Complement clauses in Israeli (a.k.a. ‘Modern Hebrew’) demonstrate inter alia that the fascinating, new, ‘semi-engineered’ language is caught in a war between prescriptivism and descriptivism. For example, the prescribed complementizer *ki* ‘that’ is possible and comprehensible but – as opposed to the usual complementizer *she*- ‘that’ – unproductive (see §4.2). By and large, authors of Israeli grammars attempt – deliberately or subconsciously – to force a ‘Mosaic’ grammar, which is Semitic, on a ‘mosaic’ language, which is made up of both Semitic and Indo-European components.

1. Basic information

The Israeli language emerged in *Eretz Yisrael* (lit. ‘Land of Israel’, which at the time was known as Palestine) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is one of the official languages – with Arabic and English – of the State of Israel (established in 1948). Israeli is spoken to varying degrees of fluency by the 6.8 million citizens of Israel – as a mother tongue by most Israeli Jews (whose total number is 5,235,000), and as a second language by Israeli Muslims (Arabic-speakers), Christians (e.g. Russian- and Arabic-speakers), Druze (Arabic-speakers) and others. It is also spoken by some non-Israeli Palestinians, as well as by a few Diaspora Jews.

The genetic classification of Israeli has preoccupied linguists since the beginning of the twentieth century. The still prevalent, traditional school suggests that Israeli is Semitic: (Biblical/Mishnaic) Hebrew revived. I call this the ‘phoenix model’, as the
phoenix rises from the ashes. The revisionist position, by contrast, defines Israeli as Indo-European: Yiddish *relexified*, i.e. Yiddish is the ‘substratum’, whilst Hebrew is only a ‘superstratum’ providing the lexis and lexicalized morphology (cf. Horvath and Wexler 1997). I call this the ‘cuckoo model’, as the cuckoo lays eggs in the nest of another bird. My own *mosaic* view is that Israeli is simultaneously Semitic and Indo-European. Both Hebrew (in use as the Jewish liturgical language but lethargic as a vernacular for more than 1700 years) and Yiddish (the revivalists’ mother tongue, the contribution of which was not intentional, hence the term ‘semi-engineered’) act as its primary contributors (rather than ‘substrata’). Israeli, therefore, falls into a mixed category of its own, as a ‘phoenicuckoo hybrid’ (which often also resembles a magpie as it collects features from various languages other than Yiddish and Hebrew).

Although Israeli phonetics and phonology are primarily Yiddish and its morphology is mainly Hebrew, the European contribution to Israeli is not restricted to particular linguistic domains and is evident even in its morphology. Thus, the term ‘Israeli’ is more appropriate than ‘Israeli Hebrew’, let alone the common signifiers ‘Modern Hebrew’ or ‘Hebrew’ *tout court* (cf. Zuckermann 1999, 2003, 2005, forthcoming).

2. Grammatical profile

Israeli is a fusional synthetic language, with non-concatenative discontinuous morphemes realised by vowel infixation. Consider, for example, *yoháv* ‘love:3msgFUT’, i.e. ‘(he) will love’; *mitahévet* ‘fall.in.love:fsgrPRES’, i.e. ‘(she) is falling in love’ – both formed from the root *’.h.b.*, but fitted into two distinct verb-templates. Compare also the following two verbs based on the root *n.d.b.: yenadvú* ‘volunteer:3pl’, i.e. ‘(they) will
volunteer (others)’; and hitnudávti ‘volunteer:1sgPAST: COERCIVE/INDUCIVE.hit–a–é– + –
+ – u–á–’, i.e. ‘I (was) volunteered (by force)’.

However, Israeli is much more analytic than (Biblical/Mishnaic) Hebrew. Whereas the Hebrew phrase for ‘my grandfather’ was sav-í ‘grandfather-1sgPOSS’, in Israeli it is sába shel-ì ‘grandfather GEN-1sg’. Still, Israeli sometimes uses the Semitic feature known as ‘construct-state’ (Israeli smikhút, glossed here as CONSTR), in which two nouns are combined, the first being modified or possessed by the second. For example, repúblika-t banánót, lit. ‘Republic-CONSTR bananas’, refers to ‘banana Republic’; and mevakér ha-mdiná, lit. ‘comptroller DEF-state’, is ‘State Comptroller’. However, unlike in Hebrew, the construct-state is not highly productive in Israeli (see Zuckermann forthcoming). Compare the Hebrew construct-state ‘em ha-yéled ‘mother:CONSTR DEF-child’ with the more analytic Israeli phrase ha-íma shel ha-yéled ‘DEF-mother GEN DEF-child’, both meaning ‘the mother of the child’, i.e. ‘the child’s mother’.

Israeli is a head-marking language. It is nominative-accusative at the syntactic level and partially also at the morphological level. As opposed to Biblical Hebrew – whose constituent order is VAO(E) / VS(E) – but like Standard Average European (cf. Zuckermann forthcoming) and English, the usual constituent order of Israeli is AVO(E) / SV(E). Thus, if there is no case marking, one can resort to the constituent order. Israeli is characterized by an asymmetry between definite Os and indefinite Os. There is an accusative marker, et, only before a definite O (mostly a definite noun or personal name). Et-ha is currently undergoing fusion and reduction to become ta. Consider taví l-i et ha-séfer ‘give:2msgsIMP (puristically FUT) DAT-1sg ACC DEF-book’ (i.e. ‘Give me the book!’), where et, albeit syntactically a case-marker, is a preposition (cf. Danon
2002), and *ha* is a definite article. This sentence is realised phonetically as *taví li ta-séfer.*

2.1 Nouns

Israeli nouns show number, normally only singular and plural. Each noun is either m(asculine) or f(eeminine), the latter often being created by adding a suffix to the unmarked masculine. For instance, whereas *manhíg* is ‘male leader’, *manhíg-á* is ‘female leader’ (note the addition of the feminine suffix -*a*). Similarly, *khayál* is ‘male soldier’ and *khayél-et* is ‘female soldier’; *profésor* is ‘male professor’ and *professor-it* is ‘female professor’.

Pronouns have ‘case forms’ consisting of a preposition plus a suffix: nominative (e.g. *aní* ‘I’), accusative (*ot-í* ‘me’), dative (*l-í* ‘to me’) and genitive (*shel-í* ‘my’). However, NPs which are not pronouns do not bear case marking. The only exceptions are the above-mentioned accusative marker *et* (or *ta*), and the lexicalized allative (‘to/towards’) case (which, serendipitously, is based on the historical accusative case, see Weingreen 1959), e.g. *ha-báít* ‘the house’ > *ha-báyt-a* ‘to the house’; *yerushaláim* ‘Jerusalem’ > *yerushaláym-a* ‘to Jerusalem’; *tsafón* ‘north’ > *tsafón-a* ‘to the north’.

New allative phrases, e.g. *tel avív-a* ‘to Tel Aviv’, are not normally used unless one is trying to sound high-flown or jocular.

Adjectives agree in number, gender and definiteness with the nouns they modify, e.g. *ha-yéled ha-gadól*, lit. ‘DEF-boy DEF-big’, i.e. ‘the big boy’; *yelad-ím gdol-ím*, lit. ‘boy-mpl big-mpl’, i.e. ‘big boys’.
2.2 Verbs

As opposed to Biblical Hebrew, which had only a perfect/imperfect distinction, Israeli has three tenses: past, present and future. In the past and future, verbal forms differ according to gender, number and 1st, 2nd and 3rd person. However, in the present tense, verbs are only conjugated according to gender and number and there is no person distinction. The historical reason is that the forms of the Israeli present can be traced back to the Hebrew participle, which is less complex than the historical perfect and imperfect forms.

Verbs are transitive, intransitive or ambitransitive (labile). Ambitransitivity is usually of the S=A type, e.g. *dan shatá etmòl* ‘Dan, drank yesterday’ (cf. *dan shatá etmòl bíra* ‘Dan drank yesterday beer’). However, owing to Americanization, there are more and more ambitransitive verbs of the S=O type, e.g. *ha-séfer mokhér tov* ‘The-book sells well’ (cf. *grísham mókher et ha-séfer tov* ‘Grisham sells ACC the-book well’); *yésh po máshehu she-meríakh ra* ‘There is here something, that-smells bad’ (cf. *ani meríakh po máshehu ra* ‘I, smell here something, bad’).

In addition to the rich plethora of inflected verbal forms, there is a tenseless form, which is usually referred to in Hebrew linguistics as the ‘infinitive’ (see §4.4, §4.5), cf. Israeli *makór natúy*, lit. ‘inflected origin’. It consists of the allegedly historical basic verb form (Israeli *makór*, lit. ‘origin, source’; often similar to the 2nd person masculine singular imperative form, which derives from the historical imperfective), preceded by the dative preposition *le-* (or *lí*- or *-la*), which can refer to ‘in order to’. For example, *le-nashék* ‘INFIN-kiss’, i.e. ‘to kiss’ (cf. *nashék* ‘kiss:2msgIMP); *li-shmór* ‘INFIN-guard’ (cf. *shmór* ‘guard:2msgIMP); *la-lékhet* ‘INFIN-go’ (cf. *lekh* ‘go:2msgIMP).
2.3 Clauses

The main clause in Israeli consists of (a) clause-initial peripheral markers, e.g. discourse markers; (b) NP(s) or complement clause(s); (c) a predicate – either verbal, copular or verbless; (d) clause-final peripheral elements, e.g. discourse markers. The only obligatory element is the predicate, e.g. \textit{higáti} ‘arrive:1sgPAST’. Sentences (1), (2) and (3) are examples of a verbal, copular and verbless clause, respectively.

(1) \[\text{[ester]}_A \{[akhlá]_V [tapúakh]_O\}\]
\begin{align*}
\text{Esther} & \quad \text{eat:3fsgPAST} & \quad \text{apple} \\
& \quad \text{‘Esther ate an apple.’}
\end{align*}

(2) \[\text{[ester]}_{CS} \{[hi]_{COP} [akhót shel-i]_{CC}\}\]
\begin{align*}
\text{Esther} & \quad \text{COP:fsg} & \quad \text{sister GEN-1sg} \\
& \quad \text{‘Esther is my sister.’}
\end{align*}

(3) \[\text{[ester]}_{VCS} \{[khakham-á]_{VCC}\}\]
\begin{align*}
\text{Esther} & \quad \text{clever-f} \\
& \quad \text{‘Esther is clever.’}
\end{align*}

There are many types of subordinate clause, e.g. adverbial (denoting time, place, condition, concession, reason, result, goal, state, comparison), adjectival/relative, nominal/complement. I shall first describe the difference between a \textit{she-} complement clause and a relative clause (§3). Just like English \textit{that}, the relativizer \textit{she-} also acts as a complementizer. Only after having established a clear distinction between relatives and
she- complements, shall I go on to describe the six main structural types of complement clauses, and their syntactic functions (§4).

3. The difference between she- complement clauses and relative clauses

Unlike a relative clause, which is only part of an argument (O/S/A/E), a complement clause is itself an argument (O/S/A/E). Consequently, there are several criteria to distinguish between relative and complement clauses in Israeli: passivization, topicalization, coordination and interrogation. Whereas only complement clauses can undergo passivization and topicalization, only relative clauses can be coordinated with adjectives. In interrogation, a complement clause answers a different type of question from that answered by a relative clause.

3.1 Passivization

A complement clause – but not a relative clause – can be the target of passivization. Consider the following complement clauses:

(4) [anì] {yodéa <she-hì yaf-á>o}

I know:msg PRES COMP-she beautiful-fsg

‘I know that she is beautiful.’

(5) {yadúa l-i} <she-hì yaf-á>s

know:msgPRES:PASS DAT-1sg COMP-she beautiful-fsg

‘It is known to me that she is beautiful.’
In (5) the complement clause from (4) is the target of passivization, just like an NP object. On the other hand, in (6), she-niytá yafá ‘who became beautiful’ behaves like an adjective and cannot be the target of passivization, i.e. it is a relative clause.

(6) raiti et [ha-ishá [she-niytá yaf-á]REL]O
   see:1sgPAST ACC DEF-woman REL-become:3fsgPAST beautiful-fsg
   ‘I saw the woman who became beautiful.’

3.2 Topicalization

A complement clause – but not a relative clause – can be topicalized, as, for example, in (7), which is based on (5):

(7) [[ze] <she-hí yaf-á>]S {yadúa l-i}
   PROXmsg COMP-she beautiful-fsg know:msgPRES:PASS DAT-1sg
   ‘That she is beautiful is known to me.’

Sentence (8) is topicalization by fronting of the complement clause in (9):

(8) [[ze] <she-yóram ohév et íris>]O kul-ánu yodím
   PROXmsg COMP-Yoram love:msgPRES ACC Iris all-1pl know:mplPRES
   ‘That Yoram loves Iris we all know.’

(9) kul-ánu yodím <she-yóram ohév et íris>o
    all-1pl know:mplPRES COMP-Yoram love:msgPRES ACC Iris
    ‘We all know that Yoram loves Iris.’
Israeli prefers not to begin a sentence with a *she*- clause. The solution the language has found is to insert a *ze* ‘that, this’ demonstrative as an external head. The result is that the *she*- complement clause is in apposition to *ze*. In other words, once the complement clause is put in a sentence-initial position, it has to transform into a complex O (or S in the case of passivization – see (7)) consisting of an NP and a complement clause in apposition (see §4.1). The result is ‘complementary distribution’ of a complement clause and a complementation strategy of sorts – as in the case of Tariana (Chapter 8).

That said, it is indeed possible to topicalize the complement clause without *ze*. However, such a structure is highly marked, rare and requires intonation of topicalization, with a rising-falling contour at the end of the topicalized constituent:

(10) `<she-yóram ohév et íris>_O kul-ánu yodím
    COMP-Yoram love:msgpres ACC Iris all-1pl know:mplpres
    ‘That Yoram loves Iris we all know.’

3.3 Coordination

While a complement clause cannot be coordinated with an adjective, a relative clause can. After all, the relative clause within an O is itself a modifier of the NP heading the O. Consider the relative clauses in (11) and (12):

(11) raiti [yalá [she-hí khakham-á]REL]O
    see:1sgpast girl REL-COP clever-fsg
    ‘I saw a girl who is clever.’
In (12), an adjective is added to (11). Such a move is impossible in the case of (13), which contains a complement clause:

(13) koév l-i <she-ló notnim la-kélev ókhel>ₕ
  hurt:msg:PRES DAT-1sg COMP-NEG give:mpl:PRES to:DEF-dog food

‘It hurts me that no food is given to the dog.’

3.4 Interrogation

Whereas a complement clause could serve as an answer to a question beginning with what (Israeli ma, cf. What did you hear? I heard that Danny was coming), a relative clause could serve as an answer to a question beginning with which (Israeli éyze, cf. Which fruit do you like here? I like the fruit which is red). That said, in the case of a complex O/E (see §4.1), the complement clause can also serve as an answer to a question beginning with which (e.g. Which news did you hear? I heard the news that Danny was promoted).

4. Structural types of complement clauses

Israeli has six main types of complement clause, classified here according to structure (e.g. the complementizer type):

(a) she- ‘that’ (§4.1)
(b) *ki* ‘that’ (§4.2)

(c) *im* ‘if’ / interrogative (§4.3)

(d) ‘infinitive’ (§4.4)

(e) *im*/interrogative + ‘infinitive’ (§4.5)

(f) reduced complement clause (§4.6)

All these types are used in the O slot. All except (f) can be used in the A/S slot – see (5) and (16) for (a) and (33) and (48) for (c). Complements (a), (b) and (c) can take all the TAM properties available to main clauses. However, (d) and (e) can only take an infinitive and the verb in (f) must be in the present tense. Negation is possible within all Israeli complement clauses. In (d) and (e), the negator has to appear right before the ‘infinitive’. Raising is possible only in (f) – see (43).

### 4.1 *She*- ‘that’ complement clause

This is the unmarked, most common complement clause, often used as a fact complement clause but also for activity and potential meanings:

(14)  hu  amár      l-i      <she-én      l-o      késef> O

`he  say:3msgPAST   DAT-1sg    COMP-exist.COP:NEG   DAT-3msg  money`

‘He told me that he had no money.’

(15)  shamáti      <she-ha-profésor-it      tekudám> O

`hear:1sgPAST   COMP-def-professor-fsg   promote:3fsgFUT:PASS`

‘I heard that the female professor will be promoted.’
Although *she*-complement clause usually appears in the O slot, it can easily be in the S slot (see (5) above) and even in the A slot – just like in Yiddish and other European languages – as follows:

(16) \{[margíz]_V \ [ot-à]_O\} <she-okhlím khatul-im>\_A

\text{annoy:msgPRES} \text{ACC-3fsg} \text{COMP:eat:mplPRES} \text{cat-pl}

‘It bothers her that cats are eaten.’

By and large, *she*-complement clauses can follow almost all \text{PRIMARY-B} verbs, as well as all verbs denoting \text{SECONDARY CONCEPTS} other than beginning \text{SECONDARY-A} verbs (see Tables 1 and 2).

The Israeli complementizer *she*- [़े] ‘that’ can be traced back to the Hebrew complementizer *she*- ‘that’, which derives from the Hebrew relativizer *she*- ‘that’. There is no consensus about the origin of the latter. It might be a shortened form of the Hebrew relativizer *‘asher* ‘that’, which is related to Akkadian *‘ashru* ‘place’ (cf. Semitic *‘athar*), similar to the case of Goemai (Chapter 9). Alternatively, Hebrew *‘asher* derived from *she-*., or it was a convergence of Proto-Semitic *dhu* (cf. Aramaic *dī* below) and *‘asher*. The Hebrew relativizer *‘ashér* is the origin of the Israeli relativizer *ashér* ‘that’, which is much less common than the Israeli relativizer *she*- ‘that’. Whereas Israeli *she*- functions both as complementizer and relativizer, *ashér* can only function as a relativizer.

**Complex O/E with an NP and a *she*-complement clause in apposition**

Like *that* complement clauses in English, *she*-complement clauses can sometimes appear in a complex O/E argument involving an NP followed by a complement clause.
in apposition (cf. (8) in Chapter 1, as well as Dixon 1991: 141-2). The NP can be a noun like ha-uvdā ‘the fact’ or ha-khadashót ‘the news’ or ha-teórya ‘the theory’ or ha-hanakhá ‘the assumption’, as in (17):

(17) hem satrú et [[ha-hanakhá]NP <she-yésh khaím
they contradict:3plPAST ACC DEF-assumption:f COMP-EXIST.COP life

akhréy ha-mávet>]O
after DEF-death

‘They contradicted the assumption that there is life after death.’

Obviously, the noun is modifiable by an adjective before the apposed complement clause:

(18) hem satrú et [[ha-hanakhá ha-rovákh-at]NP
they:m contradict:3plPAST ACC DEF-assumption:f DEF-common-f

<she-yésh khaím akhréy ha-mavét>]O
COMP-EXIST.COP life after DEF-death

‘They contradicted the common assumption that there is life after death.’

However, non-modifiable words can also be used in complementation. Consider the adverb kakh ‘so, thus, that’ and the masculine singular proximal demonstrative ze ‘this, that’, which, like a generic noun, can act as the head of an apposed complement clause. Kakh and ze are often used in the case of a complement-taking verb which requires a
preposition. They can be added between the verb and the complementizer she-.

However, this is not a necessity and Israeli allows she- after a preposition, as follows:

(19) hen makhú al [(kakh/ze) <she-ló natnú
they:f protest:3plPAST on (so/PROXmsg) COMP-NEG give:3plPAST
l-o avodá>]E
DAT-3msg work

‘They protested that he was not given work.’

The difference between kakh and ze is that kakh sounds high-register, whereas ze sounds colloquial. That said, only ze can occur after a complement-taking verb with no preposition. Furthermore, when the complementation occurs at the beginning of a sentence, it is only possible to use ze (see §3.2).

4.2 Ki ‘that’ complement clause

Instead of using the she- complementizer, an Israeli formal writer could use the rare complementizer ki ‘that’, which derives from the Hebrew complementizer kī ‘that’, from kī ‘because’. (Hebrew kī was replaced by ‘asher/she owing to the calquing of Aramaic dī/zī, which functions both as complementizer and relativizer – cf. Deutscher 2000: 64). Consider the following minimal pair:

(20) ha-neeshám taán <ki hu khaf mi-pésa>o
DEF-accused:msg claim:3msgPAST COMP he clean from-crime

‘The accused claimed that he was innocent.’
(21) ha-neeshám zuká [ki hu khaf mi-pésha]CAUS
        DEF-accused:m acquit:3msgPAST PASS CAUS he clean from-crime

‘The accused was acquitted because he was innocent.’

Whereas in (20) *ki* introduces a complement clause, in (21) it introduces a causal clause.
But such versatility can easily result in ambiguity, for example after the verb *hevín*
‘understand’:

(22) hevánti [ki kvar hisbiru et ze]CAUS/COMP
        understand:1msgPAST REL/CAUS already explain:3plPAST ACC PROXmsg

‘I understood that it has already been explained.’
OR ‘I understood because it has already been explained.’

Consequently, *ki* is often avoided even by Israelis attempting to write in a high register.

As opposed to *she-*., I believe that *ki* should be categorized as a prescriptive complementizer tout court. That said, some French-speaking immigrants to Israel use the complementizer *ki* less rarely than other Israelis because of the phonetic similarity to the French complementizer *que* ‘that’.⁵ Bendavid (1967: 147) calls this multiple causation phenomenon *hidamút sheló midáat* ‘subconcious assimilation’ – cf. ‘use intensification due to phonetic matching’ (Zuckermann 2000: 316).

With regard to the distribution of *ki*, although it can replace *she-* in most cases, it cannot do so, for example, following LIKING verbs such as *aháv* ‘love, like’, *saná* ‘hate’, *heedíf* ‘prefer’ (see Table 1). As opposed to *she-* complements, *ki* complements cannot follow verbs denoting SECONDARY CONCEPTS.
Furthermore, whereas *she*-complement clauses can be topicalized in colloquial speech (see (10)), *ki* clauses cannot be. The reason for this syntactic restriction might be that whereas topicalization is colloquial in Israeli, *ki* is highly prescriptive, resulting in a clash. Unlike *she-* , *ki* complement clauses are not normally the target of passivization.

### 4.3 *Im* ‘if’/Interrogative complement clause

Both *im* ‘if’ and interrogative complement clauses can follow almost all attention verbs, as well as conception, memory, knowledge, credence and prediction (thinking) verbs, and saying, proposition, report, asking and demonstration (speaking) verbs.

#### 4.3.1 *Im* ‘if’ complement clause

*Im* ‘if’ complement clauses – in contradistinction to interrogative complement clauses – can also follow liking verbs, as well as modal and emotive verbs denoting secondary concepts. *Im* clauses often, but not always, have a potential – rather than fact/activity – meaning. Consider (23):

\[
(23) \text{ani tohé } <\text{im atá rotsé la-vó}>_O
\]

\[
\text{I wonder:msgPRES if you:2msg want:msgPRES INFIN-come}
\]

‘I wonder if you would like to come.’

*Im* complement clauses can be the target of passivization. They can follow all primary-B verbs except those of supposition, remorse, promise and command – see Table 1. This distribution is similar to the case of interrogative complement clauses, although the latter can follow command verbs.
In addition to the verbs already mentioned in §4.3.1, interrogative complement clauses – as opposed to *im* ‘if’ complement clauses – can follow command *speak* verbs. Interrogative clauses often, but not always, have a potential – rather than fact/activity – meaning. Consider (24):

(24) hi giltá l-i <matáy [ha-hor-im shel-à] yagiù>o
    she reveal:3fsgPAST DAT-1sg when DEF-parent-pl GEN-3fsg arrive:3plFUT

    ‘She revealed to me when her parents would arrive.’

Historically, one might regard the interrogative complement clause as a semi-direct speech clause: *emór li: “matáy atà ba?” > emór li matáy atà ba > amárta li [matáy atà ba] – Tell me: ‘when [do] you (2msg) come?’ > Tell me when you (2msg) come > You (2msg) told me [when you (2msg) come]. Direct speech is commonly used in Israeli, for example in informal speech or story-telling. Unlike English, the present tense in Israeli direct speech does not become past in indirect speech, and there is no change of constituent order. Thus, besides the distinct intonation, the only difference between an interrogative complement clause and direct speech is the pronoun used. Juxtapose (25) and (26):

(25) hu shaál ot-i <ma ani rotsé>o
    he ask:3msgPAST ACC-1sg what I want:msgPRES

    ‘He asked me what I wanted.’

(26) hu shaál ot-i: [ma atà rotsé ?]Direct Speech

4.3.2 Interrogative complement clause (*vis-à-vis* direct speech)

In addition to the verbs already mentioned in §4.3.1, interrogative complement clauses – as opposed to *im* ‘if’ complement clauses – can follow command *speak* verbs.
he ask:3msgPAST ACC-1sg: what you:2msg want:msgPRES?

‘He asked me “What do you want?”’

Although I have no doubt that European languages such as Yiddish (a primary contributor to Israeli) are an important source for Israeli interrogative complement clauses, such clauses seem to have pre-existed in Hebrew (the other primary contributor to Israeli). Consider, for instance, the Biblical Hebrew sentence lo noda’ [mi hikkâhu]

‘it be not known [who hath slain him]’ (Deuteronomy 21:1). Such multiple causation, or multi-sourcedness, corresponds with the Congruence Principle, according to which if a feature exists in more than one contributor – whether primary or secondary – it is more likely to persist in the target language (see Zuckermann 2003; cf. ‘convergence’ in Thomason and Kaufman 1988).

**Interrogative + she- relative clause**

Interrogative complement clauses should not be confused with relative clauses which modify an interrogative functioning as an NP, as follows:

(27) dáni makír et [[mi]NP [she-hígía etmòl]REL]O

Danny know:msgPRES ACC who REL-arrive:3sgPAST yesterday

‘Danny knows the one who arrived yesterday.’


Yossi and-Ruthie regret:mplPRES on what REL-they do:3plPAST

‘Yossi and Ruthie regret what they did.’
4.4 ‘Infinitive’ complement clause

Complement clauses beginning with a tenseless verb, commonly referred to as ‘infinitive’ (see §2.2) are often potential (31), but they can also describe activity (32).

(31) [hem] {bikshú mi-dáni <li-knót mataná le-natalí> O}
    they ask:3plPAST from-Danny INFIN-buy present to-Natalie
    ‘They asked Danny to buy a present for Natalie.’

(32) od lo siámnmu <le-haavír et ha-khafats-im> O
    still NEG finish:1plPAST INFIN-move ACC DEF-item-pl
    ‘We have not yet finished moving the items.’

‘Infinitive’ complement clauses can appear in the S slot, as follows (see also (48)):

(33) <le-hitahév>S {ze khashúv}
    INFIN-fall.in.love COP important
    ‘To fall in love is important.’
The following verb types do not use the ‘infinitive’ complement clause: (a) ATTENTION; (b) THINKING: supposition, credence, prediction; (c) LIKING: remorse; (d) SPEAKING: proposition. All the others do – see Tables 1 and 2.

4.5 *Im/Interrogative + ‘Infinitive’ complement clause*

*Im/interrogative + ‘infinitive’ complement clauses can follow almost all ATTENTION and SPEAKING verbs, as well as conception, memory, knowledge and prediction (THINKING) verbs, but not LIKING verbs. Consider (34) and (35):

(34) [hi] {tagíd l-i <im li-fgósh ot-à be-[yóm khamishi]>o} 
    she say:3fsg FUT DAT-1sg if INFIN-meet ACC-3fsg in-day fifth 
    ‘She will tell me whether to meet her on Thursday.’

The ambiguity here – either ‘she will tell me on Thursday’ or ‘we shall meet on Thursday’ – exists in Israeli too.

(35) [ha-moré le-nehigá] {masbír <ekh le-hatslíakh ba-tést>o} 
    DEF-teacher to-driving explain:msgPRES how INFIN-succeed in:DEF-test 
    ‘The driving teacher explains how to succeed in the test.’

4.6 Reduced complement clause

In Israeli it is difficult to distinguish between a reduced complement clause and an NP object followed by a participle acting as a modifier (either a relative clause or a deverbal adjective). Consider (36):

(36) [hi] {tagíd l-i <im li-fgósh ot-à be-[yóm khamishi]>o} 
    she say:3fsg FUT DAT-1sg if INFIN-meet ACC-3fsg in-day fifth 
    ‘She will tell me whether to meet her on Thursday.’
(36) raiti [kélev noshékh]₀
    see:1sgPAST dog bite:messagePRES
    ‘I saw a biting dog.’
    OR ‘I saw a dog biting.’

(37) raiti et <ha-kélev noshékh>₀
    see:1sgPAST ACC DEF-dog bite:messagePRES
    ‘I saw the dog biting.’

In (37), there is a complement clause, although the object of ‘biting’, a transitive verb, is not mentioned. Reduced complement clauses are in the present and it impossible to change their tense. In (36) there are two possible readings: either a mere NP object (‘a biting dog’) or a complement clause (‘a dog biting’). One of the criteria which can be used to distinguish between the two readings is to check whether an object can be added to the verb (or participle), in this case noshékh ‘biting’. This works in the case of transitive verbs. If it is possible, then it is a complement clause.

(38) raiti <kélev noshékh ot-à>₀
    see:1sgPAST dog bite:messagePRES ACC-3fsg
    ‘I saw a dog biting her.’

Sentence (38) is based on (36) but whereas (36) is ambiguous, (38) is not. Similarly, (39) is based on (37):
(39) raiti et <ha-kélev noshék ot-à>o

see:1sgPAST ACC DEF-dog bite:msgPRES ACC-3fsg

‘I saw the dog biting her.’

The picture gets complex when considering (40):

(40) raiti et [ha-kélev ha-noshékho]

see:1sgPAST ACC DEF-dog DEF-bite:msgPRES

‘I saw the biting dog.’

The modifier *ha-noshék* ‘DEF-bite:msgPRES’ can be analysed either as a deverbal adjective (with the *ha* appearing due to the required definiteness agreement between nouns and adjectives) or as a reduced relative clause (with *ha* as a ‘relativizer’, as opposed to the unmarked *she-*). Supporting the relative clause analysis is the fact that it is possible to add an object to the clause in (40). In that case, however, *hanoshékho otá* ‘that is biting her’ will *have* to be a relative clause modifying the dog – see (41).

However, here some native-speakers perceive a change of meaning.

(41) raiti et [ha-kélev [ha-noshékho ot-à]}o

see:1sgPAST ACC DEF-dog REL-bite:msgPRES ACC-3fsg

‘I saw the dog that is biting her.’

Although the *noshék* ‘biting’ complement clauses involve a transitive verb, from (37) one should conclude that whenever the noun is definite but the following participle/verb
is not, there is a complement clause. Consider (42), where noshévet ‘blowing’ is an
intransitive verb:

(42) shamáti et <ha-rúakh noshév-et>o
    hear:1sgPAST ACC DEF-wind:f blowing-f

‘I heard the wind blowing.’

It is possible to raise the subject of the complement clause to the O slot within the main
clause, as follows:

(43) shamáti ot-åi <[Ø]i noshév-et>o
    hear:1sgPAST ACC-3fsg Ø blowing-f

‘I heard it [the wind] blowing.’

Finally, compare (43) with (44), where the construct-state is an NP object, not a
complement clause. The head of the NP neshivá ‘blowing’ is a deverbal noun
(‘gerund’). (One might consider such nominalization a complementation strategy.)

(44) shamáti et [[neshivá-t ha-rúakh]CONSTR]o
    hear:1sgPAST ACC blowing-CONSTR DEF-wind

‘I heard the blowing of the wind.’

5. Complement-taking verbs

Table 1 features the distribution of complement clauses among verb types outlined in
Chapter 1. The symbol ‘√’ means ‘possible’ whereas ‘~’ means ‘possible but unlikely’.
A blank means ‘does not occur’.

<place Table 1 about here>

There are verbs which always require a preposition following them, e.g. makhá ‘protest’ – see (19). Many others, however, may require a preposition to follow them only in specific circumstances. Tables 1 and 2 mark whether a specific complement clause can follow the verb regardless of whether or not the verb requires a preposition between the verb and the complement clause. Note that no ‘infinitive’ complement clause follows a preposition.

Some verbs, especially negative promise ones such as hizhír ‘warn’, require *irrealis* semantics and can take the prescriptive complementizers *pen*, *bal*, *levál* and *shéma* ‘lest’, resulting in a rare type of Israeli complementation, which cannot be the target of passivization:

(45) hizhárti ot-ò <bal/levál/pen/shéma yedabér>_E
    warn:1sgPAST ACC-3msg lest speak:3msgFUT
‘I warned him not to speak.’

Negation and modality are often interlinked in Israeli. Consider *ma she-ló taasé*, lit. ‘what REL-NEG do:2msgFUT’, i.e. ‘whatever you do’, as well as the following minimal pair:
(46) hodíu le-dalít <she-[má] [she-hi taasé]REL>s yaażór> O
notify:3pmPAST to-Dalit COMP-what REL-she do:3fsgFUT help:3msgFUT

‘Dalit has been notified that what she will do will help.’

(47) hodíu le-dalít <she- má she-hi lo taasé
notify:3pmPAST to-Dalit COMP- what REL-she NEG do:3fsgFUT

yakhshílu ot-à> O
fail:3plFUT ACC-3fsg

‘Dalit has been notified that no matter what she does, she will fail.’

6. Secondary concepts

Table 2 features the distribution of complement clauses among verb types denoting secondary concepts outlined in Chapter 1. It is clear from the table that, by and large, secondary verbs in Israeli do not take the *ki* ‘that’, *im* ‘if’, interrogative, or interrogative+‘infinitive’ complement clause.

<place Table 2 about here>

As one can see in the ‘emotive’ section in Table 2, some Israeli adjectives can take a complement clause as an argument – cf. the cases of Matses (Sentences (20) and (21) in Chapter 10) and Goemai (Chapter 9; note, however, that Goemai ‘adjectives’ are actually verbs coding property concepts). Consider (48), said to be the last words of Yosef Trumpeldor, soldier and early pioneer-settler in *Eretz Yisrael*, spoken on 1 March
1920, when he was mortally wounded while defending Tel Hai, a settlement in the Galilee:

(48) tov <la-mút beád arts-ēnu>_s

   good   INFIN-die   for   land-1plPOSS

   ‘It is good to die for our country.’ (cf. Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.)

7. Concluding remarks

Israeli has six main types of complement clause and does not require complementation strategies. It can use direct speech (see §4.3.2) and nominalization (see end of §4.6). Israeli complementizers (other than the archaic pen, bal, levál and shéma) all have some other grammatical function. Thus, Israeli provides yet another illustration of the statement that ‘the great majority of complementizers are homonymous with some other grammatical form in that language’ (Dixon 1995: 184). One of the main difficulties is how to distinguish between a reduced complement clause and an NP object with a modifier. By and large, Israeli complementation types and their frequency correspond with Yiddish and Standard Average European, although the forms used are Hebrew.
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**Table 2: Classification of Verbs Denoting Secondary Concepts**
References


Footnotes

1 Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald and R. M. W. Dixon read a draft of this chapter and provided invaluable suggestions for improvement.

A note on the transcription: whereas á is primary stress, à is secondary stress. If a stress is not mentioned in a bisyllabic word, it means that there are two possible stresses.

2 Etymologically, shel ‘of’ (GEN) consists of the relativizer she- ‘that’ and the (dative) preposition le ‘to’.

3 Note that unlike Hebrew, in Israeli many semantically imperative constructions consist of morphologically future verbs.

4 Israel’s first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, did not like the et particle and would have liked to have replaced taví li et ha-séfer with taví li ha-séfer. (It has been suggested that he was not keen on diplomatic relations with etyópya ‘Ethiopia’ for the same reason.) However, such a puristic attitude is hardly ever seen these days and taví li ha-séfer is non-native.

5 French que is traceable back to Proto-Indo-European *kwe, which is also the origin of Modern Persian ke (cf. Haig 2001: 200), and which has been alleged to be ultimately related to Hebrew kī. If this is the case, the phonetic similarity between French que and Israeli kī cannot be put down to pure serendipity – cf. ‘incestuous phono-semantic matching’ in Zuckermann (2003).

6 Cf. formal generative linguists’ ‘complement small clause’ and infinitival ECM (Exceptional Case Marker), e.g. Rothstein (1995).