%94-%D7%90%D7%AA-%D7%96%D7%94%E2%80%9D-%D7%90%D7%95-%E2%80%9D%D7%96%D7%94-%D7%90%D7%AA-%D7%96%D7%95%E2%80%9D/>, accessed June 23, 2010.

- (17) a. הילדים שיחקו אחד עם השני 1X
ha-ylad-im sixku exad im ha-šeni 2
 DEF-boys-PL play.PST.3.PL one.M with DEF-second.M 3
 ‘The boys played with each other.’ 4
- b. הילדים שיחקו זה עם זה/אלו עם אלו 5
ha-ylad-im sixku ze im ze/ 6
 DEF-boys-PL play.PST.3.PL DEM.M.SG with DEM.M.SG 7
elu im elu 8
 DEM.PL with DEM.PL 9
 ‘The boys played with each other.’ 10
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The agreement, however, is not morphological but semantic. The target of the agreement is controlled by the actual number of members within each set that participate in the reciprocal relation. With singular demonstratives, example (17b) signifies that among the children various individuals played with each other; and with plural demonstratives, then example (17b) indicates that the children were divided into groups, each group consisting of at least more than one child, and that these groups played with each other (Glinert 1989:69; see Heine & Miyashita 2008:169–170 on the peculiarity of this phenomenon cross-linguistically). This is a regular phenomenon in Modern Hebrew but can also be recognized in Mishnaic Hebrew (Bar-Asher Siegal 2012, 2014b). Should we then consider this similarity between Mishnaic Hebrew and Modern Hebrew to be an example of a successful imitation in Modern Hebrew of the style of Mishnaic Hebrew? And, if so, then how exactly did this imitation occur? 12

If we suppose such an imitation, then it could have happened in one of two ways: 1) the first speakers of Modern Hebrew were exposed to so many examples from Mishnaic Hebrew that they eventually internalized the grammatical rules of the classical form of their language; 2) they learned the rules from grammar books and forced an implementation of the relevant rules. 13

Option 1 is quite unlikely due to the “poverty of stimulus;” there are very few relevant examples in the rabbinic literature, and, even in this corpus, there is a lack of consistency (Bar-Asher Siegal 2012). Option 2 is irrelevant, for the publication of good grammars of Mishnaic Hebrew did not happen before the middle of the 20th century, at which point the numeral-construction had already been in use for several decades. Moreover, even these grammars did not notice the relevant semantic distinction (cf. Segal 1946:63). It is, therefore, more likely that this similarity is not due to historical relation (inheritance or imitation), but rather in both cases the result of the same natural development. When the subject of the reciprocal construction is a plurality, languages usually do not 14
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make the fine-grained distinction as to whether the reciprocal relation holds between singular individuals or between sub-pluralities. This lack of distinction is due to a lack of nominal declension in the relevant reciprocal expressions (consider for example the English “one”-“another”). In fact, very rarely do languages use existing pronouns such as demonstratives to express reciprocity. In Hebrew, on the other hand, the use of demonstrative pronouns allows number declension, and consequently the relevant semantic distinction can be developed. Thus, it is quite possible that the common morphology of Mishnaic Hebrew and Modern Hebrew allowed the independent development of the same distinction, without assuming that the former influenced the latter.

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Similarly, I believe this is also the case when reciprocity is held between pairs of different gender. It is possible that the tension existing today between the two options (illustrated in (11b) and (12b)), was also present for speakers of previous periods of Hebrew. It therefore seems unnecessary to argue for a historical relation or seek a different explanation.

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Conclusions

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This article described a situation in which Modern Hebrew added a new construction to express reciprocity, due to a calque of a construction existing in Indo-European languages. The emergence of a new construction, the numeral-construction, a calque of a common Indo-European construction, did not replace the older construction, the demonstrative-construction, an inheritance from Mishnaic Hebrew. It only provided a means to distinguish between registers.

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Despite the semantic and the syntactic resemblance between the new and the old constructions, they remained two independent constructions with different grammatical properties and semantic nuances: 1) Only the components of the numeral-construction appear regularly as a two-unit construction. Two demonstratives in a two-unit construction most often are not interpreted as a reciprocal construction; 2) In the case of the demonstrative-construction it is possible to distinguish between cases where reciprocity is held between individuals or between groups denoted by the subject. The numeral-construction, as is the case with most constructions of the NP-strategy, cannot mark such a semantic distinction.

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