Superfluous Negation in Modern Hebrew and its Origins[1]

Abstract

In this paper, 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; pleonastic negation; expletive negation; Modern Hebrew; Yiddish; Slavic; 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.[2] 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.[3] We then ask whether these constructions (and an additional construction, which is by now obsolete) existed in earlier stages of

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[2] 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 which 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.
[3] We abbreviate Modern Hebrew as MH, Biblical Hebrew as BH.

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 MH exhibits Super Neg with the negative morpheme לֹא *lo* in a variety of constructions.[4] The negative morpheme generally resists stress when it is "superfluous" (Avinery 1964:242,253; Eilam 2009).[5]

1. **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* 'who', איזה *eyze* 'which', איפה *eyfo* 'where', מתי *matay* 'when', איך *eyx* 'how').[6] 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).[7]

> (1) מה שדני לֹא 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)

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

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

[6] *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.

[7] 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.

2. **Rhetorical questions expressing surprise or noteworthiness**. These interrogatives are used as exclamatives and convey a universal implication (in (2), he was blamed for *everything*).[8]

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

3. **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 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 yagiʕa milyarder rusi nukasel titkaše
 until that-NEG will.arrive billionaire Russian Newcastle will.have.trouble
 'Newcastle will be in trouble until a Russian billionaire comes along.' (Web)[9]

4. **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.

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[8] 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).
[9] http://sports.walla.co.il/?w=/7/2685702, accessed August 2014.

ani   lo   roce   še-mišehu   yece   mi-po   bli   še-hu   lo   kibel
I   NEG   want   that-someone   will.leave   from-here   without   that-he   NEG   received
maʕane   ʕal   ha-šeʔelot   šelo
response   on   the-questions   his
'I don't want anyone to leave here without having gotten answers to his questions.' (Web)[10]

5. **Embedded under negated 'surprise'**.[11] 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.

(5)   אני לא אתפלא אם הוא לא יזם את כל התקרית המכוערת הזו.
   ani   lo   etpale   im hu lo   yazam   et   kol   ha-takrit
   I   NEG   will.be.surprised   if   he   NEG   initiated   ACC   all   the-incident
   ha- mexoʕeret   ha-zo
   the-ugly   the-this
   'I wouldn't be surprised if he is the one behind this ugly incident.' (Web)[12]

6. **Clausal complements of 'fear'-type predicates**. Another somewhat restricted manifestation of Super Neg occurs in the complements of verbs like פחד *paxad* 'fear', דאג *daʔag* and חשש *xašaš* 'worry' (and derived nouns), mainly in colloquial language (Sagi 2000:95).

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[10] Protocol of the Tel Aviv-Yafo local Design and Building Committee meeting of Aug. 24, 2011.
[11] The pattern may extend to other expressions of expectation, e.g., שאני אמות אם... *še-ani amut im…* 'I'll be damned (lit. dead) if…'.
[12] Kadman, Haim, 2010, *Škiʕa afrikanit* ('African Sunset'). Published online. http://cafe.themarker.com/blog/288913/display/?archive=2010_8, accessed September 2014.

(6) ‏פחדתי שלא ינדו אותי בגלל שאני ערביה.‏
   paxadti   še-lo   yenadu   oti biglal   še-ani ʕarviya
   feared.1SG that-NEG will.ostracize.3MPL me because that-I Arab
   'I was afraid I would be ostracized because I was Arab.' (Web)[13]

7. **Clausal complement of כמעט** *kimʕat* **'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-ʕir   freroy kimʕat še-lo   nitxadša   lifney yamim axadim
   in.the-city Freroy almost that-NEG was.renewed before days   ones
   ʕalilat ha-dam
   libel.CS the-blood
   'The blood libel was almost/all but revived in the town of Freroy a few days ago.'
   (*Ha-melic*, Feb. 26, 1886)[14]

Origins of Super Neg Constructions: First Attestations and Contact

We begin with a brief overview of other cases of so-called 'redundant' or 'repetitive' negation that have been identified in Biblical and Mishnaic Hebrew. We then turn to the contemporary constructions given above. Although in a number of cases there exist sporadic pre-modern examples that resemble the contemporary 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.

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[13] http://club.malka-net.co.il/Page.asp?PiD=0.692&id=1773, accessed August 2014.
[14] The town referred to is probably Kremsier in Mähren, today Kroměříž in the Czech Republic.

Biblical Hebrew

Two types of redundant negation in BH are discussed by grammarians (Gesenius 1910:483; Joüon & Muraoka 2006:573). The first is exemplified by בְּטֶרֶם לֹא *bə-ṭɛrɛm lō* 'before NEG' used to express temporal precedence.[15] Although it resembles MH *lifney še-lo*, the lexical choice of preposition is different. Another, more productive, type is *mi-blī/mē-ēn*. It is analyzed as containing two negative morphemes, 'mi$_{without}$-NEG', that give rise to a single, emphatic, negative interpretation (e.g., *mi-blī yōšēb* 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/ēn* in the BH construction, in MH it is restricted to *lo* (**bli (še-)eyn*).

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., *eyn mevarxin lo ʕal ha-ner ve-lo ʕal ha-besamim šel noxrim*, 'It is not allowed to recite a blessing NEG over candles and NEG over fragrances of foreigners'; Beraxot 8:6). This is an interesting construction which exists in MH too, but we do not consider it an example of Super Neg. The repetition of negation in the two conjuncts conveys emphasis, on a par with English *neither…nor*, and the additional repetition of negation in the matrix clause may be an instance of negative concord, obligatory in Modern Hebrew in the context of *N-words*.[16] The repetition of

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[15] Zephaniah 2:2.

[16] N-words are Negative expressions such as *nobody* in English or *af exad* 'nobody' in Hebrew. Since Hebrew has negative concord, an N-word is necessarily accompanied by sentential negation. We remain agnostic as to whether the negation which is interpreted in Negative Concord is the actual negative marker or some other, abstract, negative operator (Zeijlstra 2011).

negation in the two conjuncts conveys emphasis, on a par with English *neither…nor*, and is not an instance of superfluous negation.

First attestations and possible contact

1. **Free relative clauses**. Super Neg in 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).[17,18] The construction is well attested in literary writing of the revival period, with early examples in MH 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 *eyx* '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.

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[17] 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', Jerusalemite Talmud, Beraxot 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, Kohelet raba 5:11). (Ch. Ariel, p.c.)
[18] Sagi mentions 4 occurrences in 16-19th c. responsa but does not cite specific examples. A cursory search in the current version of the Responsa Project revealed many more examples. Notably, *kama še-lo* is preceded by *kol* 'every' in many of them.

Despite the existence of attested examples in the pre-revival era, grammarians of MH 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 and König 1998:613). Only the first type is attested in MH.[19] 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 שלֹא התגעגעתי להיות פעם אחת בקונגרס ולראות את יוצרו [...]
ve-xama   še-lo   hitgaʕgaʕti lihiyot paʕam axat ba-kongres
and-how.much that-NEG longed.1SG to.be   time   one in.the-congress
ve-lirʔot   et   yocro
and-to.see ACC his.creator
'And however much I wanted to attend the [Zionist] Congress once and see its creator [...]' (*Be-ʕolam Ha-ʔotiyot Ha-maxkimot*, I. L. Peretz, 1904)

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[19] An anonymous reviewer correctly points out that Modern Hebrew does have occurrences of 'only' FRs of the sort found in Yiddish:

      i. *ani eten   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 MH:

      ii. **ani aʕane   lax   ʕal ma   še-rak   tišʔali*
         I   will.answer you on   what that-only you.will.ask

2. **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 MH construction seems not to have been inherited from these earlier varieties.[20] Our searches reveal many examples in Hebrew literature already in the 19th century, with מי לא *mi lo* 'who NEG' attested as early as Judah Leib Gordon's *Ahavat David U-Mixal* (1856) and מה לא *ma lo* 'what NEG' in Avraham Mapu's *Ašmat Šomron* (1865).

(9) נער אדמוני הוא ויפה עינים -- דוד הרעה -- מי לא יכירנו?!
  naʕa admoni hu vi-yfe   ʕeynayim david ha-roʕe
  r
  lad redheaded he.is and-beautiful.CS eyes   David the-shepherd
  mi lo yakirenu
  who NEG will.know.him
  'He is a red headed lad with beautiful eyes, David the shepherd, who doesn't
  know him?!' (*Ahavat David U-Mixal*, Judah Leib Gordon, 1856)

A distinct pattern of emergence is observed in comparison to FRs: the majority 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.

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[20] One issue under debate in the literature is whether the biblical Hebrew particle הֲלֹא *hă̆lō*, which had a non-negative presentative function in rhetorical questions, should be analyzed 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.

Eilam (2008, 2009) proposes that while negative rhetorical questions are common

crosslinguistically and may have developed independently in MH, it is plausible that the

construction was in fact calqued from Yiddish.

3. **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.[21] In contemporary MH,

ʕad means 'until' and no longer has the 'while' meaning. Early MH inherited the

rabbinic *ʕad še-lo* (Eilam 2008, 2009), with examples attested in our corpora from the

1860s (11).

(10) [...] עד שלא יתחילו במלאכה צא ואמור להם
   ʕad še-lo   yatxilu   ba-melaxa   ce   ve-ʔemor lahem
   while that-NEG will.start.3MPL in.the-work go.out.2MSG and-tell   them
   'Before they start working, go out and tell them…' (Original rabbinic use;
   Babylonian Talmud, Bava meciʕa 4)

(11) [...] חובה עלינו לתת תודתנו לאלה החכמים אשר קדמו לעזור לנו עד שלא קראנו אליהם
   xova   ʕaleynu latet   todatenu   le-ʔele ha-xaxamim ʔaše kadmu   laʕazor
   duty   on.us   to.give our.thanks to-those the-wise   who were.early to.help
   lanu   ʕad   še-lo   karanu   ʔeleyhem
   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 preference seems to

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[21] According to BDB (p. 725), *'ad* in the sense of 'while' is also found in BH (rare). There are three instances
of עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא *'ad ăšɛr 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).

have been maintained in early MH (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]   livli   cet   mi-setšuan   ʕad še-lo

therefore   was.ordered.3MSG [the-commissioner.3MSG] to.NEG exit from-Sichuan until that-NEG

yuxlat   *ha-davar   be-nogeʕa le-tašlumey   nizkey   ha-misyonerim*

will.be.decided   the-issue regarding   to-payments.CS damages.CS the-missionaries

'Therefore the commissioner was ordered not to leave Sichuan until compensation

is settled for the damage done by the missionaries.' (New type; *Ha-melic*, Aug. 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 MH, but by 1920 the new type had become prominent, accounting for over 80% of

occurrences. As the new type continued to expand in MH, 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 MH calque (Eilam 2008, 2009), and seems the more likely source of influence, since negation in the 'until'-clause is optional in Yiddish, as in MH, but obligatory in Russian. Besides the main semantic shift, the greater variety of tense marking in the ʕ *ad še-lo* adjunct could be a reflection of the same freedom in Yiddish and Russian 'until'-clauses (Schaechter 1986; Abels 2005; Wade 2011:502).

4. **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 MH, 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.

5. **Embedded under negated 'surprise'**. The expression of expectation using superfluous negation in 'if'-clauses following negated 'surprise' appears to be a recent development of MH. While לֹא יִפָּלֵא *lo yipale* 'NEG will.surprise' occurs quite frequently in BYP, negation in the 'if'-clause has its usual truth reversal effect:[22]

> (13) ועל כן לא יפלא כי רוב העם לא ידעו מה שכתוב במגלות ההן
> *ve-ʕal-ken   lo   yipale   ki   rov   ha-ʕam   lo   yedʕu   ma*
> and-therefore NEG   will.be.surprising that most   the-people NEG   will.know what
> *še-katuv   ba-megilot   ha-hen*
> that-written in.the-scrolls the-those

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[22] Verbal patterns searched for included the roots פ.ל.א *p.l.ʔ* , ש.מ.מ *š.m.m*, and ש.א.י. *š.ʔ.y*.

'Therefore it is not surprising that most of the people do not know what is written in those scrolls.' (Ordinary negation; *Ha-yaʕar Be-ʔeyn Dov*, Ephraim Deinard, 1929)

A similar construction exists in English and German (as in *I won't be surprised if he isn't given a hard time*),[23] but, according to our informants, seems not to exist in Russian or in Yiddish.

6. **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., פֶּן *pen*) and שֶׁ-לֹא *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 13 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*).[24] *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   ʕolaman   be-xayehen,
women   fly   and-walk,   hurry   to.enjoy,   to.see   their.world   in-their.life,
keilu   mi-tox   yirʔa   še-lo   leʔabed   šaʕa   kala   le-vatala
as.if   out.of   fear   that-NEG   to.lose   hour   light   to-pointlessness
'Women rush by, hurrying to enjoy as much as they can in their lifetime, as if afraid to spend a single hour in vain.' ("Xulša", *Ha-šiloax*, Eliyahu Maidanik, May 1904)

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[23] http://baketown.blogspot.co.il/2005_02_01_archive.html, accessed September 2014.
[24] The roots searched for were פ.ח.ד *p.x.d*, ד.א.ג *d.ʔ.g*, ח.ש.ש *x.š.š*, and י.ר.א *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, Latin; Weinreich 1958; Schaechter 1986; Timberlake 2004; van der Wouden 1994, a.o.). 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.

7. **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   xayei ʔadam mexamat*
> the.day.before.yesterday almost that-NEG were.plucked life.CS human because.of
> *ʔi-zehirut šel šoter   angli*
> lack-caution of   policeman English
> 'Two days ago a British officer's carelessness almost cost a man's life.' (*Doʔar Ha-yom,* Nov. 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 2014), 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*, Dec. 14, 1934).[25]

Before concluding, we note another construction that is obsolete in contemporary MH and can potentially be analyzed as an instance of Super Neg: -לְ *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 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 crosslinguistically (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.[26]

Conclusion

Constructions with superfluous negation in MH do not all share the same path of development. While several constructions were denounced as "vulgar Russianisms or Polishisms"[27] over the years, some disappeared (*kimʕat še-lo*) while others lived on to become part of the MH grammar. Language contact may have reinforced existing

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[25] This may be one reason for the disappearance of the construction in MH, an issue we must leave for future research.

[26] 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 RH which did not survive to be part of MH is counterfactual 'if' אלמלא *ʔilmale* or אילולא *ʔilule* (M. Taube, p.c.). *ilmale* 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 oto ha-zman lo hayu mefixin 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)

[27] Shapiro (1909/1938).

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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