A Sketch of Modern Hebrew Syntax

L303, Fall 2012
Basic Sentence Structure

- As in English, the basic word order in Hebrew is SVO.
- This suggests the rule $S \rightarrow NP \ VP$

Diagram:

```
  S
 /\  \\
 NP VP
 /   \
 N.def ha-susa the-mare V axla ate \
    |     \
    |     N
    |     tapuax apple
```
Basic Sentence Structure

- There are a few wrinkles, however.

Subjectless Sentence

Verbless Sentence

'I ate an apple.'
The Noun Phrase

Adjectives follow nouns.

Rules:

\[ \text{NP} \rightarrow \text{N (Adj)} \]

*Oh yeah. The Hebrew text reads left to right.*
The Noun Phrase

The definite article ‘the’ is a prefix. If we attach it to the noun, we must also attach it to the adjective.

rules:

NP → N (Adj)
NP → N.def (Adj.def)
The Noun Phrase

Some determiners follow the adjective. But others, which we’ll call Pre-determiners (PDet), precede the noun.

 spécial, le, la, un, une, des... 

Rules:

NP ➔ (PDet) N (Adj)
NP.def ➔ (PDet) N.def (Adj.def) (Det.def)
The Noun Phrase

All NP elements (with the exception of pre-determiners) must agree in number, gender, and definiteness.

Rules:

NP.ms ⟷ (PDet) N.ms (Adj ms)  NP.def.ms ⟷ (PDet) N.def.ms (Adj.def.ms) (Det.def.ms)
NP.fs ⟷ (PDet) N.fs (Adj.fs)  NP.def.fs ⟷ (PDet) N.def.fs (Adj.def.fs) (Det. def.fs)
NP.mp ⟷ (PDet) N.mp (Adj mp)  NP.def.mp ⟷ (PDet) N.def.mp (Adj.def.mp) (Det.def mp)
NP.fp ⟷ (PDet) N.fp (Adj.fp)  NP.def.fp ⟷ (PDet) N.def.fp (Adj.def.fp) (Det.def.fp)
The Possessive Phrase

Possessive phrases are headed by the possessive marker (Poss) šel ‘of’, which takes a definite NP has its complement.

```
PossP
  Poss šel
  of
  NP.def
  ha-xasmala’i
  the-electrician
```
The Possessive Phrase

Possessive phrases occupy the same slot as determiners within the NP.

\[
\text{NP} \rightarrow (\text{PDet}) \quad \text{N} \quad (\text{Adj}) \quad (\{\text{PossP}, \text{Det}\})
\]

\[
[ \text{kol} \quad \text{ha-susot} \quad \text{ha-xaxamot} \quad [ \text{šel} \quad \text{ha-xasmala’i} \quad ] ]
\]

all the-mares the-smart of the-electrician

‘all the electrician’s smart mares’
The Prepositional Phrase

PPs work much as they do in English: The Prep precedes an NP. However, some prepositions attach to the NP as prefixes.

\[ \text{PP} \rightarrow \text{Prep} \quad \text{NP} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>el</th>
<th>xanut</th>
<th>el</th>
<th>ha-xanut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to</td>
<td>store</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>the-store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘to a store’</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘to the store’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>be-xanut</th>
<th>ba-xanut</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in-store</td>
<td>in.the-store</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘in a store’</td>
<td>‘in the store’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transitive Verbs

Every transitive verb selects a particular particle to mark its complement, either \textit{et}, or a prefixed clitic such as \textit{b-} or \textit{l-}.

- **ET verbs**

\[
\text{VP} \rightarrow \text{V.et} \quad \text{ET} \quad \text{NP.def} \quad (\text{PP})
\]

bišla \text{ et} \ ha-marak
cooked.fs \ OM \ the-soup
‘cooked the soup’

\[
\text{VP} \rightarrow \text{V.et} \quad \text{NP} \quad (\text{PP})
\]

bišla \ marak
cooked.fs \ soup
‘cooked soup’
Transitive Verbs

• b- verbs

\[ VP \rightarrow V.b \quad b- \quad \{ \text{NP, NP.def} \} \quad (PP) \]

yištamšu \[ b- \quad \text{(h)a-maxšev} \]
use.FUT.3mp \[ \text{the-computer} \]
‘they will use the computer’

• l- verbs

\[ VP \rightarrow V.l \quad l- \quad \{ \text{NP, NP.def} \} \quad (PP) \]

azarnu \[ l- \quad \text{(h)a-susa} \]
help.PAST.1cp \[ \text{the-mare} \]
‘we helped the mare’
Intransitive Verbs

$\text{VP} \rightarrow \text{V.intrans} \quad \text{(PP)}$

caxakta
laugh.PAST.2fs
‘you laughed’

caxakt b-(h)a-xanut
laugh.PAST.2fs in-the-store
‘you laughed in the store’
Linking Verbs

VP ➞ V.link
  nir’e
  seem.PAST.3ms
  ‘seemed short’

Adj (PP)
kacar
Attributive Verbs

\[ VP \rightarrow V.\text{attrib.}1 \quad l- \quad NP \quad \{\ NP, \ Adj \} \quad \text{(PP)} \]
\[
\text{kar’a} \quad l- \quad (h)a-xasmala’i \quad \text{mexo’ar} \\
call.\text{PAST.2ms} \quad \text{the-electrician} \quad \text{ugly} \\
‘you called the electrician ugly’
\]

\[ VP \rightarrow V.\text{attrib.et} \quad ET \quad NP \quad \{\ NP, \ Adj \} \quad \text{(PP)} \]
\[
\text{cavata} \quad et \quad \text{ha-xeder} \quad \text{adom} \\
paint.\text{PAST.2ms} \quad \text{the-room} \quad \text{red} \\
‘you painted the room red’
\]
Clausal Verbs

VP ➔ V.clausal	Comp	S

xašavti	še-
think.PAST.1cs	that	[ ata
coxek ]
‘I thought you laugh’

raciti	še-
want.PAST.1.cs	that	[ caxakta ]
laugh.PAST.2ms
‘I wanted you to laugh’
Verbs Taking Infinitival Complements

\[ \text{VP} \rightarrow \text{V.modal} \quad \text{VP.inf} \]

- yaxol [ li-cxok ]
  - can.PRES.ms to-laugh
  - ‘can laugh’

- carix [ li-cxok ]
  - must.PRES.ms to-laugh
  - ‘I must laugh’
Subject-Verb Agreement

The VP and subject NP must agree in person, gender, and number.

```
S
   /   
NP.def.3fs   VP.3fs
   /     
N.def.3fs   V.3fs
   /    
ha-sus-a    ax1-a
  /      
DEF-mare-3fs eat.PAST-3fs
    /    
NP.3ms
    /   
N.3ms
   / 
tapuax apple.3ms
```