Tif' alna Forms in Modern Hebrew *

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The article shows that speakers of Modern Hebrew continue to adhere to the tif’alna form that is characteristic of Biblical Hebrew, and not only when speaking or writing in a high register. Our counting of the occurrences of 19 tif’alna forms using Google’s search engine found thousands of quotations which, while mostly in a high register, also included examples of spoken language (which approximates to ladies and gentlemen), as well as language disruptions and the simpler yif’alu form. It appears that the unceasing use of tif’alna forms today has links to the feminist revolution that showed its first signs in Israel in the 1970s. Women’s organizations in Israel have come out against classical Hebrew’s generic form, which is masculine. The use of the tif’alna form sits well with the modern trend of addressing a mixed audience twice over, as in ma’azinot u-ma’azinim.

Keywords: language, gender, tif’alna, feminine, masculine

Tif’alna Forms—Diachronic Aspect

Hebrew is a Semitic language and like all Semitic languages it has gender distinctions. The distinction is determined by forms and morphemes that are particular to each gender. Muchnik describes in her book the difference between European languages and Hebrew: “The case of Hebrew, […], is much more complex than European languages, because not only nouns, but almost all content words, and even some function words, are grammatically determined by gender…” (2015, p. 8).

To illustrate Muchnik’s words, the word “you” in English represents four different possibilities, each of which has a special form in Hebrew: second person (masculine singular)—‘ata; second person (feminine singular)—‘at; second person (masculine plural)—‘atem; and second person (feminine plural)—‘aten. This distinction is also reflected in syntax: when a noun in Hebrew is the subject of a sentence, the verbal predicate agrees with it in gender and number. For example, in English one can say “You are eating”, for which Hebrew has four corresponding sentences in which the subject changes between the genders in the third person singular (he, she) but in the third person plural there is only one form. Conversely, Hebrew distinguishes between masculine plural (hem) and feminine plural (hen). Owing to this distinction, the verb that is the predicate agrees with the subject in gender and number, for example, in English the future tense sentence “They will go” has two corresponding possibilities according to gender and number: “hem yelxu” in the masculine plural and “hen telexna” in the feminine plural, and the same is true in the second person plural, where “You will go” corresponds to the masculine plural in Hebrew—“atem telxu”, and the feminine plural—“aten telexna”. This means that many second and third person feminine forms are identical and end with the characteristically

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In Biblical Hebrew, there was a special form for the third person feminine plural (yif’alna), but it was pushed aside by the masculine form yif’alu (Yarkoni, 2004, p. 67). In only a small number of places in the Bible do we find the yif’alu form rather than tīf’alna and not only in the later books of the Bible, for example, “ya’alu hatsefarde’im” (Exodus, 7:29). This feature became more widespread in the spoken language, and in Mishnaic language the tif’alna form disappeared entirely. The disappearance of third person feminine plural forms was in fact commonplace in many of the world’s languages, and matches the language universals described by Greenberg (1966) in the 1960s. It is a trend that has continued in Modern Hebrew. Avineri (1965, p. 461) referred to the words of Ahad Ha’am, who opposed the use of the tif’alna form in the works of Enlightenment writers, who saw Biblical language as exemplary. Like Ahad Ha’am, Avineri also expresses his discontent with the insistence of teachers of grammar on using the tif’alna form in Modern Hebrew. More than 50 years have elapsed since then, and it seems that speakers of Israeli Hebrew are continuing to adhere to the tif’alna form, and not only in high register. Many high-register forms have almost disappeared from the written, printed, and digital language, such as the use of the subordinating conjunction “ha” as a substitute for the subordinating conjunction “še,” but the use of the tif’alna form has not ended nor even diminished to this day. The Hebrew Language Academy has not seen fit to officially permit use of the masculine since the disappearance of the tif’alna form from Mishnaic language and its replacement by yif’alu. In 2010, the Academy commented on the demand to relinquish the tif’alna form in these words: “Both options are standard. However, it is important that today’s Hebrew speakers are familiar with classical forms such as tir’ena, tilbašna, which are rare in spoken Hebrew today. This is why teachers emphasize these forms in their lessons.” Ornan (2016, p. 149) also pointed out that in groups of girls (such as in the army), although the old form is still used for second and third person plural in the future tense, the masculine form is more common.

The purpose of the article is to prove the continued use of the tif’alna form in standard high and middle registers and in sub-standard language, and to try to explain why it has not disappeared from Modern Hebrew despite what Muchnik (2015, p. 192) wrote: “Such forms can probably still be found, but are very infrequent”. We will show that Hebrew speakers today are continuing to integrate the high tif’alna forms alongside many non-standard forms of Hebrew, without any sensing of their incompatibility.

Variety in Modern Hebrew

So far we have described the standard use of the second and third person plural future tense forms and have shown that in Modern Hebrew there are those who adopt the classical tif’alna form for second and third person feminine plural, while others prefer the shortened form common to masculine and feminine—‘atem and ‘aten tif’alu, hem and hen yif’alu. From now on, we refer to the tif’alna form as the “long form”, and the yif’alu form as the “short form”. This is in fact a socio-linguistic question by nature, since it depends on those participating in the discussion and other important circumstances. The subject of variety in Modern Hebrew has

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1 The imperative forms that are also acceptable only in the second person agree with the masculine plural and feminine plural.

Using forms almost identical to the future tense but omitting the letter taf: “shimru” for the masculine and “shorna” (as in the form pe’alna) for the feminine (Blau, 2010, p. 185). This article does not discuss the imperative forms.

2 In Hebrew, the subordinating conjunction še (as that) joins the verb in the past tense and future tense, and in a high register in the present tense is replaced with producer. For example: ha’anašim še-lamdhu safot (past tense), ha’anašim še-yilmedu safot (future tense), and ha’anašim ha-lomdim safot (present tense).

been discussed by Bentolila (2002), Shlesinger (1995; 2000a; 2000b; 2002), and other researchers. Schwarzwald (2002) described all the text variables referred to in linguistic research, and distinguished between three main external variables: the source of the text, the manner of production of the text, and the purpose of the text. There are also internal variables, and they are the subject of the text linked to its content, and the level of formality of the style (formal or non-formal). The external variables are then divided into sub-variables. Schwarzwald divides the source of the text into four sub-variables: the producers of the text who differ from each other in their linguistic characteristics from the aspects of gender, age, and linguistic background; the process of creating the text; the circumstances of production of the text and where it was produced; and the date of production of the text or the date of its publication, which can differ.

The way of producing the text also has some variables: spoken or written medium. When the medium is spoken, the range of circumstances of production of the speech must be taken into account, and today there is the electronic dimension, with its own characteristics. The external structure of the text also varies, as does its profile, which contains non-verbal variables such as illustrations, graphics, and so on. The third important variable is the purpose of the text, which depends on the target audience and the circumstances of the dialog.

The detailed description of variety is important for presentation of the examples later in the article, as the use of the long and short forms of the second and third person plural depends on the variables mentioned there, and we should also take into account the major variables. We explain first that all the examples are taken from the Internet and represent a written medium, and therefore it should be borne in mind that alongside examples from high-register language there are also examples representing a new way of writing that has come into being during our lifetime—a combination of written language and spoken language (Weissman & Gonen, 2005, p. 10). The producers of the text are described from the aspect of the profile insofar as such information can be gleaned from the Internet. Information about the age and occupation of the writer is not usually available, and most of the quotations do not note the gender of the writer, except in cases where identification was possible. Such cases are presented in two separate items with the headings “The language of women” and “The language of men”. The process of producing the text is also unknown since it appears on the Internet in its finished form, but the date and stage are noted in the source. The structure of the text is clear from the manner of its presentation, and its purpose can be understood from the identity of the target audience, the presentation of the text, and the circumstances of the dialog. Although some of the external variables are missing, the internal variables that are the subject and style of the text are apparent. Later we explain the manner of presentation of the examples, which relies on the data provided here.

**CMC Language**

Because the research corpus is taken from Google’s search engine on the Internet, we provide here a brief description of CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). This is a language with various types of dialog: asychronic or synchronic dialog of forums or electronic (Web-based) forums, email correspondence, and synchronic chat dialog. Cohen and Sagi (2006) described three notable features of CMC: first, it is easy to produce, delete, and change and therefore is considered unstable text. Second, it allows dialog participants to retain anonymity, and therefore a kind of intimacy, frankness, and exposure develops, to the extent of rudeness, swearing, and verbal violence. Third, the dialog is conducted in writing and by reading, without seeing or hearing its participants, and as a result, this communication lacks the para-verbal means that contribute to delivering the message and testifying to the extent of intimacy between those involved.
The characteristics of electronic language have been studied by numerous researchers, among them Danet (2001; 2007), Weissman and Gonen (2005), and Cohen and Sagi (2006): unique use of punctuation, emoticons, a unique language (geek forums), deliberate spelling mistakes, phonetic writing, the creation of a large and esoteric vocabulary, etc. It is important to emphasize that while the research corpus includes quotations from forums, blogs, and other types of correspondence, all the quotations in it were nevertheless written in the traditional way of passing on information. The Examples section also contains quotations with spelling, style, and punctuation mistakes, but these are typical also of traditional writing and are not deliberate as they are in Internet dialog. The reason for this appears to be the pattern of the tif'alna form, whose place is not in the informal and mischievous language of online dialog but in more institutional contexts or in traditional communication that enjoys the advantages of anonymity, accessibility, availability and the speed of the flow of information afforded by the Internet. We note also that the electronic medium of communication is an intermediate medium that combines speech and writing and bears the characteristics of both.

Method

The research method is to count the occurrences of 19 tif'alna forms published on the Internet in the past decade, using the Google search engine. In order to eliminate all the instances of the forms that are quoted from the Hebrew before our time, we selected only roots created in our time, such as “tit’ametna”, “tefargena”, and “tedoragna”, or roots that existed in the earlier layers of the language but in conjugations created in Modern Hebrew, such as the roots of “hitbatsea” and “huxraz”. Verbs from roots that have taken on a new meaning, such as “šider”, were also added.

The following Table 1 describes the roots in the corpus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New root</th>
<th>New conjugation for existing root</th>
<th>New meaning for existing root</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mm’š (execute)</td>
<td>hištalem – hitpa’el (study)</td>
<td>dr’g (grade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘m’t (confront)</td>
<td>hitbate – hitpa’el (express)</td>
<td>šl’m (camera)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>’xz’v (disappoint)</td>
<td>hitbatsea – hitpa’el (implement)</td>
<td>šd’r (broadcast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frg’n (say something nice)</td>
<td>yisem – pi’el (apply)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘B’r (enable, allow)</td>
<td>rixel – pi’el (gossip)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kz’z (offset)</td>
<td>huxraz – huf’al (announced)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šdr’g (upgrade)</td>
<td>gibeš, gubaš, hitgabeš (bond)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dv’x (report)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zh’h (identify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a small number of cases, where no examples from these roots could be found or we sought to diversify the verbs, other verbs were used in quotations that were written in the past decade.

It is well known that Google sometimes retrieves results that are quoted more than once, but even when taking this into account, the results are significant. For example, the form tit’ašerna appears on the Internet 3,050 times; temumašna—6,730 times, tešaderna—997 times.

Remarks on Methodology

1) In Google-based research, quotations are sometimes removed and there is no way to prove that they were once there.
(2) It is not always possible to distinguish between a male and female writer because some of the names in Hebrew are both male and female. In this case, if a photograph was included we were able to identify gender.

(3) Forum members sometimes use false names. Gender identity in such cases was informed by the form of language in the text that typifies one or the other.

(4) The samples sometimes contained more than one occurrence of the tif’alna form, and in those cases all of them are bolded, including those which are not derived from the roots in the table. For example, the word tiheyena appears three times alongside tif’alna forms, even though it already appears in the Bible. The marking of additional forms reinforces our argument and does not detract from the conclusion that the quotations are taken from Modern Hebrew.

Under the rules of Hebrew grammar, the prepositions k, l, and b are usually pointed with a mobile shwa, which is pronounced similarly to the vowel e. However, when they join a word that also begins with a mobile shwa, the pronunciation sounds as the vowel i. The same occurs with the preposition m. The waw consecutive w (= and) in these circumstances is pronounced u. Most Hebrew speakers do not adhere strictly to this rule and therefore pronounce the two consecutive shwas at the start of the word. Because all the examples in the corpus are from written texts (rather than spoken ones), there is no way of knowing if the writers would have pronounced them properly when speaking. For the sake of uniformity, these cases were transcribed according to the standard grammar.

**Findings**

The findings revealed hundreds, sometimes thousands, of results for each of the 19 forms (exact numbers are provided below). A small number of the quotations indicated that they were being used in contexts of day-to-day language, sometimes alongside simple forms or language disruptions.

The quotations presented below are taken from a variety of texts and are presented in sections in the following order:

- (a) Formal language
- (b) Marketing language
- (c) Sports language
- (d) Religious language
- (e) The language of women
- (f) The language of men
- (g) Language disruptions
- (h) Mixes

The order of the sections was determined according to the various variables described in previous section. Sections a-c represent differing levels of language: high-register language (a) and middle-register language (b, c). In these sections, there was no information as to the identity of the writers and therefore we also lack their profile. Section d focuses on the religious writers, which has its own language. Sections e and f distinguish between women’s language and men’s language in quotations for which the information was provided directly or indirectly (see above, Remarks on Methodology 2, 3). The last two sections reflect manifestations that are characteristic of non-standard writing, and their purpose is to show integration of the high-register tif’alna forms even in sub-standard writing. We point out that excluding the examples in sections The Language of
Women and The Language of Men, all the quotations testify to the language of both sectors, but in every section we chose to focus on a different variable of the language’s variety.

The examples are presented twice: in the original language in English transcription, and translated into English precisely as written in Hebrew. The date appears above the quotation, with the name of the addressee to its right. A link related to the quotation appears after the quotation. The form or forms in the tif’alna pattern are bolded, and correspondingly, the transcribed and translated words are also bolded. We note that the transcript reflects the Modern Hebrew pronunciation in which ‘ sounds as ’ and ḫ sounds as x.

Examples

**Formal Language**

Formal language is represented by publications from government ministries and local authorities: a course for kindergarten teachers, a tender, notice from the town hall to residents, a Ministry of Agriculture program, and regulations for sporting events. The writers of these texts, each of whom represents an official body, are meticulous in their use of the Biblical tif’alna form, which is perceived as a high-register form appropriate to the circumstances of the communication. We selected five of the numerous examples of this kind.

1. 2.9.18 – Afula Town Hall
   hagananot atsman tistalemna vetuxšarna li-fe’ilut zo ve-’af tizkena bi-gmul ‘al ze.
   The kindergarten teachers themselves will-study and will-be-trained for these activities and will-be-rewarded for it.
   https://eco-afula.co.il > General

2. 24.9.19 – Tender for pipe system – The Economics Company for Ramat Gan Development
   hahanxayot hanal lišmira teymusama behet’em lidrišot harašut hamusmexet.
   These guidelines for security will-be-applied as required by the competent authority.
   https://www.calcalit-rg.co.il > html5 > web

3. 2.8.19 – Yoqne’am Town Hall
   haknisa vehayetsi’a tit’afšerna derex kviš 722 – rehov hatamar.
   Entry and exit will-be-allowed through Road 722 – Rehov Hatamar.
   https://www.facebook.com > yoqneam.org.il > posts

4. 9.2.12 – The State of Israel – Ministry of Agriculture
   Hato’elet haxevratit vehakalkalit šel hatoxnit titbatena biklita ve’ixlus…
   The social and economic benefits of the plan will-be-reflected in absorption and population…
   https://www.moag.gov.il > Documents > infrastructure_reconstruction

5. 2017 Regulations: Football State
   kevutsot ašer ta’alena šalav velo tofa’na elav, turxakna mi-pe’ilut bimdinat hakaduregel.
   Teams that move-up a stage but do not appear, will-be-excluded from the activities⁴.
   https://football-state.com > InfoPage

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⁴ In constructions such as this, Hebrew uses the future tense whereas English uses the present tense, as shown in the translation. Additional similar instances are followed by an asterisk.
Marketing Language

Marketing language is sampled in this section with five advertisements. According to Nir (1991), the principal aim of advertisers is to convince consumers, to influence and shape their consumer conduct, and therefore the advertisement focuses on the conative function pursuant to Jakobson (1970). The wide range of addressees requires the advertiser to write in language that is directed towards the widest common denominator, which means that a middle-range register is the most suited to that goal. Shlesinger (2002) found that marketing language and the sports language that we quote after it, are written in a lower register than that of the other sections in the newspaper. As we show below, the selected advertisements contain tif‘alna forms even in this register. Because the advertisements are not frequently updated, no dates are given.

1. Our products – Dimol Bags Ltd. – Branded bags
   …kexol šesakiyot ha‘ariza tiheyena xazakot veyafot yoter – hen tešaderna meser šel esek retsini, xay venošem!
   …The stronger and more beautiful the bags/packaging are, the better they will-send the message of a serious, alive and dynamic business!
   https://www.dimol.co.il > motzarim

2. Bags for carrying food – Catalog of products from all over the world
   …hanayadut vehakalut šelo te’ašferna lexa lehištameš bo bekalut.
   …Its portability and light weight will-allow you to use it easily.
   https://top2.co.il

3. Concord cake – The cherry on the cake – The Baghdad Baker
   ‘ugot yom huledet me’utsavot tat’emna lemigvan šel eru‘im.
   Designer birthday cakes are-suitable for a range of events.
   https://www.haofemibagdad.co.il

4. Custom-made TV chairs
   Kursa‘ot televizia me’utsavot ba’alot mar’e’agol […] tat’emna bimyuxad lebatim ba’aley ‘itsuv kafri…
   Designer TV chairs with a rounded appearance [see section 1] are especially suited to rural-style homes…
   https://tvpoint.co.il > blog

5. Advertisements for the rural design brand
   Ha-liči nimme ‘im haperot ha’asirim be-vitamin C. šaloš yexidot ličhi (ke-30 gr’) tesapekna 25% mimenat havitamin C ha-yomit ha-mumletset.
   Lichi is one of the fruits rich in vitamin C. Three lichis (about 30 grams) will provide 25% of the recommended daily dose of vitamin C.
   https://www.specialib.com

Sports Language in the Media

Yahav (2005, p. 11) identified in sports language characteristics of a sub-culture that is developing social norms that differ from those of society in general. One of these is a unique jargon that is described in an article by Kayam and Kaufman (2005). Kayam, who researched the rhetoric of sensitivity in the language of sports commentators, found something unique in their language, which is a rare combination of words from a high
linguistic register together with words from a low linguistic register in the same sentence or the same paragraph. According to Kayam, this combination seemingly stems from the commentator’s desire to write or express himself as a reliable and professional authoritative figure while at the same time addressing his readers or listeners “on their own level”. The five examples below show the same combination of high and low register, as well as tif’alna forms that seem foreign to the context.

1. 12.6.19 – Basketball > Wiener Sal League
   Hamo’adon ya’amod ‘al kax šehaxlatot haminhelet ‏teyusanna‏ bimlo’an.
   The club will insist that the manager’s decisions are-implemented in full.
   https://sport1.maariv.co.il

2. 14.11.18 – Hapoel Yerushalayim in Bamberg – Sal News Forum
   hayiti batuax še’im yihyu lexol hapaxot ba-top... ‘ubifrat yikxu et ha-bayit šelaniu “ba-halixa” ‘uše’ar hamo’adonim kolel hapo’e! ‏tit’anetna‏ ‘al…
   I was sure that if they would be at least in the top... and especially would easily take our group and the other clubs, including Hapo’e!, would-compete for…
   http://salnews.com > front page

3. 18.4.15 – Debuzzer archive
   štehen ‏titxarena‏ šuv hašana, vešuv ha’amera’ika’im tolim bahen tikvot gdolot.
   The two of them will-compete again this year, and once again the Americans have high hopes for them.
   http://debuzzer.com > shohat

4. 11.7.10 – Sport
   sfarad, larišona betoldoteha, veholand, bapa’am hašlišit, ‏titxarena‏ bamisxak hexašuv beyoter bakaduregel ha’olami. ma šebatuax tiheyet ‘alufa xadaša.
   Spain, for the first time in its history, and Holland, for the third time, will-compete in the most important game in world football. Definitely, there’ll be a new champion.
   https://news.walla.co.il

5. 21.4.16 – Walla! 13 News
   bemisgeret haturnir ‏titxarena‏ kvutsot min haliga hayisra’elit axat neged hašeniya, šniya lifnei šehen mit’ofefot leyatseg otanu ba’alifuyot ha’olam lebogrim uleno’ar še-‏titkayenna‏ bakayits…
   In the tournament, teams from the Israeli league will-compete against each other, a second before they take off to represent us in the world adult and youth championships which-will-take-place this summer…
   https://13news.co.il > parents

**Religious Language**

A fairly large number of papers have described research into national religious and Orthodox religious language, for example, those of Shlesinger (1995; 1996; 2002), Seri (2001). All of them point to speech and writing in a higher register that is influenced by their great familiarity with the language of the Jewish Bible. This fact can affect greater use of the tif’alna form, which is considered high register owing to its Biblical source. In the examples below, most refer to day-to-day routine subjects. The fourth example quotes a rabbi responding to a question relating to demonstrations by religious girls, and we can assume that his function as
rabbī also influences his high style. The last example in this section is one of two in which the characteristics of CMC language are apparent: the use of punctuation as emoticons that express emotions—the word a-l-w-a-y-s and the symbol :).

1. 15.1.14 […] ha-davar lo yo’il, ze rak yavi leperud ‘ulesin’a šenašim mešua’ mamot basafsal bagina **tuxalna ve-ta’akovna** axar…

   It will not help, it will only lead to a schism and hatred that bored women sitting on the bench in the park **will be able and will be preoccupied** by…
   https://bshch.blogspot.com > 2014/01 > blog-post_3248

2. 3.9.19 – Arutz 7 (a radio channel)
Da’agit lištei talamot mikto’iot **še-tetsalemna** et ma še-kore.
I made sure there were two professional photographers who **would photograph** what was happening.
https://www.inn.co.il > News > News.aspx

3. 24.10.11 – Forum: Behind closed doors
Ha’im hen **tif’alna** bexol še’ot hape’ilut ‘o nitan yiheye lehafsik et pe’ulatan […] ha’im nitan lehatkeen et hamatslemot **še-tetsalemna** beretsef…

   **Will-they-operate** during all the hours of activity or can they be switched off […] Can the cameras be installed so that **they-will-film** continuously…
   https://www.bhol.co.il > forums > topic

4. March 2005 – Yeshiva website
mutar bitmai še-ta’amodna bešeket velo **tit’ametna** im ha-mištara.
It is permitted provided they **stand** quietly and **do not confront** the police.
https://www.yeshiva.org.il > Ask

5. 10.7.19 – National Service Forum
ve’al **tid’agna** – on naam kol hahatxalot kašot’, aval **tizkorna** t-a-m-i-d “kaše” yeš rak balexem – vegam ‘oto ‘oxlim… :)”

   And **don’t-worry** – although “all beginnings are hard”, **remember** a-l-w-a-y-s that “only” bread has a crust, and that gets eaten too… :)”
   https://www.kipa.co.il

The Language of Women

Schwarzwald (2002) mentioned research papers that pointed to the measure of conservativeness of women and of men. According to those papers, women tend to be more normative in their uses of language. One of the explanations for this is their maternal and educational functions within the family. On the other hand, women are alert to new fashions and adopt neologisms more quickly than men do5.

   Note that the last two examples in this section contain slang expressions and therefore represent women’s low-register language.

1. 21.4.15 – A book site where readers give their opinion on books

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5 See the researches in The Language of Men section and Cheshire’s research (1998).
ulai ki hamimsad hamexubad šelamu mefaxed šebnot yisra’el hakešerot tizdahena ‘im “larisa” vetelexna bedarka?

Maybe because our esteemed Establishment is afraid that kosher Israeli girls will-identify with “Larissa” and will-follow her lead?

http://blogs.bananot.co.il

2. 20.11.12 – Mako Celebs – Women
   ‘ele šexošvot et ‘atsman hañxi yafot ba’olam vevoxadot še’tim tefargena lemišehi ze ya’ase ‘otan paxot yafot.
   Those who think they’re the most beautiful in the world and are afraid that if they-say-something-nice about someone it will make them less beautiful.
   https://www.mako.co.il > TalkbacksPage

3. 27.12.17 – Blog of Michal Shapira (jewelry designer)
   ‘ani mekava šegam po, hahatmada vehahasvulut šištalemna.
   I hope that here too, perseverance and patience will-pay-off.
   http://micture-art.blogspot.com

4. 11.10.16 – Arutz 7 (a radio channel)
   Besof šavua 18 […] be’ikar im tetsa lax beten lifnei ve’az debili “lehastir” kešekulan misaviv teraxelna vetašodna bax.
   At the end of week 18 […] mainly if you have a bump before and then it’s stupid to “hide” when everyone around you will-gossip and suspect you.
   https://www.inn.co.il/Forum/Forum.aspx/t822363

5. 4.10.18 – Casual
   nashim mele’ot be’atsman lo ro’ot et haxavera mimeter, teraxelna aleha berega šetitraxek.
   Women full of themselves don’t see the friend when she’s right next to them, will-gossip about her as soon as she moves away.
   https://www.sheee.co.il

The Language of Men

The examples in this section show that there is no difference between women’s writing and men’s writing from the aspect of use of the tif’alna forms, even though, as noted earlier, some of the quotations in the other sections were written by men. There are those who believe that these forms are unique to women’s expression, owing to their desire to preserve a status that differentiates them from men and not to erase their identity as women by using a form that was originally attributed to men. Another reason is the fact that women are more conservative than men in their language, as it has been shown in many research papers (Jespersen, 1922; Trudgill, 1998; Eisikovits, 1998; Muchnik, 2002; and others). But the examples in this section and others prove that the trend is a general one—both women and men continue to use a linguistic form that relates specifically to the feminine gender. It should be noted that the last example in this section, which uses the tif’alna form three times, was written by a man.⁶

⁶ Another example of the use of three tif’alna forms in one quotation can be found at the end of Formal Language section, but the gender of the writer in that example is unknown.
1. 18.10.17 – Yisrael Hayom (a free newspaper)
meser šel exut? meser šel xom vebetiyut? meser šel kvedut bemida mesuyemet? xašuv šehadlatot tešaderna et ha-mesar ha-meduyak šebo atem me’unyanim ve-titsorna et ha’avira ha-mat’ima.
A message of quality? A message of warmth and homeliness? A message of some degree of weightiness? It is important that the doors transmit the precise message that you want and create the correct atmosphere.
https://www.israelhayom.co.il > article

2. 25.5.09 – ynet, talkback No. 193
lo yitaxen še’ani nimtsa bator vešeka’iot teraxelna alenu besafa še’ani lo mevin russit/aravit/tsarfa tit/angliit...
It is inconceivable that I stand in line and the check-out girls gossip about us in a language I don’t understand Russian/Arabic/French/English...
http://m.googel.co.il > forum

3. 9.9.15 – Setting out, Yuval Harel’s blog
rekordz ki lema’ala me-70 lehakot kvar ušru la’eru’a velehakot nosafot tuxrazna bekarov, lidvarav bekenes šeyitkayem beta’arixim 11 ad ha-15 lenovember, 2015, yinxexu asrot anšei…
Records that more than 70 bands have already been confirmed for the event and others will soon be announced, he says a conference on 11-15 November, 2015 will be attended by dozens of people…
https://yuvalerel.com

4. 19.1.15 – Telecom
bakevišim tisa’na mexoniot, še-te’utsavna bešituf hayatsranim vehamištamšim.
On the roads there will be cars designed jointly by the manufacturers and the users.
https://www.telecomnews.co.il

5. 26.5.16 – Har Adar, Dr. Yehuda Ben-Hur
hen higi’u elenu me’afrika bedarkan le’erop sha’m hen tekanena. bastav hen šuv ta’avorna me’al artsenu bedarkan le’afrika šam hem tišhena ad bo ha’aviv.
They arrived here from Africa on their way to Europe where they-will-nest. In the autumn they-will-pass-over our country on their way to Africa where they-will-remain until the spring.
http://www.har-adar.muni.il > articles

Language Disruptions
In this section, we show that it is not only in high-register language that the tif’alna form is used, but also in sub-standard utterance that includes mistakes of language and style.

1. 22.10.10 – Review of bridal-wear store
Vet’a’emet šeze lo rak hasimla hamadhima šederek agav hamaxma’ot lo mafsikot lavo… zot gam Keti. ‘en… bekitur šave šave šave lalexet lešam. aten lo tit’azevna ‘ani mavtixa…
And the truth is it’s not only the amazing gown which by the way is getting non-stop compliments… it’s also Keti. What more can I say… In short it’s really really really worthwhile to go there.
you-will-not-be-disappointed I promise…
https://www.mitchatnim.co.il > review
In this quotation, there are characteristics of spoken language in which the first word, which represents the two words “ve’et ha’emet”, is written exactly as it would be spoken in everyday speech. Another example is the word “‘en”, which is a slang expression that covers a whole sentence: “What more can I say”. The third example from spoken language is the use of the word “šave” three times to express strong emphasis.

2. 13.1.19 – The Kitchen Coach

haxamutsiyot mošxot ‘oto yoter lakivun šel hasalat – im magiša pošer hen behexlet tešadregna…
The cranberries pull it more towards the salad – if serve warm they-will-definitely upgrade…
https://www.thekitchencoach.co.il

The subject is missing from the second half of the sentence, as is common in the online language. It should be “If you serve warm…”.

3. 1.2.12 – Hapitria

pirsomot šonot leyundai tešudarna lifney ‘uvemešex hamissxak hagadol, vekol axat mehen, ‘ex lomar, sukaria.

Various commercials for Hyundai will-be-broadcast before and during the big match, and each of them, how shall I say this, is eye candy.
https://www.pitria.com

In standard Hebrew, two prepositions (before and during) will not appear consecutively before the noun; rather, one will come before it and the other after it.

4. 23.5.17 – Ministry of Transport announcement

hagašat bakašot yevu tit’afšera hazel me’ogust 2017.
Submission of import applications will-be-allowed commencing August 2017.
https://www.chamber.org.il > sectors

Under the rules of Hebrew syntax, the gender and number of subject and predicate must agree (see previous section). The sentence above does not comply: the subject is feminine singular while the predicate is feminine plural. It should read “hagašat bakašot yevu tit’afšer”.

5. 13.10.13 – userblog > tzanua

…av al lemażalxen, banot, ‘ulmazali – hayom titstalemma (lo ixpat li ‘im ze ‘ivrit tiknit, ba li lehagid titstalemma be-mivta klafe’i)

…But It’s your lucky day, girls, and it’s my lucky day – today you-will-be-photographed (I don’t care if that’s standard Hebrew, I feel like saying you will be photographed in the accent of a gossip)
http://www.tapuz.co.il

This source demonstrates clearly how online language is more light-footed and unrestrained. Apart from the spelling mistake in the word “‘im” (= with), a homophone for the conditional word “‘im”, the writer, who is meta-linguistically aware, knows that the word titstalemma is typical of standard language and she writes that she doesn’t care about using it. Furthermore, she also wants (“ba li” in slang) to emphasize its use by saying it in the accent of a gossiping busybody. This example provides a good illustration of the words of Muchnik (2015, p. 192) that nowadays, a conservative form like tif’alna is sometimes pronounced humoristically in a mocking tone while raising the voice and imitating exaggerated feminine speech.
6. 15.8.18 – Mako website
‘aten kanir’e masigot et kol tsumet halev la ‘aten zekukot, ‘aval tizkorna ‘im texacedna et ‘atsmexen vetstalemna betsura ‘axeret…

Apparently you are getting all the attention you need, but remember if you respect yourselves and are-photographed another way…

https://www.mako.co.il > TalkbacksPage

This sentence has a writing disruption in the word “kanir’e”, a disruption that is typical of someone whose learning is deficient.

7. 14.9.09 – Israeli Satellite Forum
kaše li leha’amin še’irgun hanašim hafeministi bimdinat yisrael, yaskim šexavarot misxariyot beyisrael tešaderna pornografia bli pikuax ra’ui Xevre, tets’u mehakufsa… ze internet!

I find it hard to believe that the organization of feminist women in the State of Israel will agree that commercial companies in Israel will-broadcast pornography without appropriate supervision. Guys, get out of the box… it’s Internet!

In this example, there are spelling mistakes in the words “irgun” and “kufsa”. There is also a disparity in language register between the long first sentence, which is written in a high register, and the closing phrase, which is pure spoken language.

Mixes

This section brings examples in which alongside the tif’alna form we find the use of yif’alu forms that are typically masculine but whose use is standard, as explained in previous section. Numerous examples of this kind were found, and we reproduce eight of them here. The quotations prove that the use of the yif’alu form is not deeply rooted in the speakers of the language even though, according to the Academy, it is decisively standard. Even today, speakers still refuse to discard the high-register tif’alna forms, and sometimes are unaware that their words also contain yif’alu forms. In the examples in this section, tif’alna forms are bolded as in all the examples of this section, while yif’alu forms are in italics.

1. 5.10.17 – Sports news in Safsal
lo paxot me-5 kevutsot me’ezor hašaron tesaxekna ha’ona bamaxoz hatsfoni šel haliga ha’artsit. Be’od štayim mehem mexuvanot lale’umit, ha’axerot ya’amdu ba-tvax šebeš hama’avak ‘al hamakom…

No fewer than 5 teams from the Sharon region will-play this season in the north district of the nationwide league, while two of them are directed to the national [league]. The others will be in the range between the fight for place…

https://safsal.co.il

2. 18.9.19 – articles
maxar šloš hamit’amlot yevats’u et targil ha’alot ‘uvesiyum hamukdamot titgabešna ha’olot ligemar ha’seret velegmar ha’alot.

Tomorrow the three gymnasts will perform the clubs routine and at the end of the preliminaries those who qualify for the ribbon final and the clubs final will-be-selected.

https://www.sport5.co.il

3. 13.8.19 – Instagram – Land of Legends | Ofira Shushan
babayit, hastylistiot ‘ume’atsvot ha’ofna yekablu bama […], ha-dugmaniot tešaderna ‘online al haset ‘o mexufša xalomit bezanzibar ‘o be’iyey sayšel.

At home, the fashion stylists and designers will be given the stage […], the models will-broadcast online on the set or from a dream holiday in Zanzibar or the Seychelles.

https://www.ofirashushan.co.il

4. 29 June 2009 – Kipa forum
‘al tistalemna mehatsad. ze lo yelex xenhab el hašamayim ‘o hafux el haritspa… tistaklu yeširot ‘el hamatslema bli xošmot…

Don’t be-photographed from the side. It won’t work nor will looking to the sky or the opposite to the floor… look directly at the camera plain and simple…

https://www.kipa.co.il

5. 20.9.19 – Israeli Quilting Association
hašoftot bata’aruxa yišpetu et hayetsirot lefi hakriteryonim šenikbe’u biprotokol ha-ta’aruxa, letsořex bexirat hayetsirot šeyikadetlu veuyutsu bata’aruxa ‘utedaregna et ha-yetsirot.

The judges at the exhibition will adjudge the works according to the criteria set in the exhibition protocol, in order to select the works that will be included and displayed at the exhibition and will grade the works.

https://www.israeli-quilt.com/node

6. 13.11.19 – Signon-Life Style > Signon Ma’ariv
hen tetsalemna kos šel starbaks ‘o šulxan amus kol tuv, ‘aval hen lo yar’u et ‘atsman dofkot bis milapa.

They will-photograph a Starbucks mug or a table laden with good food, but they won’t show themselves biting into a lapa.

https://www.maariv.co.il

7. 14 March 2017 – Tetsave: Experimental Torah School for Girls
bnot ha’atuda betet tisa’na lebar ilan lekenes benoseh nanotexnologia. š’ar bnot šixva tet yagi’u karagil be-7.30 lehitpalel velilmod ‘anglit baboker. le’axar miken yis’u…

The reservists in 9th grade will-travel to Bar Ilan for a conference on nanotechnology. The other girls from 9th grade will arrive as usual at 7:30 for prayers and English lessons in the morning. Then they will travel…

http://www.pelech.org.il

8. Undated [Advertisement for bach flower]
maxšavot šel de’ugot yiša’aru, ‘o ‘im bemešex hazman yaxlefu, hen taxzorna.

Worrying thoughts will remain, or if they dissipate over time, they will return.

https://www.bachflower.co.il

Discussion and conclusions

We selected 46 quotations of various kinds which contain the long tif’alna forms. In the first four sections, we focused on quotations from differing genres, in which the difference was the language register, then texts written by women followed by texts written by men. The last two sections dealt with examples reflecting
non-standard language with grammatical mistakes, and instances of mixed use of the two forms—long and short. It should be noted that most of the forms found in Google’s search engine represent texts written in a high register. We also emphasize that our selection of quotations was authored by both men and women. The first conclusion arising from these facts is that many of those who use high-register Hebrew see the tif’alna form as a characteristic of that register, and therefore both women and men are meticulous about using it. This is actually not a new conclusion, since it relates to an ongoing trend. The innovation in this research relates to the middle register used in marketing language and in sports, and the non-standard language containing disruptions and a mix of forms. These changes are in keeping with the deterioration in spoken language and even in written language, and the devaluation that has occurred in acknowledgement of the classical Hebrew language. Hed (2000) attested that the 1950s were the shining period of Bible study in schools, before its fall from grace in the sixties and seventies. Katz-Admoni (2013, p. 10) discussed the reasons for the disconnection between the young generation and the language of the Bible, and devoted her entire book to the difficulties experienced by school children in understanding it. Rosenthal (2018, pp. 17-22) also in his book Talking Biblical Hebrew addressed this question and tried to open a door to the world of the Bible. In addition, Judaism studies in schools have been cut back, lessening the exposure of students to classical Hebrew texts.

Another phenomenon is the change in literary language. Since the 1980s, there has been a revolution in Israel, in which authors have started to write children’s books in spoken language in order to speak to them “on their own level”7. A similar process has occurred in Hebrew poetry (Sovran, 2002) in which the spoken language has penetrated the works of poets who started their creative lives between the establishment of the State of Israel and the present.

The implications of these trends have been catastrophic—a whole generation of children is unfamiliar with the high and rich Hebrew language, and this deficiency has greatly reduced the level of learning in young people today. Against this backdrop, it is unclear how the long tif’alna form has managed to survive while other high-register forms of language uses, such as idioms and sayings, have disappeared from the language. It seems that the reason for this is not linguistic, but social.

Sha’har (1978, pp. 12-20) compared the expectations of gender roles that were the worldwide norm until the 1940s and the expectations of gender roles about 30 years later. She finds that starting in the 1970s, various sociologists tried to redefine the essence of the “division of labor” by men and women in western society. In Israel also, social processes and considerations occurred which slowly changed society’s relationship with the status of women. A small group of women, immigrants to Israel from the U.S. in the 1970s, decided to implement in their new homeland the feminist Torah to which they had been exposed in America, and they founded the Women’s Emancipation movement. More information on this can be found in Almog’s article “Pioneer, Sabra, Housewife, Yuppie—Changes in the Image of the Israeli Woman and Her Social Status” (2000). The status of women in Israel is greatly improved, and women are now fighting for the right to be afforded equal rights from the aspect of language.

Muchnik writes:

“...In all cases feminine forms are marked and derived from the masculine. Thus, derived words in Hebrew are defined as [+ MASC] or [− MASC], which can be perceived as a negative attitude towards the feminine gender, as claimed by Spender”. (Muchnik, 2015, p. 8)

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With these words, Muchnik points out how problematic it is to define feminine forms in Hebrew, and links it to the sense of deprivation felt by women when words in the feminine are defined by the masculine form, rather than independently as is characteristic of them as a differentiated gender. It seems that the growing use of tif' alna forms nowadays is connected to the feminist revolution that put out its first shoots in the 1970s. Another problem raised by women’s organizations is the phenomenon customary in classical Hebrew which is nowadays deemed to be standard, in which the unmarked form describing a mixed group is masculine (Muchnik, 2015, p. 192). If this is so, there need be only one man in an audience of women for a speaker to that group to use the masculine form—“‘alexem”, not “‘ale xen”, “‘atem”, not “‘aten”, “takšivu”, not “takševna”.

The modern trend led by women in Israel without the intervention of the Academy is to address a mixed audience in both forms: ma’azinot ‘uma’azimin, and the use of the tif’ alna form adds another layer to women’s efforts to bestow on the feminine gender a differentiated identity. The two options available to users of the language create a tension between the use of the long form that respects women and the short form that is far more common in the language and sounds more natural, as witnessed in the last section with its examples of mixed forms. We can assume that these mixes are not made consciously but are spontaneous, and as such they are indicative of the complexity of the question.

It can be argued that before the 1970s the tif'alna form was also widely used, but at that time spoken Hebrew was largely precise and fastidious, with its basic forms adhering to Biblical Hebrew. In the 50 years that have elapsed since then, the Hebrew vocabulary used in both written and spoken Hebrew has gradually become more limited, and yet the tif'alna forms refuse to leave the stage, not because of the high register they represent, but because by their very existence they allow women to express their presence as themselves, and grant them equal gender rights. This trend, although an initiative of women, is also supported and used by many men, as shown in the research findings.

References
TIF’ALNA FORMS IN MODERN HEBREW


