

Why is *This Day* Different from all Others?

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The principles of *Construction Grammar* include an understanding that form-meaning pairings, i.e. *constructions*, are the basic building blocks of the grammar of a language, and grammatical description must attend to the relationship between the form and the meaning of such pairings.

Fillmore’s (2002) account of certain time-when expressions in English characterizes the realization of calendar units (CUs) and calendar subunits (CSUs) in a family of constructions for temporal location, the most general one called (for convenience) LTN (for *last-this-next*). The present paper considers a subset of these in contemporary Hebrew — lexical instances of deictic period names. A relatively simple instantiation of LTN with the CU *yom* – ‘day’, the Hebrew lexical day name *hayom* (the-day) – ‘today’ (“this day”)/‘the day’ (cf. *hašavua* (the-week) – ‘this week’/‘the week’) strikingly demonstrates the affinity between CUs and LTN.

Aside from *hayom* – ‘today’, Hebrew has four other deictic lexical day names. Table 1 displays the entire set, and captures the asymmetry in the paradigm described further here. The deictic day name *maxratayim*, a morphological dual that uses the (no longer fully productive) dual suffix *-ayim*, can be construed as “two tomorrows” from *hayom* – ‘today’ which is “**This CU**” with *maxar* appropriately “one tomorrow”. However, *šilšom* – ‘the day before yesterday’ with its morphological relation to the number *šaloš* – ‘three’ must be construed as third back from *hayom*. The European and American ways to count building stories offer a useful analogy. In Europe the entry level story is “zero”, analogous to “**This CU**” in motivating *maxratayim*; in America, the entry level story is the first floor, analogous to “**This CU**” in motivating *šilšom*.

“European”		0 →	1	2
3	2	← 1		“American”
3rd back from this CU (as 1st)	“Last CU”	“This CU”	“Next CU”	2nd ahead from next CU (as 1st)
šilšom	etmol	hayom (the-day)	maxar	maxratayim
the day before yesterday	yesterday	today	tomorrow	the day after tomorrow

Table 1: Hebrew Lexical Day Names

Interestingly, while lexical day names have no prepositional marking in the LTN construction, Hebrew weekday names (Petruck and Boas 2003) require the locative preposition *be-* – ‘in/on’ (*be-yom šilši še-avar* (on-“day third” that passed) – ‘last Tuesday’).

The idiosyncrasies found in these data can be motivated, although in principle they cannot be predicted. Moreover, finding the two different ways of counting lexical day names in one language is odd. In contrast to the “slot-filler” approach, as adopted previously in accounts of Semitic morphophonemic phenomena (e.g. McCarthy 1981), the Construction Grammar framework is particularly well suited for these data. The present work contributes to testing and demonstrating the efficacy of the constructional approach for various grammatical phenomena within the morphological and lexical dimension of grammar, while also intimating the need to integrate lexica and constructicons.